

# Time in Newgate

Peter and William Harvey spent much of their time in Newgate together and Peter's health improved greatly as the days passed. Peter had visited the Orkney men and had been brought up to date with all the events which had taken place in the islands to contribute to their demise. As William Punton had advised him, Peter did not express too many opinions or talk about his time on board the *George* among the men. There were several conflicting stories. Pottinger tried to assure the men that he had not run the ship aground intentionally. However, it all depended on who he was talking to at the time. Some of the Orkney men would secretly have loved the adventurous life of a pirate and they blamed others for taking that chance away. One of the men, Edward Gunn was a comic piper who spent the day inventing tunes on a whistle. His "Lament for Imprisoned Bagpipes" always brought groans from his friends. They would hurl things, anything, to quieten him. Edward's set of bagpipes was, for the time being anyway, in the safe keeping of Mr James Fea, on the island of Eday. The piper had been rounded up during the raid on Honeyman's mansion house of Clestrain. Gunn had been keen to join the pirates in raiding Honeyman's supply of fine wines and spirits, but all of this had fuddled the man and when it was put to him that he should pipe them down the muddy track from the mansion house to their waiting boat on the shore, Gunn had been only too willing to oblige. He even stepped into the boat and continued to play as they bobbed across the waves and boarded the *George*. In the cold, cold light of dawn, Gunn found himself bound on the ship's deck. But, never one to get down about anything, he resolved to make the best of it all. And here he was now, in prison, awaiting trial for piracy! Fea had recognised that this man was a victim rather than an instigator and had agreed to look after the unfortunate soul's bagpipes until his return. Even Fea was sure the man would soon be back in Orkney, but probably not in the employment of his former master, Mr Honeyman.

Peter now ate everything offered and Liz made sure he had as much fresh food as possible. Peter was worried that he would never be able to repay her, sure that he was to be hung or beaten up by Williams or some other with a grudge. But Liz assured the boy it was all taken care of. "There's them out there that care for you young man. Don't you worry about a thing."

And, although Liz Punton continued to bring in food for the boys, they saw less and less of her husband, William. This upset Peter. However, William Punton understood the situation. Harvey and the Orkney men were aware that Punton had offered Fea too much information when captured. The majority of the men were pleased to be off the pirate ship, but would have preferred not to have been taken prisoner.

William Clouston, Gow's nephew, who had been seriously ill for weeks, had now rallied round and had joined the Orkney "camp" rather than spend any time with his uncle. He believed, after all, that he would soon be home again and felt it would be easier to sever connections with Gow now. None of the men ever looked for their captain.

One afternoon in the middle of May, while Peter was sitting chatting to the Orkney men, they had a visit from a real London gentleman, a friend of Mr Thomas Traill of Westray. The man had been sent word from Traill to ensure that the Orkney men had fair rations and, upon their release, were to be assisted with their transport to Orkney. This gave them hope. The Londoner was able to inform the men that twenty nine of the thirty two prisoners taken to London were to be given a hearing at the Sessions of Oyer and Terminator at the Justice hall in the Old Bailey on May 26<sup>th</sup>. The men looked at each other. Finally it was all to be laid forth and the end, whatever it held for each of them, would be decided.

"You are all guilty to different degrees, and some will be used to give evidence against others at the trial. Think well before you open your mouths, and I am certain we shall be sending you all back to those distant islands to be of service to your communities." The man left.

But as the men's hopes and trepidations grew, Peter sank again into despair.

On May 23<sup>rd</sup> Peter told Harvey he was going to find John Gow. He had to see the man. Harvey tried his best to put Peter off. He had Phinnes and Dobson try to reason with the boy.

