

Born	7 October 1813
Baptism	11 June 1820, St Peter Ad Vincula, Great Coggeshall, Essex
Parents	James Tansley and Susannah/Susan Arnold
Parent's marriage	3 October 1813, St Andrew, Halstead, Essex.
Siblings	Joseph (1818-1818), James (1821), Henry (1827), Mark (1828-1834), Mark (1835)
Wife	Lucy Wade
Married	27 November 1837, St Peter Ad Vincula, Coggeshall
Children	Hannah (1838), Susannah (1840), Harriet (1842-1858), William Daniel (1844), Walter (1848)

William Tansley married Lucy Wade, the daughter of Daniel Wade, in 1837.

At the Essex County Assizes, 3 March 1838

William Tansley, 23, gardener, indicted for feloniously obtaining money from Thomas Kemp, at Coggeshall. Bill ignored.¹

Later in the same year, William Tansley, Samuel Juniper, James Ellis, Thomas Kitchen and William Palmer were committed on 9 May 1838 for assaulting George Peas, Joseph Partridge and Joseph Mears, at Coggeshall.² At the Essex County Adjourned Sessions, on 15 May 1838 William Tansley, 23, charged with riot and assault, No Bill (for all of them)

On the 1841 census, Crouch Place, Great Coggeshall

Wm Tansley 25, gardener; Lucy 25, works at Silk Factory, Hannah 3 and Susan 2. Wm Arnold, 30, wheelwright, was living with them.³

William's mother, Susan, died in 1846 at the age of 54.

From 1844 to 1848, a series of violent crimes took place in Coggeshall and the surrounding villages, which had the local inhabitants in fear for their safety. A group of up to 14 men, known locally as the Coggeshall Gang, committed the crimes. They had their headquarters at the Black Horse Inn in Stoneham Street. The landlord was William French, the half-brother of the gang leader, Samuel Crow.

William French benefited from the proceeds of the crimes by receiving stolen property from the gang. Crow was employed as a post-chaise driver for innkeepers and the gentry, and was well known in the neighbourhood. Armed with pistols and cudgels and wearing masks, the gang operated mainly at night and terrorised the local inhabitants.

Discovery of a Gang of Burglars at Coggeshall. This newspaper report is from 1848:

At the assizes held last summer, at Chelmsford, a field gardener, named William Wade, was convicted of a burglary at Bradwell, a village near Coggeshall. Previously to his committal he had entered into a compact with those of his brethren in the craft, who were concerned in this affair, that, in consideration of their taking care of his wife, he would refrain from "peaching." Unfortunately for themselves, however, his partners in delinquency, after a short time, neglected to fulfil their part of the contract, and the consequence was a full confession by the convict.

¹ Essex Standard, 16 March 1838, p2

² Essex & Herts Mercury, 15 May 1838, p2

³ TNA, HO107/335/4

A meeting of Magistrates was thereupon convened, when, after the depositions of several witnesses, warrants were at once issued for the apprehension of the following parties, viz. William Ellis, William Springett, William Tansley, and Samuel Crow.

Ellis, having some suspicion that he might be wanted, left his lodgings at Rivenhall during the night, and on the appearance of the constables on the following morning was not to be found; he has, therefore, escaped for the present. Springett, who was employed in thatching, was apprehended on Wednesday afternoon at a farm in the parish of Feering, and Tansley, a labourer, was apprehended in Meeting Street, Coggeshall, shortly after the warrant had been issued. Samuel Crow, the well-known leader of the gang, has, up to the present moment, escaped the hands of the police.

At the committal hearing, the following witnesses were called.

