

## **Pioneers from Pembury**

During the 1820s, 1830s and even into the 1840s Ann, the wife of Sampson Wanmer, gave birth to at least 8 and possibly 2 or 3 more children. He was an agricultural worker and they lived at Lower Green, probably in one of the cottages still at the bottom of Henwood Green Road or a similar one in a row that used to be behind them. Opportunities in Pembury must have been very limited for children from such a family at that time, but two of the boys had more than the usual amount of initiative and went to the new emerging colony of Australia.

Because the family were non-conformists the children were not baptised in the Parish Church and so it is not until the 1841 census that we catch up with them. By then James (born 1823), probably the second child, had left Pembury to join the army in India. He served there for 14 years before moving on to Australia where he arrived in 1854. Solomon, the baby, was only 3 months old at the census but he too left home at 17 and joined his brother in Australia in 1859.

By the 1851 census Ann was widowed and only the three youngest boys were still at home. Samuel, the eldest, (born 1821) was himself married and lived with his wife and three sons at Hawkwell where he too was an agricultural worker. The Hawkwell connection is important. James settled in Gladstone in what would later become the state of Queensland and bought some land. He called his estate 'Hawkwell'.

About Solomon we have more information. The journey to Australia took him 6 months and was an adventure on its own. He went to Tonbridge by cart and then to London by train, across London to Paddington and the evening train for Plymouth. He embarked on the 'Nimrod' a few days later and arrived in Sydney in April. He then travelled to Brisbane by schooner and a week later left for Gladstone. Brother James furnished him with a horse and he joined 5 others to go prospecting for gold in the hills. This expedition proved unsuccessful and very frightening so he soon returned to Gladstone and then on to Brisbane where he got a job with a shopkeeper at £40 per annum and comfortable accommodation with the shopkeeper.

After 4 months, however, he got itchy feet again and got a job on a sheep station at 6 shillings a day for a six day week. He stuck this very hard life for 3 months and then returned to Gladstone where he settled down and became a very well respected builder. When he died in 1920, just a week after his wife of 53 years, he left a son, Solomon junior, who was a journalist on the Brisbane Telegraph and 2 daughters, one of whom was married to the then mayor of Gladstone. James had died some years earlier.

And how do we know all this? Believe it or not, through the internet. You are aware that Pembury Parish Council have recently acquired a web site through the auspices of the Pembury Business and Secretarial Services. Well this site was found by a gentleman in Australia who is a descendent of Solomon Wanmer and was researching his English ancestors. He was particularly interested to find the Hawkwell connection. Mr Bennedick contacted PBSS and there have been several exchanges of information.

PBSS contacted the Local History Group to find out what we knew about the Wanmer family and that is how I got involved with the story. This is the first known response to the 'Pembury' web site but it is early days yet and who knows who else will contact us from around the world with news of past residents of our village.

The following article was written for the quarterly magazine published by Pembury Parish Council. It seems to show us two things;

- a) the internet can be a very useful tool for picking up information if you happen to look in the right place
- b) there were opportunities for self improvement in the colonies for anyone with the initiative to go there and a willingness to work hard in difficult conditions. I doubt that Solomon would have achieved so much had he remained in England, the youngest of 8 children of an agricultural labourer, and with a poor level of literacy to the end of his life.

WANMORE	Samuel	Anne	Pembury	Lab Bricklayer	Mary	1/1817	bn 9/1827
					Samuel	1/1819	
					Sarah	9/1821	
					Elizabeth	11/1823	
					George	12/1827	
					Edmund	5/1825	
					Jonathan	8/1829	
					Adelaide	8/1831	
WANMORE	Uriah	Sarah	Pembury Tonbridge	Lab Farmer	James Samuel	1/1833	
					Elizabeth	2/1819	
					Abel	2/1821	
					Mary	4/1823	
					Sarah	1/1825	
					Anne	2/1827	
WANMORE	Sampson	Anne	Pembury	Lab	James	5/1820	
					Samuel	1/1822	
					James	12/1823	
					John	3/1826	
					Richard	8/1828	
					Stephen	11/1831	
					Hariett	9/1833	
					Sampson	11/1835	
					Mary Anne	6/1839	
					Solomon	3/1841	

*From notes compiled by Kathryn Franklin*