"We will be asked to give evidence against those who caused the deaths and robberies." Dobson warned him. "It will be hard on you, Peter, if you go speaking to that man." But eventually they all gave up. Peter was well again and that stubborn streak was back. William led the boy down to the end of a dank, dark corridor, between two tall rows of cells. No wonder Peter had not found Gow during the forays he had made downstairs on his own. There they found their captain. He sat, hunched, on a wooden crate, his knees drawn up under his chin and his heels resting on a loose plank of wood to keep his feet out of the puddle surrounding his resting place. Above him was a gaping window; an open, heavily barred rectangle in an outside wall of the prison. As Gow

turned to see who approached Peter gasped at the man's appearance. His pale face was sunken and his skin looked translucent. His eyes appeared as two dull, dark caverns. But he his eyes widened as Peter approached. "Peter Hansen, where have you been? I have missed you."

He's been ill." William Harvey snapped.

"OK Harvey," Peter whispered. "I'm fine. I'll see you later."

William Harvey shrugged and left.

"Why do you sit here under this window? It's so cold and wet." Peter asked.

"Listen." Gow was silent. "It's just a few degrees quieter here." He looked up. "There is still a stink, but it's a cold stink." Peter was beginning to understand. "And generally, no one wants to be damp and cold, which is an incentive to be here itself; to be on my own. And I like to see the sky. It's the same sky which can be seen for miles out to sea, far, far from here. And the stars, when I can see them at all, are those same stars which guided the ship as we sailed from Amsterdam to Santa Cruz. Do you remember that Peter?"

Peter got up onto on the wooden case next to Gow.

"We will get out of here some time will we not?" Peter gazed at the sunken eyes as the man stood up to face him.

"You will go free, Peter. Some day you will have charge of your own ship. But do not follow my example. It is a fine feeling to be master of your ship, but not by foul means."

"You will be set free with me. You put the master out of his suffering. No one else could have piloted the ship when the gang had done their murdering. You have not harmed anyone, and you rescued those two girls in Orkney. That will all come out at the trial, will it not?"

"Yes Peter, all will come out at the trial in some fashion. But, I want to hear how you fared after you left the ship. I am now pleased the men took you to safety and I forever hoped that you *were* safe, but you were a miss on the ship."

Peter told Gow of his adventures; crossing the Pentland Firth, John Milne's family who looked after the men from the longboat, the fight at the ferry crossing. He squirmed with guilt as he spoke of the longboat, realising that Gow would probably not be here if he had had the boat to assist him off the rocks on the Calf. Gow did not seem to care. William Harvey came to listen for a while. He had come to fetch Peter. They had a visitor.

"Bring whoever it is here," Peter suggested, but Harvey stared sternly at the boy.

Gow instructed him. "You go Peter. I will be here tomorrow, and one or two tomorrows yet. I will look forward to another chat."

Reluctantly Peter followed William Harvey back upstairs to Punton's corner. Peter let out a shriek as he recognised his lost pal, William Oliver.

"Oly!" he cried as he battered his way through layers of prisoners. "You are well, and you have come to see us. Where have you been? I thought at first they had taken you and hung you. I knew nothing then. I can see now it all takes months to get to the hanging part."

"Don't talk like that Boy." Punton rolled over on his straw to have a snooze.

William Oliver, having taken no part in the murders or piracy, had been released after his hearing. He had made his way from the city to his home up north where he found that his father was off on a trip to sea and, although his mother was concerned and fed him up well, he could not settle for long. "So, I decided to come back and see my old friend, Peter Hansen. There is an unfinished story you remember? There are all the missing bits to your granddad's travels with Captain William Kidd. I had to come back.

The two boys settled on the straw sack.

"What are you going to do now you are free Oly?"

"I'm not thinking so far ahead yet." Oly lied. There were plans alright, but it was too soon to raise Peter's spirits.

Oly quickly changed the subject. "I think it's time we finished that story Peter."

"Your granddad had been correct Peter," Oly began, "Captain William Kidd was, indeed, a pirate hunter. He had been given a ship and legal orders to sail the oceans and rid the seas of pirates and return with treasure and prisoners. Kidd was an honest man to the end. But those who had employed him and who hoped to make a small fortune were far from honest."

"What was the *end* for Kidd?" Peter implored.