William Wade, a convict under sentence of transportation for 15 years, said, on a Friday night in March, I met Wm. Ellis, Samuel Crowe, jun., and William Tansley, in the yard of the Black Horse Inn, when Ellis said, "I know where there is an old man at Bradwell who has money; I have heard it talked about when I was at work; and so then proposed that all four of us should go and rob him, the Black Horse Inn is kept by a man named French, and we were in the habit of meeting there; we all four agreed to go by the Horse River Bridge; Ellis led the way, Tansley and I followed, and in about 10 minutes Crowe came, when we all met in a cart-lodge at the Grange, Little Coggeshall. belonging to Mr Unwin: we then proceeded on the road to Bradwell; and when within 40 rods of James Finch's house, between ten and eleven o'clock, Crowe put a shirt over his head, and a white night-cap over his face, holes being cut in it for his eyes and mouth; the others blackened their faces with something which Crowe had with him for the purpose, and we all then went to the house; Tansley stood at the front door to look out, and give an alarm if any one approached: Ellis, Crowe, and I then went to the back of the premises, and Crowe, with a piece of iron, attempted to force the door open, making a great noise to the effort, which awoke the prosecutor; as he was coming down stairs Crowe burst open the door, and I then saw prosecutor and his housekeeper, Elizabeth Wright; Crowe asked if he had got any money; Finch replied he had not; Crowe, who had a pistol in his hand, then broke into the housekeeper's room, and Ellis and I went upstairs; in a minute or so Crowe followed us, and when became into the room he again asked Finch if he had got any money; but Finch again said he had not. Crowe, who still held the pistol, said he knew better and insisted upon knowing; upon which Finch seemed very much alarmed, and told him there were a few shillings upon the beam in the room. Crowe then got onto a sack, which I understood contained wheat, and reached down a canvas purse, or bag, which he opened, and took from it a sovereign, a half-sovereign, and some silver. Crowe then told Finch he knew he had got more than that, but Finch said he had no more. Besides the money, there was a book, which I believe to be a Savings Bank book, which Crowe took from the bag; he opened the book, and asked if I could read it? I did so, and I saw Witham Savings Bank upon it. After Finch had told Crowe he had no more money, Crowe went to the bed, and found five shillings in his trowsers pocket. Crowe again pressed Finch to tell him where the rest of his money was, and Finch said that was all he had, except what was in the Witham Savings Bank. Crowe then said, if he did not tell him where he had some more, he would hang him upon the beam; Finch replied, he hoped he would not do that; when Ellis and Crowe took hold of him, and dragged him into another room. Crowe made a noose in a rope which he had, and put it over Finch's neck, and, whilst Ellis held him up, Crowe, who had thrown the end of the rope over the beam, pulled him up and kept him suspended nearly a minute, whilst Ellis kept hold of him to prevent his straggling; I said, "mind you don't, hurt the old man," and they took him down; all this time Finch was in his shirt; we then went down stairs into the housekeeper's room, and found her sitting at the side of the bed, partly dressed; Crowe asked her if she had any money; she said she had not, and as Crowe was looking under the bed she said there were a few halfpence in the drawer; Crowe opened the drawer and found 5d., which he took; he then wanted to know if she had more, and said if she did not tell him he would set her on the fire; she said she could not help it, she had not got any; Ellis and Crowe then took hold of her and took her into the keeping room and placed her on the fire grate; Crowe placed some straw under her and lighted it, so that her gown caught fire and she screamed out; I

said "don't do that;" and I put out the fire from under her gown, and Crowe said to me "don't do that, you fool;" the housekeeper then went into her bedroom. Crowe then went to the cupboard and took out a mug, with which he proceeded to the pantry and drew some beer: we all partook of it, as also some bread and cheese; Crowe and Ellis after this told Finch if he would not tell them where he had some more money they would put him on the fire; Finch said he had not another farthing in the house, and they then placed him on the fire place; Crowe put in a lighted candle to make a blaze, and Finch, who was still only in his shirt, called out a great deal for them to spare him, and said "pray don't do that;" they then let him get off, and I believe he went upstairs; Crowe then looked up the chimney, and took down four hams and two chaps; we then all went into the pantry where we found two tubs containing pickled pork, some of which we took out and put into a sack and a bag which we found there; Ellis and Tansley then went forward carrying part of the pork with them; and I followed them with another parcel; Crowe, who remained on the stairs, overtook us before we got to Bradwell Hall Farm; when we arrived there we went into the farm-yard and Crowe got upon a haulm wall, in which he made a hole, and hid the pork there; we all four then went back to the Grange yard, and got into the cart-lodge, and stopped there some bit; Crowe left first, and went away homeward; Ellis, Tansley, and I stopped some time afterwards, and then repaired to the Black Horse stable; this was between four and five o'clock; we found Crowe there, and we waited till French got up, and parted the money in the meantime.

