

CHAPTER 2 THE JOURNEY OUT

Emigration

The 1840s have been described as the ‘Hungry forties’, the years of potato famine in Ireland, when thousands starved to death. The Corn Laws were repealed by a government led by Sir Robert Peel in 1846, against the wishes of his aristocratic land owning, conservative, supporters, but in favour of the increasing urban masses. By 1848 corn prices were falling, which they did until 1852 and then stabilised for 30 years¹. Thomas had taken up his tenancy at a most unfortunate time. Macdonald² suggests that the free trade policies after the repeal of the ‘Corn Laws’ in 1846 might have encouraged the Pannetts to look to better themselves elsewhere than England. Baptists had been prominent in arguing the case for the repeal of the ‘Corn Laws’ to lower the cost of bread for the common people, the majority of their members, although not in the interests of their farming members³.

The low price of wheat in the late 1840s would have been a threat to Thomas’s growing family (Eliza (35), Henry (11), Thomas (9), Lucy (7), Eliza (4), Sarah (3), and John Avis (1)⁴. Although Baptists they were not excluded from the Canterbury settlement, which might have been seen as opportunity to make a fresh start, as long as they were prepared to pay the price required for the ecclesiastical and educational endowment fund if they bought land. Emigration was certainly in the air in Sussex at the time. Many parishes were subsidising poor families emigrating to stop them being a burden on the parish’s poor rates. Also Eastgate Baptist Chapel membership lists indicate that many families had emigrated including a Mary Fuller going to New York in 1796, other families elsewhere in America, and a family called Elphick moving to Australia in 1839⁵. The Canterbury Association was advertising at the time for farm labourers, especially with young families and unmarried daughters.

The tenancy at Laughton was given up probably at Michaelmas 1850, the traditional changeover date for tenancies. From then to the following May the family were probably resident in Barcombe, closer to Chailey, in an un-named house, but maybe on the copyhold land referred to earlier. They were recorded there in the 1851 Census. They left Britain the following May for New Zealand on the *Lady Nugent* which was then on its second trip for the Canterbury Association.

The cost of the passage in the Steerage Class was £15, but the Association paid two thirds for agricultural labourers and their families, and for single women, but less in other cases. So we may conclude that Thomas and his family probably had to pay only £5-0-0 per head as a maximum adult fare. The surviving papers for the *Lady Nugent* do not show the fares paid or any promissory notes for outstanding amounts unpaid by emigrants at the time of sailing⁶.

When Thomas left Britain Baptists formed about twenty percent of Nonconformist Christian denominations in Britain, and the Nonconformists were about half of practising Christians. At the time of the 1851 Religious Census only about half of the population actually attended church. Nonconformity was weakest in the southeast of England - in London, Middlesex, Surrey and Sussex⁷. However, Lewes was a radically different town to other towns in the Southeast in that it had what Goring describes as a ‘burgeoning of Non-conformity’⁸. There just over half of the population attended a Non-conformist service of worship in 1851 and church attendance was just under three quarters of the population, when in most areas it was only around half⁹. Further Goring reckons that the population had a higher proportion of the middle class sort of people, artisans and traders, who made up the backbone of Non-conformist churches. Such individuals were highly resistant to being directed to follow any pre-ordained path by the establishment. Lewes had also been the site of much bitter religious strife, starting with the martyrdom by burning of 17 Protestants, who refused to recant from their beliefs and agree to become Roman Catholics in the reign of Queen Mary (1555-57)¹⁰. That had been made manifest just before Thomas and his family left England with petitions from Lewes against Catholic emancipation. Goring asserts that this dissension had not been helped by the rise of a number of Calvinistically dominated churches, starting with the Methodists in the Evangelical Revival, and then

supported by the rise of churches such as Eastgate Chapel, which was made up of Particular Baptists. Such churches flourished under good ministers and shrank under poor ones. So Eastgate had flourished and needed a bigger building under Welshman Ebenezer Davis in the mid 1840s but then declined under a less charismatic Englishman who succeeded him by the mid 1850s.

FOR

CANTERBURY And other Ports IN NEW ZEALAND,

The first-class Passenger Ship.

LADY NUGENT

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LYING IN THE EAST INDIA DOCKS.
JOHN PARSONS,
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Chartered by the CANTERBURY ASSOCIATION, and appointed to Sail from the PORT OF LONDON

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8. Migration poster for Canterbury and other Ports in New Zealand, the first class passenger ship, *Lady Nugent* - Thomas and Eliza's journey to New Zealand. (*Canterbury Association, Canterbury Museum, Document ref. 19XX.2.556*)

In the 1844 Eastgate Chapel membership list, Thomas and Eliza are recorded as living at Laughton, where farms tended to be somewhat larger¹¹, and worshipping at Broad Oak, about ten miles away near Heathfield. The Religious Census of Sussex of 1851 reports a Calvinist church meeting for public worship in a private school room at Broad Oak under their minister, Samuel Norman. In light of the character of church established later at Lincoln it seems likely that Thomas and his family worshipped with this group, while he lived at Laughton, although it was further away than Eastgate Chapel in Lewis. It was a congregation of 240 in the morning and 260 in the afternoon¹². Broad Oak was on the edge of the High Weald where there were a lot of small independent properties. The independence individual property ownership provided may have been very attractive to Thomas as a tenant bound by the whims of landlords and their agents.

While a tenant at Laughton Thomas was appointed a parish constable by the Church of England church wardens for Laughton. Although a non-conformist his standing in the community was such that he was asked to take the position, which is evidenced by an invoice for going to Hailsham to be sworn in. There was no salary, only expenses for the position¹³. Eastgate Chapel records have a pencilled note “Emigrated to Zealand”¹⁴.