"I shall explain." And Oly settled next to Peter on the straw.

My father, Davey, showed your granddad, Claes the Danish Lieutenant, to Kidd's cabin and left them to talk. In the dusk Claes was rowed ashore with a letter from Captain Kidd who appeared very worried. However, Claes returned next day and he spoke with the captain for long hours. By evening they had moved onto the deck and enjoyed a fair amount of rum together. Davey overheard the two of them discuss a new Scottish colony in the south Americas and wondered when he would ever see Newcastle again.

It was now April and the port of Saint Thomas was bustling. Kidd was uneasy here among so many dangerous ships and crews. He made ready to sail. Some of the crew, who believed they would be better off leaving the ship, were allowed to do so. Kidd sent them ashore once they agreed to look after his sick brother-in law who was rowed ashore with them. To the surprise of the whole crew, Claes turned up just as the ship was leaving. Gone was his uniform of office. He shook hands with the captain and came to join Kidd's crew as a sailor, and a fine one he made too.

Captain Kidd had made his decision. Despite the dangers to him and his crew he felt sure he would be able to clear his name. He was a man of standing in his home town, New York, so that is where he would sail.

The passage was fraught. The *Quedagh* found itself becalmed in the Caribbean, and then almost driven ashore. Its days were numbered. The old *Quedagh* was leaking and, as your grandfather told you, Kidd managed to buy the *Saint Antonio* from Captain Bolton to continue home. The *Quedagh*, along with much of the cargo, were left in Bolton's care. Kidd would return when his affairs were sorted.

Claes had become a good friend to Davey. They shared the same watch and spent much of their time working together. Claes explained to the crew just how serious Kidd's position was. He was, in fact, England's most wanted PIRATE.

'This is all wrong,' Claes had repeated. 'Our captain has all the correct papers. He is an honest man and he is going to prove it. It is our duty to stand by him whatever happens. Honesty is the best policy.' Claes ended with these words every time he spoke of Kidd's predicament.

At the end of May the ship had made good progress, but nearing Delaware Bay the ship's boom-iron snapped. Although they were close to home, Kidd decided to have the ship repaired and dropped anchor in the bay at Lewes.

This was only the start of the problems. Inquisitive locals rowed out to the *Saint Antonio*. On board was a rabble of old pirates. Three of them recognised Kidd and were taken on board by the captain. That night was spent reliving old times but, also, Kidd heard some astonishing news, the worst imaginable. Just days earlier, some of Kidd's mutineer crew had arrived in the area. These men had heard that the king of England had proclaimed a pardon for anyone swearing never to become a pirate again so they had come ashore looking for someone to grant them this pardon. Kidd could just imagine the lies these drunken pirates would spread in New York. He realised it would now be too dangerous to sail there.

The three worthies left the *Saint Antonio* with £300 in goods. Kidd instructed them to keep their mouths shut but it was not long before a man-of-war was on its way to the Delaware Bay where the *Saint Antonio* lay at anchor.

The boom-iron fixed in a matter of hours, the *Saint Antonio* was able to escape. Kidd sailed, avoiding the normal busy shipping lanes, east around the tip of Long Island and then doubled back, west, then along to Oyster Bay which lies around 25 miles from New York. Here Kidd sent off a messenger with a letter to his New York lawyer. The *Saint Antonio* sailed east once again to the rendezvous point at Block Island. Kidd waited anxiously to hear from his lawyer. What would be his best plan?

Claes had become a close friend to the captain and he knew just how much Kidd longed to be reunited with his wife, Sarah, and his young daughter, also Sarah. As Kidd spoke to Claes both men were well aware that the captain could meet his beloved family and sail off to a new life, with new names and identities, to an island somewhere in the Caribbean. It would be a wonderful life. He had a fortune in gold and goods aboard the *Saint Antonio*. Claes said that, although Kidd spoke of this, it was never a really serious thought.