French came down between 6 and 7 o'clock, and spoke to us; he said, "You have been out somewhere tonight, I know." I told him we had been a little way, and he said, "Where have you been to?" I told him we had been to an old man's house at Bradwell; he asked us if we had any luck; I replied no matters; he then asked us what we got, and I told him we had got a few shillings, and some other things; he then said, "Let us have a drop of drink;" and as we went towards the house he said, "Perhaps you will meet with better luck next time;" this observation was made to me alone as we were going along the passage, but the previous conversation took place in the presence of Tansley and Ellis; Crowe was about the yard all the time attending to his business; when we got into the house we all drank together in the tap-room, and all breakfasted together off a pigs-fry, which Crowe either fetched or sent for, and I know that French took part of it; Ellis, Tansley, and I, stopped there the greater part of the day, and Crowe often came in and oat; we had nothing more to eat, but plenty to drink; the next day I asked Finch if he was in a mind to buy a ham or two which we got at roaster French's; he said he did not like, for he had heard of that Halsted job, and he was afraid! Nothing more was said between me and Mr French at that time: and a fortnight after, Tansley, Ellis, and I went and removed the hams to the top of Water Lane, where Crowe met us: he had promised to bring a horse and cart, but he came without, and said he could not get one; we then carried it to a lodge in Mr Doubleday's meadow, in Robinbridge Road; Crowe afterwards took the pork, and gave Tansley and I, 4s each for our share; this took place in the yard of the Black Horse Inn, but French was not present.

Cross-examined by Mr Lane. French is a married man, and had a female servant in his house, but I don't know that he had one at that time; before the day of which I have been speaking I have often been at his house, and at all hours; on that morning in question I did not see any servant about; there are cottages and a blacksmith's shop in the yard of the inn, and the blacksmiths were at work; the conversation between me and French took place against the harness room, which is opposite the blacksmith's shop, and about three or four rods from it; when we went into the house there were customers present in the tap-room, but I don't know who they were; French did not sit down with us to breakfast, but sat down against the fire while the pigs fry was being cooked by Ellis; some of the others stood about; Mr French drew the beer as it was called for; French took part of the fry the same as the rest, and Mr Stribbling, who was in the bar in the course of the day, drew some of the beer, and brought it into the tap-room: we all paid our share; Samuel Crowe was ostler at the Black Horse, and it was his duty to be about the yard, and in and out of the house; the next day, when I spoke to the prisoner French about buying the hams, I called him into the passage alone.

Re-examined. The conversation which took place between the prisoner French and us near the harness room could not have been overheard by the men at work in the blacksmith's shop; Crowe is the half-brother of the prisoner French; I don't know that French stood treat.

James Finch, of Spencer's Garden, Bradwell, was next examined, and his description of the robbery and the treatment of himself and housekeeper corresponded with the statement of the accomplice Wade.

Superintendent Cook deposed that on Wednesday, 30 August, when he went to the Black Horse to apprehend Crowe; French, the landlord, denied that he was there, and said he had gone out with a gig on the Colchester Road; but on being questioned by Mr Corder said he did not know the name of the gentleman he was driving, and that he had not entered it in the Excise-book; but subsequently, on being farther questioned, he said it was a job of his own; witness searched the house, to which no impediment was offered. Witness further stated that French, at the close of his preliminary examination before the Magistrate, said, "Well, if I had known it would have come to this, I would have told where he (Crowe) was."

Robert Evans, toll-gate keeper at Coggeshall, said he was on duty on the 30th inst., and was quite sure Samuel Crowe did not pass through on that day.

Rebecca Young, a resident in the Black Horse Yard, proved seeing the prisoner French come out and speak to the policeman; she heard him say to Inspector Ward, "do you want Sam?" and about ten minutes after she saw Crowe come out of a stable door, when he yawned and stretched himself, as though he had been asleep; she went up to him and told him the police had been after him or someone else; Crowe then went into the house, and she afterwards saw him come out and go into a cottage of French's, but she had not seen him since.

Cross-examined. Crowe went into the house about ten minutes after French.

William Osborne, basket-maker, remembered the day in question; between three and four o'clock saw Samuel Crowe peeping from behind the window curtain of the Black Horse, apparently watching Inspector Ward, who was in the street; saw French at the door a few minutes before, and afterwards; and he told Inspector Ward what he had seen, but not until ten at night.

Joseph Hills proved that he was in the passage of the Black Horse Inn between three and four o'clock on the day in question, when Samuel Crowe came in, and French said, "they are after you," Crow replied, "they might have found me, for I have been having a nap in the stable."

Cross-examined. There was no appearance of alarm: nothing was said about concealment in my presence; nor did I perceive any desire evinced by French to conceal Crowe.

