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ISSUE : [Issue 72](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1997/6/1

ment reprieved two other murderers. A report from April 1789 noted that some convicts were seen "lurking about Halifax," and we know that Luke Keegan of Mainadieu kept a young boy as a servant." Although we assume the authorities brought the remaining twenty convicts from Mainadieu to Sydney, there is no record of this event. In all likelihood, the local population absorbed some convicts as servants and settlers. The Home Secretary Lord Grenville admits as much in October 1789 when he refers to the "convicts employed in Cape Breton as no longer a Burthen on the public."* The British Treasury eventually paid ??567 for the support and maintenance of the convicts, about ??60 less than Captain Debonham received to transport them in the first place. Despite Grenville's petition, the Irish authorities failed to punish the captain for his callous abandoning of the convicts on a desolate headland. Inasmuch as Captain Debonham planned to avoid discovery or notoriety, his action that December afternoon led to a major shift in British foreign policy, the naming of Cape Breton's "Convict Point," and the tale's passage into our oral tradition.

Endnotes

- 1 Letter from a British Regular Soldier, 5 August 1789 in Report of the Department of Public Archives for the Year 1944, p. xxxvii. National Archives of Canada (NAC) 1945, Dominion of Canada, Ottawa.
- 2 Shaw, A.G.L. Convicts and the Colonies: A Study of Penal Transportation from Great Britain and Ireland to Australia and other parts of the British Empire. Faber and Faber. London 1966 pp. 25
- 3 Ekirch, A. Roger. Bound for America: The Transportation of British Convicts to the Colonies 1718-1775. Clarendon Press. Oxford 1987 pp. 27
- 4 Ibid pp. 2.
- 5 Ibid pp. 25.
- 6 Ibid pp. 3.
- 1 Ibid pp. 221.
- 8 Ibid pp. 65.
- 9 Ibid pp. 230.
- 10 Martin, Jed. Convict Transportation to Newfoundland in 1789. Acadia (Autumn) 1985 pp. 65.
- 11 Ibid pp. 85.
- 12 Frost, Alan. Convicts and Empire: A Naval Question, 1776-1811. Oxford University Press. Melbourne 1980 pp. xv
- 13 Freeman's Journal 13-16 September 1788
- 14 Ibid 1-9 October 1788
- 15 Ibid 21-23 October 1788
- 16 Ekirch Bound for America pp.100
- 17 Freeman's Journal 13-16 September 1788
- 18 Ibid 16-18 October 1788
- 19 Report of the Board of Trustees for the Year 1950, Public Archives of Nova Scotia (PANS) King's Printer, Halifax. 1951 pp. 18
- 20 Ibid pp.9
- 21 Freeman's Journal 3 January, 15-18 March, 6-9 September, 14-16 October, 9-12 August 1788
- 22 PANS pp. 17
- 23 Ibid pp. 20
- 24 Ibid pp.22
- 25 Macarmick to Secretary of State Sydney, May 20 1788, in Report of the Canadian Archives, Public Archives of Canada (PAC) 1895 pp. 23
- 26 PANS pp. 25
- 27 Ibid
- 28 Taitt to Grenville, 9 March 1790, in Colonial Correspondence, originally CO. 217, in a transcription at the Beaton Institute, UCCB as Cape Breton A, Vol 73, pp. 1
- 29 Mathews to Macarmick, 30 March 1789, Cape Breton A, Vol. 73 pp. 41
- 30 PANS pp. 28
- 31 Grenville to Macarmick, 20 October 1789, Cape Breton A. PAC pp. 24,33
- 32 PANS pp. 37
- 33 PANS pp. 38
- 34 Freeman's Journal 2-4 July 1789
- 35 Murdock, Beamish. History of Nova Scotia or Acadie. James Barnes. Halifax 1866 pp. 74; PANS pp. 19
- 36 Grenville to Macarmick, 20 October 1789, Cape Breton A

Charles A. Burke has here added new information to an article he



delivered as "Irish Convict Transportation to Cape Breton, 1788" at the Irish Cultural Symposium in Louisbourg, August 1995; and, with additions, as a talk to the Old Sydney Society, March 1997, called "Rascals Enough Upon the Island." The drawing of convicts on their way to Australia, and the list of crimes punishable by transportation, were found on the Internet. Mr. Burke is an archeologist at Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Site. He reminds us that the Irish convict trade used the same captains and ships as the slave trade to Ghana. He first heard the story of Irish convicts from his father's uncles in Baleine, and hopes this article will help stir up family memories of related traditions among our readers.

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