The messenger returned with Kidd's elderly lawyer, James Emott. He looked grave. Kidd would not have a glorious welcome in New York. His business contact, Lord Bellomont, was no longer in that city but was now Governor of Boston. Actually, with all the rumours of Kidd turning pirate, it would have suited this rather two faced gentleman if Kidd had never been heard of again, but he had to receive Kidd's lawyer in a civil manner and not reveal his true feelings. He told Emott and his colleagues that there was the possibility of a safe return, provided all Kidd's documents were in order.

On hearing this news Kidd insisted that he should receive this message in writing. So messengers were sent off again.

During the next few days, negotiations continued. People came and went. The *Saint Antonio* sailed to Gardiner's Island, a private island belonging to a fellow Scotsman. There, bales and valuables were unloaded for safe keeping. Two of the little slave children were sent up to Gardiner's house. Davey and some of the New York crew marked their goods and had them sent ashore.

Eventually Bellomont's written reply arrived. It suggested that it was safe for Kidd to dock in Boston provided he had all his documents in order and, the greedy man added, "and be equipped and fitted out, to and fetch the other ship." He wanted to be sure of retrieving the *Quedagh* and its fortune.

This was good enough for Kidd. He sailed closer to Block Island, where his wife and daughter now waited to board the *Saint Antonio*. On June 25<sup>th</sup>, Captain Kidd was reunited with his wife and daughter after three years separation. His daughter was now six years old and must have had just distant memories of her father. They were deliriously happy, even the most hardened of crew were touched.

On July 1<sup>st</sup> Kidd sailed into Boston. There was no celebration of his return as there should have been. Bellomont had requested that Kidd and his family stay with a friend and the crew remain on board. This did not go down well, but the crew were ever loyal.

Davey was shaken awake the next morning by Claes. Without any explanation Claes told the sleepy crew to be silent and rushed them to the starboard side. It was a dark dawn as they lowered a boat over the side. They could hear something quietly approaching on the port side. The peace was broken by shouts and clamour as 41 armed men rushed the deck. Several of Kidd's crew made it into the boat but young Barleycorn was grabbed and shouted at Davey to get away. Lord Bellomont, Governor of Boston, had backtracked and had Kidd arrested. These officers had been sent to round up all the crew and have them imprisoned. Claes, Davey and five others scrambled ashore away from the town but were given away by frightened farmers and were caught that afternoon. In the notorious Stone Prison all of the crew were reunited apart from Kidd who was kept in solitary confinement.

The following winter was long and bitter in their cells. But the extreme cold was not the only danger. They young boys were endlessly harassed by one wicked jailor who wished to extract from them the whereabouts of Kidd's treasure. He had no success. Claes rubbed the boys' hands and had them jump around to stay warm. This made their chains rattle. They tried to keep time and sang but it was most miserable. Claes also kept the boys informed as well as he could, but there was very little news. Claes was sure that the captain's wife and his lawyer would be doing everything possible to bring this misery to an end, but days turned into raw months. "Kidd was a Scot in the English empire, a man accused of piracy. Not good." Was how Claes described the predicament?

Davey heard, in February, that a ship, the *Advice*, had arrived to take them all to London to stand trial. They then discovered, and all laughed heartily, that it had become stuck in thick ice and was damaged. But the day did come when they were taken through the breaking ice in longboats to board the *Advice* bound for the Thames. The freezing air was their first fresh breath for months. Once on board the 32 prisoners were crammed into a makeshift prison below deck and chained. They did not sail immediately. Treasure was loaded from the *Saint Antonio* alongside, everything weighed and documented; even Kidd's slave boy, Dundee, was boarded. Bellomont, however, held up the departure, feverishly writing more letters for London before loading more files and reports.

Weak and filthy, your grandfather and my father, Davey, arrived in England during the middle of March. They were taken, along with the rest of the prisoners to Newgate Prison.

You see, Peter, they were there together twenty four years ago, your grandfather and my father. They shared the same stench and the same fears we share. We must never give up for, as you know, they were released, as you will also, I'm sure.

As your grandfather told you, greed and politics undid Kidd's reputation. Nothing could save him once they had him in London.