Mary Ann Farrow, servant to Mr Eley, of Coggeshall, deposed that on Wednesday, the 30 August, about four o'clock, she was opposite the Black Horse Inn, when she saw Samuel Crowe standing in the passage; he looked very pale, and appeared agitated, and was talking to two persons, one of whom she believed to be French; the witness, who appeared unwilling to give her evidence, afterwards said that at four o'clock she saw French and Crowe; in the passage together.

Inspector Ward proved that between 3 and 4 he looked over the lower part of French's premises, but did not see either of the parties he was in search of; he afterwards returned, and was repeatedly assured by French that he did not know where Crowe was; he visited the premises again with Smith and Nichols, when they went into the cottage adjoining, and upstairs they observed a hole, which appeared to witness to be larger than in the morning; Smith and Nichols went up and discovered Crowe, and, as there was no room for witness he called for them to seize him and hand-cuff him; he heard Crow say several times "don't hit see, and I'll come down like a man; they then left him, and presently heard a noise above, and he made his escape through the roof and got away.

A number of witnesses were then examined as to having seen John Crowe with a gig at Kelvedon, Feering, Tiptree Heath, Danbury, and Woodham Ferris; at the latter place, he was accompanied by a man whose description corresponded with that of the escaped party, Samuel Crow. They enquired the way to Brentwood and are supposed to have gone to Stratford. On the return of the prisoner John Crow, he was stopped at Springfield by Elijah Clark, of Coggeshall, when, as above stated, several articles of clothing known to belong to Samuel Crow were found in the gig.

At the conclusion of the evidence, the Magistrates retired for a short time, and on their return, the prisoners, when asked if they wished to make any defence, French said he was not guilty; but the others declined making any statement. The prisoners were all fully committed to take their trial at the next assize; Ellis and Tansley for the burglary, French as an accessory after the fact, and John Crowe for aiding and abetting the escape of his brother. Upon the application of Mr Lane, it was stated that bail in two sureties of £50, and himself in £100, would be accepted for French's appearance at the assizes. The examination occupied eight hours, and as many as so witnesses were present, but the evidence of some of them was dispensed with.⁴

At the trials in March 1849, William Tansley, 35, a gardener. Samuel Crow, 26, groom, and Samuel Juniper, 33, labourer, were also charged with breaking and entering the dwelling house of William Barker, the elder, at Little Coggeshall, 9 June, and stealing various property therefrom. Mr Rodwell and son prosecuted; Mr Chambers defended.

Mr Ryland, having stated that it was not their intention to prefer any further charges against the convicts, French and John Crow, opened the case against the three prisoners named in the present indictment, and called the following evidence.

William Wade, convict, on 9 June 1848, at nine ten at night, I saw Juniper, Tansley, and Crow, in the Black Horse public-house; we then went to Barker's house, and Crow undid the back window with spanner winch which he brought with him, got in, made light with a match and a candle, undid the front window, and let me and Juniper in. It was about eleven o'clock. We took some wine, and then all three went upstairs; I and Crow went into old Barker's room while Juniper stood against young Barker's; Crow went to the drawers and I stood at the bed; he undid the drawers before Mr. Barker awoke, and took out 2 or 3 sovereigns and half a sovereign or two; Barker, when he saw us, lay down again and covered himself with the bedclothes, being threatened; found two watches, and Barker said hoped would not take them away, and did not; we then went where Juniper stood; told Juniper to bring the box out of young Barker's room, which he did, and gave it to me, and gave it to Crow; it was locked, and Crow opened it with the spanner; there was a sovereign it, and lot of half-crowns; we then went downstairs, and had some more wine and bread and cheese. We were in the house for nearly two hours; we took away some bottles of wine and cheese. We hid the wine in a ditch called Crutch's, and left the spanner with it; then went back to Coggeshall, to the Black Horse stable, and there parted the money; had about £2 each, but it did not all come from that house.

William Barker, sen. I live at Blest-end, at Little Coggeshall. My house was broken into on 9 June. I went to bed at 10 o'clock and saw everything safe except one door, which I left to my son. Between 12 and 1, I was awakened by two men in my room; one had a white shirt on and a white cloth over his face.

Wade recalled. Crow wore a white shirt and a white cap over his face; there were holes for his eyes and mouth. Juniper had a blue shirt over his clothes, and I had a smock on; I, Tansley, and Juniper had our faces blacked.

