



## **News from the History Group Research Team .....**

It has been like the Unsolved Crimes Department here in my office.

I have been trying to track down the outcome of two separate events for some time now, which happened approximately 100 years apart, both were reported in the Royal Cornwall Gazette.

The good thing about newspaper reports of yesteryear is that they give you a very good description of how people looked, and what crimes they committed. The first article was that of George Kendall in September 1812 who was born in St. Tudy in 1779, and had been arrested for Larceny. The article read "Escape of Two Prisoners from Bodmin Gaol". George was described as "a Blacksmith, 5' 10" high, aged 33 years, swarthy complexion, brown hair, grey eyes, a large scar on the left cheek, stout made and one foot larger than the other". His partner in crime was John Bayley, a travelling Tinker.

It was reported that after being convicted of Larceny, George and John escaped from Bodmin Gaol and rode off with two cart mules, the property of Mr. John Bastard of Michaelstow, "one a stout brown mare, has lost the near eye and has a long tail not jointed, the other, a stout mare, well made, a cut tail and one of her hind feet is white". (we have to remember that horses and mules were a very important part of life 200 years ago and usually the only form of transport). Anyone making it known of the whereabouts of both of these men was offered a Ten Guinea reward. This was a lot of money in those days equivalent to around £6,000 today, and escapes were very rare.

From what I can tell, George, John Bailey and the two mules were never captured. They are officially listed on the Bodmin Gaol website as having escaped and never found, and local legend has it that they got lost on Bodmin Moor and died but were never found. I like to think that they survived, travelled abroad and made new lives for themselves. So, case unsolved I am afraid – but an interesting glimpse into St. Tudy life from the 1800's.

If anyone knows the whereabouts of George or John, or see their ghosts wandering the moors, please let me know so I can tell the relatives of James Chapple. James was said to be a fine man, and was the project supervisor for the building of the Gaol and its Governor.

Hopefully I will be able to report on the second case soon involving a young Gypsy woman who said she was born in St. Tudy, but wasn't, and also seems to have disappeared after being convicted of theft, and sentenced to one month's hard labour at Truro Court in 1915. I am trying to unravel the varying stories she told of who she was, and what happened to her. From her performance in Court I think she may have well gone on the stage!

PAM FREE