After weeks of questioning, Davey and Claes were moved, along with Barleycorn and most of the loyal crew, to Marshalsea Prison. The smell was familiar. However, there were less horrors; no "pressing yard" and terrible hell hole where those awaiting hanging were left to howl as there was at Newgate. One gaoler, surprisingly, bought the little slave boy and girl some new clothes. Claes, however, knew that these two had done no wrong and would be sold. Better that they were well dressed.

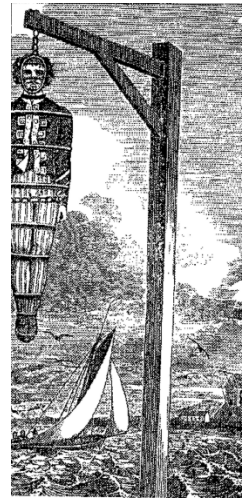
Barleycorn was called to appear at the Old Bailey during Kidd's trial. He was sick with fear. Claes explained that he must keep calm and think through all the questions before answering. But poor Barleycorn did much damage to his captain's case by becoming flustered.

Kidd, when instructed to plead had refused. He wished, quite rightly, for a proper trial where he could read from his papers. He begged to be given his papers, and he begged for two weeks to prepare his case. This was refused and again he was asked to plead. Upon his refusal judgement was given against him. To his horror Kidd was judged to be guilty of murder! This was a complete shock to Kidd who was removed from the courtroom by force and returned to Newgate.

Next day Captain William Kidd and eight of his crew were sentenced, as Barleycorn sobbed, 'to be hanged by the necks until they be dead.'

Claes and the cabin boys he had watched over for the long months in prison were at last freed. That day London's streets were packed - a pickpocket's paradise. Carnival fever had gripped the population who, in

droves, flocked to watch Kidd's last journey from Newgate down to Execution Dock, Wapping. Kidd observed the revelry through drunken eyes. People fought their way through the pack to shout, 'Where's the treasure?' But the cart rolled on and Kidd's time was up. Well dressed, in waistcoat and breeches, Kidd warned the assembled hoards to 'beware false promises and greedy men.' He singled out Bellomont and his mutinous crew. The hangmen yanked the blocks from under Kidd and three other unfortunates. They dropped about six inches, but Kidd continued with a thud to the ground. Onlookers gasped while Kidd was grabbed by sheriff's deputies. Kidd was given ten minutes extra life while the platform was fixed, and the ladder set in place. No mercy was shown. The hanging was complete as the sun set over London. Kidd's body remained hanging for the tide to wash over it three times before the execution was considered final. Then, tarred and caged, it was taken down river to be displayed as a warning to would-be pirates. The date was May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1701.



Davey, Claes and the boys slept by the river until they were told to "be off". Your grandfather, Claes, saw Davey safely home to Newcastle. He left on a ship bound for the Baltic in June the same year and, as you know, eventually returned to his family."

Peter looked worn out. He sat in silence and then asked Oly what he thought would become of them. And whatever would happen to John Gow? It was all too terrible to think about. There seemed to be no real justice, anywhere. It seemed to go round and round, year after year; the same mistakes. Peter believed that Gow, and the men who had dispatched captain Ferneau on the *George*, had had no real choice. But then they had committed murder, and in his heart he knew what their end would have to be. He would have to accept it all.

"We have done no wrong ourselves Peter. You must never despair. I am free and you shall be soon too, I am sure." Oly again comforted the troubled boy.

At sunrise Gow discovered Peter curled up on the packing case next to him. The boy had a chunk of oatmeal porridge for his captain who accepted the offering.

"Of course, I would normally have this warm from the pot, sprinkled in spices and with fresh cream," the captain said. The two laughed.

Did I tell you, Peter, that your fleabag, Hubbins, is with your young friend, Peter Craigie in Stromness?"

"I thought he'd be dead or running wild on that island off Eday looking for rabbits!"