William Barker called. One of the men had a candle, one man had his face blacked, and a pistol in his hand; I said, "Holloa, what are you after?" They pushed me down and kept me covered up under the bedclothes for nearly an hour, and I could not see anything; they then went downstairs, and at once I got up and went downstairs, and found the doors and windows open; the back window had been forced open; I then called my neighbour. On going into my keeping-room, I found three bottles on the table, two empty and one nearly so. I missed other bottles; it was currant wine. I missed three crowns, three half-crowns, and some small silver from my bedroom; the boxes were all broken, and the things were emptied out upon the floor.

William Barker, son of the last witness. I live with my father. I bolted the front door when I went to bed. When I heard noise, and was going to get up, man held down, and said if I didn't lie still he would blow brains out; he had in his hand what thought was a pistol; after a little while two more men came to my room door, and one of the men carried my box away, and I heard it broken open;

⁴ Chelmsford Chronicle, 22 September 1848, p2

there was a sovereign in it, and seven half-crowns; I knew Wade, but other; when I thought they were gone, I went down stairs. The towel produced is, I believe, is father's; one of the men had his face blacked; another had a light cloth over his face, with holes for his eyes and mouth.

A large number of witnesses gave evidence.

The learned Judge summed up, and the Jury returned a verdict of Guilty against Tansley and Crow, and Not Guilty against Juniper. The sentences will not be passed till the other members of the gang have been tried.⁵

There were a number of other charges relating to various burglaries, involving a number of men from the gang. Some were acquitted or not charged again if already convicted.

The Magistrate handed down the sentences:

Samuel Crow, it appears upon the evidence which has been adduced before us, that you have been the most active man, and the head this gang, that has kept the people of Coggeshall in state of alarm for so many years; and you evidently, from what appears before the court, have been the leader of this party, organising attacks upon the people, going in the night time armed and disguised, and committing offences for which very few years ago your Life would have been required; and upon this occasion you might suffer the penalty of death. However, I shall not think necessary, and indeed the form in which you have been convicted would not permit me, and I should not if it would; but the sentence upon you is that upon the several indictments and for the several offences proved against you, you be transported for the term of your natural Life,—and that is the sentence upon each indictment.

William Tansley, though not so active as Crow, you have been concerned in a great many robberies! In some cases, you have not been found guilty for want of confirmation evidence of the accomplice, but I feel no doubt that the convict, who has given his evidence throughout with great clearness and distinctness, is correct with regard to your guilt. I shall sentence you to be transported for the term of your natural Life.

John Crow, you were found guilty of assisting your brother to effect his escape with full knowledge of his guilt and trying to screen him from justice. You are a young boy, and it is natural to expect you would do all you could to assist your brother. Still, respect and obedience to the law must be secured, and every person who endeavours to procure the escape of a felon is preventing the law from being executed. The fact that you were brother to the criminal ought to have made you more desirous to do what was right. I shall not punish you by any sentence so severe as the law would permit me to pronounce. You have acted extremely wrong, but you are young, and I shall therefore only sentence you to be imprisoned and kept to hard labour for three months.

William Ellis, for the part you have taken in this guilty transaction in robbing and injuring Mr Dell, your Life is forfeited to that of your country; and I did not choose to interfere by recommending you to the merciful consideration of her Majesty, the consequence would be that you would suffer an ignominious death. You have evidently not been concerned in this alone, but the circumstances of the injury to the prosecutor were not so great as to justify me in letting the sentence take its course; therefore, your Life will be spared, but the rest of it will be spent abroad.— Death recorded.

William French, it is very clear from the evidence in this case, and from what was heard the day before yesterday, that you have been in the habit of harbouring in your house a gang of thieves, the terror of the neighbourhood. You have endeavoured to effect the escape of one of them and have been receiving part of the stolen property. You were in a station of Life which ought to have induced you to conduct yourself more respectably, but your house seems to have been made a perfect nuisance to its neighbourhood by allowing thieves to congregate there and form their plans for disturbing the neighbourhood. You will be transported beyond the seas for the term of seven years.

James Everett, you have been found guilty of being connected with a gang who have infested the neighbourhood of Coggeshall for some years past, and the fact proved against you is that you did assist in breaking into a warehouse and stealing a quantity of hams. You cannot be punished for

⁵ Chelmsford Chronicle, 09 March 1849, p3; Essex Standard, 09 March 1849, p2

anything but simple larceny in this case, but I should not be doing my duty to the country I did not punish everyone connected with this gang with an adequate punishment. Your sentence is that you be transported for seven years.