"No, no. When Craigie heard you were gone he asked for the cat so I fetched him myself and handed him down to the boy in the boat. Look." Gow rolled up his sleeve to reveal a long, thin scar.

"That was the gratitude your cat showed. He had a last swipe at me as he left. It took weeks to heal. Pest." But Gow was smiling and pleased to see the young boy was cheerful.

Peter Craigie told me he would look after the cat until you came for it.

"I'll never manage that." Peter's mood changed.

"Aye will you. You'll see the islands again if that's what you want. You will be out of here soon."

But Peter gave way to sobs. "Will they let you go too? No, I bet they will not listen to a thing I tell them. There are greedy men, dishonest men, silly laws....."

"It is over for me Peter, but all along I knew what would happen if we were caught. I am used to the idea that I will be hanged. Please do not try to help me. Think only of yourself and get away from this city when you are free. Always remember what happened to us all and let it all be a lesson. You are a bright lad and will do well. You will guide your own ship some day, I'm sure. Go and find your father; make him proud of you. Return to your mother as a wealthy, honest man. She will be so happy..... Go now."

"I was proud to know you, John Gow." Peter sniffed and ran, wiping tears from his eyes, through the yard of jeering prisoners, back up to the safety of Punton's Corner.

There he lay sobbing all day. Horrors ran through the poor boy's mind. He was sure, he thought, to let Gow down just as Barleycorn had done at Kidd's trial. One wrong word may send his captain to the gallows. Watching over him, Punton, his wife and William Harvey wondered what had come over the lad. It was not until he heard Punton declare he was going to find Gow and have it out with him for upsetting the lad, that Peter stirred and sat up. He begged Punton not to go. "Please let the man be. He is to die soon." Liz Punton nodded and her husband settled down once again.

"We will not speak of our troubles tonight," she declared, "for tonight I have a pack of cards. Tonight, Peter Hansen, you will be taught the art of gamblin'."

“Liz Punton! I never thought I’d ever hear my wife suggest anything quite so bad. And Peter; he’s just a child.” But the man was winking at his wife who prepared lengths of straw.

“There we go. We’ll play for these strands of gold.” She shared them out among the four players.

Although he would rather have lain in the corner all on his own for the whole of the rest of his life, Peter discovered that Liz’s plan was the best there was in the circumstances. It was a good game and, in the end, it was his friend, William Harvey, who strolled off with the most straw. Peter managed a few hours of sleep.

Punton shook Peter awake.

“What is it?” the boy felt as if he had just finally managed to get to sleep.

“Oh boy. Who’s been pulling strings for you?” Punton pulled the straw from the boy’s hair. Over him stood Oly and his former master, Captain Thomas Wise, that gentle captain off the ship, *Delight*.

“You’re free lad.” Captain Wise told him. “We have come to fetch you out of here.”

“It cannot be. How am I suddenly free?”

“We have here the documents stating you are free; a Discharge by Proclamation. Your Captain Gow caused such a stir downstairs yesterday morning that he was finally permitted to speak to the governor. You are an important young man, Peter. There were the highest of those legal men running around yesterday over this business. I was summoned to collect these papers on your behalf and am now permitted to take you away with Oly and myself from this prison.”

“I do not understand how this came about.” Peter pressed for an explanation.

Captain Wise explained, “John Gow insisted that he should be heard. When this was eventually permitted he begged that you be released and that you should not have to turn King’s Evidence. He knew that you, along with Dobson, Phinnes, Reid, Murphy and Booth, were to be used at the trial to give evidence against the others. He was adamant that you had no part in any of the crimes. The fact that you had escaped from the ship helped your case. But Gow’s pleas were the key to you being released now. When the papers were brought over regarding your examinations, it was clear that you had no part in any of the crimes. You are very fortunate not to have to appear at the trial tomorrow.”

“Where is John Gow now? I must go to him.” Captain Wise caught him by the arm.

“No, lad. It would be upsetting for you and for your captain. He wants to know you are free. That will be the best news he can get. You must come with us.”