Before the prisoner **Samuel Crow** was taken down, he desired to say something to his Lordship, and, being allowed to do so, asked whether his clothes, which were in the hands of the police, might not be given up to him; he had three small children. His Lordship said he was sorry the prisoner had not thought of those children before; it was not in his Lordship's power to make any order, but very possibly the clothes would be given up to him. ⁶

On 24 July 1849, the following prisoners, convicted at the Lent assize, were removed to Preston Gaol, Lancashire, the present place of reception before transportation (Milbank Prison) being rendered unfit for the purpose, owing to the breaking out of cholera:— William Tansley, Samuel Crow, and William Ellis (for Life); William Springett, William French, and James Everett (seven years), burglaries, etc., at Coggeshall.

William Wass (15 years), arson at Aldham.— Joseph Bryant (seven years), robbery with violence at Ridgewell ⁷ (and other prisoners who did not come to Western Australia).⁸

William's first Petition:

Coggeshall Vicarage, 3 January 1851. Received 4 January 1851

Sir,

I have the honor to enclose a Memorial respecting William Tansley a convict formerly residing in this Parish, signed by the Parish officers and some of the chief inhabitants of the place, and which it is hoped may meet with your favourable consideration.

I have the honor to be, Sir, your most able servant, W Dampier

To the Right Honorable Sir George Grey, Bart

Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Home Department

The Memorial of the Vicar, Churchwardens and undersigned inhabitants of Coggeshall in the County of Essex, on behalf of William Tansley, sheweth

That William Tansley of the Parish of Coggeshall was convicted of felonious stealing at the Lent Assizes held at Chelmsford in the month of March 1849, and was duly sentenced by the Crown to Transportation for Life, and is now in confinement in Portland Prison for the period of his probation. That the Memorialists have reason to hope that the said William Tansley has become sensible of his guilt and that he has conducted himself in a becoming manner during the time of his imprisonment, and further that a satisfactory account will be given of the prisoner by the authorities of Portland Prison; that the Memorialists under these circumstances feel justified in desiring that the period of the Prisoner's probation may be shortened.

And would therefore humbly express their hope that such time of probation may be reduced to such extent as Her Majesty may graciously please to direct.

Result: Nil

Gaol report: bad

Answered 20 January 1851. ⁹

The Prison Registers show that William Tansley, 35, married with five children, a gardener, who could write imperfectly, was convicted on 5 March 1849 at the Chelmsford Assizes of burglary and sentenced to Life. His father resides in Great Coggeshall, and his wife and children are in the Union House, Witham, Essex.

William spent 4 months 17 days at Springfield Gaol, Essex where his behaviour was good.

He was transferred to Preston Gaol, Lancashire, on 24 July 1849; his behaviour was very good.

⁶ Chelmsford Chronicle, 09 March 1849, p3; Chelmsford Chronicle, 16 March 1849, p4

⁷ Edward William Wass, 261, per *Mermaid*; Joseph Bryant, 667, per *Pyrenees*

⁸ Essex Standard, 03 August 1849, p2

⁹ TNA, HO18295

On 2 May 1850, he was removed to Portland Prison, arriving on 3 May 1850.
Nine months later, on 18 February 1851, William boarded the *Cornwall* for Gibraltar.
He arrived at Gibraltar on 4 March 1851 and was housed on the *Owen Glendower* hulk.

While at Gibraltar, a **second petition** was lodged:

Coggeshall Vicarage, Kelvedon, 8 August 1855. Received 9 August 1855

Sir,

One of my parishioners, William Tansley, a labouring man now 40 years of age was convicted at the Chelmsford Assizes in the month of March 1848(*sic*) for housebreaking, and sentenced to transportation for life and is now at Gibraltar.

His wife having requested me to intercede for her and to procure if possible the shortening of his period of transportation, I beg to state that, so far as I can judge from the tenor of his letters written time to time to his wife, there is hope of a better life for the time to come; and I am glad to be able to state that during the whole time of her husband's absence, the wife has conducted herself in a praiseworthy manner, and has laboured industriously towards the support of herself and her children.

If any consideration may be shown to the husband under such circumstances, I would beg permission respectfully to recommend the case. I have the honor to be, Sir, your humble servant, W Dampier, Vicar of Coggeshall

Result: Nil. Answered 14 August 1855

William returned to England, per *Hamilla Mitchell*. He arrived on 4 July 1857 and was located on the *Stirling Castle* hulk at Portsmouth on 4 July 1857, where he spent 2 months and 5 days.¹⁰ William had spent a total of 8 years 6 months 4 days on Public works and in separate confinement.

A **third petition** was lodged on his return to England.

Portsmouth Convict Prison, 23 July 1857. Petition of William Tansley, 35. Received 4 August 1857.

Convicted 5 March 1859, Chelmsford Assizes, burglary, life transportation.

Separate confinement at Preston, very good behaviour.

Public works: Portland, good; Gibraltar; Portsmouth 4 July 1857, good behaviour.

To the Right Honorable Secretary of State for the Home Department.

Right Honorable Sir,

May it please your Lordship to peruse remarks which your humble Petitioner deems necessary to make relative to his Case and Sentence, having lately returned from Gibraltar under sentence of Life and having served the Crown full 8 years and 5 months, I was there informed by the Governor of Gibraltar Prison, that an account received from the Home Office ran thus.

That Prisoners who were under Sentence of 20 years served a period of 7 years, for Life a Term of 8 years, owing to the Climate being so exceptionally hot and burdensome, that in consequence of not being sent to Australia on a Ticket of leave, he, Capt Blair, received orders to this effect - "7 years in Gibraltar equal to 8 years in England and for Life 8 years in Gibraltar equal to 10 years in England, as was at that period a Common Rule or Scale for the prisoners to be (gind) from".

May it please your Lordship to use your power in my behalf, as it appears to your Petitioner that the Scale of Rules which Capt Blair received and read to all of the prisoners in the Chapel had been received from the Secretary of State his own rule of hand stating the mitigation which to us gave us the greatest of delight and pleasure, and all our minds were set upon this said mitigation and moreover your Lordship; Boards in the Prison were distributed about (written) not printed to such effect, that it lead every long sentenced prisoner to understand that he would be a free man at the expiration of the term laid down by the Secretary of State and according to the copied Scale of Rules of Capt Blair the Governor, previous to my Embarkation he encircled 287 prisoners and made the following speech to them, men, men I am proud to state to you that all of you with exception of 9 invalids are going to

¹⁰ TNA, PCOM2/383; PCOM2/137; PCOM2/107

your Liberty. I mean your Freedom that is you are going as free men and not prisoners, you will be treated as such on your voyage and on your arrival; at home, and moreover he stated that he had addressed a letter to Col. Jebb that the poor prisoners had done considerable time beyond the Scale which the Sect had sent and he hoped that they would not be detained in England owing to the long delayence of the Ship to forward them sooner, well your Lordship after a voyage of 16 days we were boarded on the Stirling Castle Hulk and were several days on board before the news was spread about that we had to complete 8 years for 20 years, and 10 years for Life, this of course much surprised us, we immediately applied to the Govr of Portsmouth Prison, who gave me the permission to address you on this Petition.

I will not forget to mention at the same time the Chaplain, Dr Alder, of Gibraltar Prison requested our presence in Chapel who mentioned also, that we should not be detained 3 days in England before our Liberty would be restore us and we came away all with good characters of long standing these facts we are not ashamed to make known, as the affair was made so Public in the Prison as a general rule and I hope your Lordship will only consider my Case is the Sincere and Earnest Prayer of Your, Humble Servant, William Tansley. ¹¹

William was no doubt bitterly disappointed by the failure of his third Petition, after believing he could be released or stay in England.

From the Prison Registers, it appears the prisoners from Gibraltar serving 10 years were discharged on licence. For those with longer sentences, some convicts were sent to Dartmoor, and the majority were sent to Western Australia.

William boarded the *Nile* on 8 September 1857 for Western Australia, arriving at Fremantle, Western Australia, on 1 January 1858. He disembarked on 5 January and was taken to the Fremantle Prison, and was assigned the number 4687.

4687. William Tansley, 44, 5'5½", grey hair, hazel eyes, oval face, sallow complexion, middling stout, no marks, stone-cutter, married with five children.¹²

A previous description in England said he had brown hair and a vaccination mark on his arm. His new occupation was a skill he learned while on public works.

On 3 February 1858, William was sent to Mt Eliza depot. He returned on 18 March 1858 and was discharged to Ticket of Leave; William was 45 years old.

On 19 March 1858, he was hired by J. Buckingham, Perth, as a general servant. His wages were 30/- per month. He was discharged and engaged by John Bridge on 14 May 1858.

On 4 March 1859, he was drunk and exposed his person, and was fined £1.

Then, William was convicted of illegally entering the store room of W. P. Tregoning with intent to steal on 6 May 1859 and sentenced to 12 months. He was received at Fremantle Prison from Guildford on 10 May 1859. Tregoning was the proprietor of the new hotel at Guildford, the "Stirling Arms".

While in Prison, William appears on the casual sick list:

6 December 1859 to 11 December 1859, with a sprain.

21, 22, 29 December 1859, he had diarrhoea.

7 April 1860, he was admitted to hospital with contusis (bruise) and discharged on 16 April into Prison. He was then sent to a Road Party on 20 April, and on 29 April, he was transferred to Mt Eliza.

William was received back at the Prison from Mt Eliza on 11 July 1860, and discharged the following day to Ticket of Leave.

He was working for John Bridge from 27 July 1860, and his wages had now risen to £2 per month.

¹¹ TNA, HO18/295

¹² SROW, Acc 128/32

William Harrison then engaged William on 1 October 1860.¹³

On 20 November 1860, in Perth, he was convicted of a Breach of Regulations and fined 5/-.

19 February 1861, saw t.l. holder Wm Tansley received into the Prison hospital from Perth. He had an ulcer and was discharged on 8 April 1861. The record doesn't say if it was a stomach or skin ulcer.

At Perth Police Court, on 4 April 1862, W. Tansley, t.l., drunk at the Police Station; fined 10s.¹⁴

On 30 June 1862, he worked for M. Wallis of Canning.

His next employer was G. Fawcett of Canning on 30 June 1862; wages 24/- per week.

15 October 1862, admitted to hospital with an ulcer and discharged 24 November 1862.

Perth Police Court, November 1862, W. Tansley, and J. Wilke, t.l.s., were charged with having been out after hours, and fined 5s each.¹⁵

William then moved to the Pinjarra area, where T.W. Oakley engaged him on 31 December 1863, at 30/- per month, and again on 30 June 1864, for 35/- per month. He was still at Pinjarra when granted a Conditional Pardon on 18 July 1864.

William died on 15 August 1869; his death was registered in Perth, but no grave has been located in the East Perth Cemetery.

Back in Coggeshall.

After initially being in the workhouse, Lucy was able to leave and support herself and her children.

The 1851 census, Bridge Street, Baxters Lane, Great Coggeshall:

Lucy Tansley, married, 34, silk thrower; Hannah 13, silk thrower; Susan 11, silk thrower; Harriet 9, silk thrower; William 6, scholar; Walter 3.¹⁶

William's father, James Tansley, 64, a gardener, was in the Witham Union House. He died there in 1856.

On the 1861 census, The Gravel, Great Coggeshall:

Lucy Tansley 45, married, takes children to nurse; William 16, labourer at Blacksmiths; Walter, 13, boy at an Iron Foundry.¹⁷

By the 1871 census, Lucy knew that William had died, as she called herself a widow. She was living at Baxters Yard, Great Coggeshall:

Lucy Tansley, widow, 55, charwoman; Walter 22, son, Iron Moulder; Alice Susan Tansley, granddaughter, 5, scholar, born Islington.¹⁸

Lucy Tansley, aged 61, was buried on 14 November 1876 at St Peter Ad Vincula, Coggeshall.

The Coggeshall Gang members who came to Australia.

William Wade was convicted on 18 July 1848 at Chelmsford for burglary and sentenced to 15 years.

His sentence was reduced to 7 years' transportation after giving evidence against his fellow robbers.

William was sent to Tasmania on the *Rodney* in 1850.

¹³ SROWA, Perth TOL Register Cons 1386/3, p70, p582

¹⁴ The Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News, 25 April 1862, p3

¹⁵ The Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News, 23 November 1860, p3

¹⁶ TNA, HO107/1783

¹⁷ TNA, RG9/1109

¹⁸ TNA, RG10/1696

William French, 645, arrived on the *Pyrenees* in 1851.

William Ellis, 1442, arrived on the *William Jardine* in 1852.

William Springett, 616, arrived on the *Pyrenees* in 1851.

James Everett, 615, arrived on the *Pyrenees* in 1851.

Samuel Crow, the ringleader, escaped from the police who went to apprehend him. He was a determined and cruel robber, according to the Prison Register. Samuel died on 7 March 1850 in Preston Gaol.