The Voyage Out

Travelling out of Sussex in the late nineteenth century was major undertaking, especially in winter when unsealed roads turned to mud. Movement was greatly facilitated by the advent of the railways. The London – Brighton line, with a spur to Lewes, was opened in 1846¹⁵, well in time for the Pannett family to travel by train to Gravesend for embarkation for New Zealand. The trip to London took just over 3 hours. They would not have needed to spend a night in London before embarkation. At Gravesend they were to join the *Lady Nugent*.

Emigrants were required to take certain belongings with them. In *Filling the Ships* Colin Amodeo has described what happened and what had to be taken:

- “Upon being approved, emigrants would pay the specified portion of their fare and receive an Embarkation Order, naming the ship and sailing date. Travel to the port would be at the emigrants own expense while refusal to sail in the appointed ship would nullify the contract, all moneys being forfeited.
- Fraudulent or misleading statements on the application form, or forged signatures on the certificates from the physician, parish minister, magistrate or land purchaser would also forfeit any claim to the passage and any moneys paid.

‘Emigrants will not be permitted to embark unless provided with a sufficient supply of clothing and other necessaries for the voyage. Their supply will be inspected by and Officer at the Port of Embarkation. The following articles are the least which will be deemed sufficient for each person:

Two blankets	Six Towels	A Tin or Pewter Plate
Six Sheets	Three Pounds of Soap	A Spoon
A Coverlet	A Knife and Fork	A Drinking Mug

Clothing

For Males:

Six shirts

Six pairs of stockings

Two pairs of shoes

Two complete suits of outside clothing.

For Females:

Six Shifts

Two Flannel Petticoats

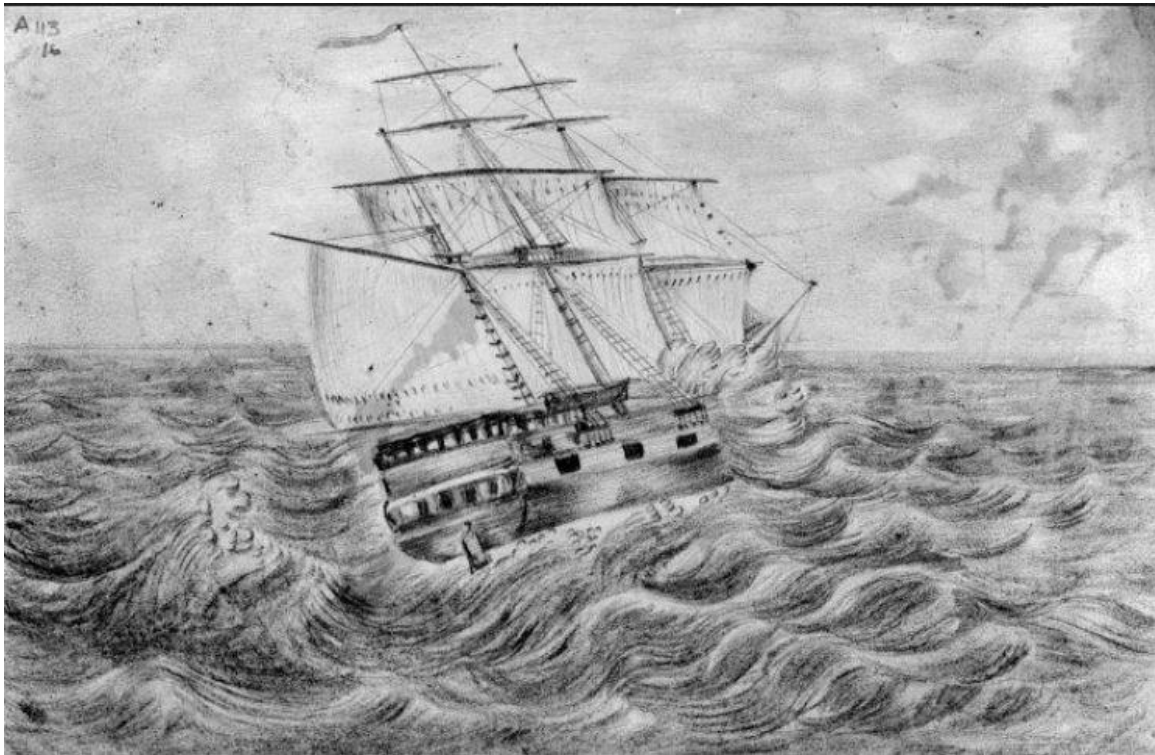
Six Pairs of Stockings

Two pairs of Shoes

Two Gowns

Each person or family will be allowed to take only their own baggage. An Emigrant attempting to take, under his own name, the baggage of another person, not a member of his family, will forfeit his passage, and what money he may have paid.’

- Emigrants were strictly under control of the ship’s Surgeon-Superintendent and would be ‘required to conform to whatever regulations it may be found necessary to make for the health and safety of all on board.’
- No further payment would be required of them upon arrival in Canterbury and they were at liberty to ‘engage themselves to any one willing to employ them, and to make their own bargain for wages.’”¹⁶



9. *The Lady Nugent on the high seas* (1840), painting by George Richard Hilliard
(downloaded from: <http://mp.natlib.govt.nz/images/?imageld=images-9850&profile=access>).

The *Lady Nugent* was a rebuilt sailing ship of 668 tons, nearly 120 feet long and 30 feet in the beam. Between decks the clearance was 6.6 feet. It was captained by John Parsons. Parsons received the following instructions¹⁷ for sailing for New Zealand:

- To sail direct from Gravesend to Canterbury, unless general provisions fail (not just meat)
- To report to J. R. Godley, Chief Resident Agent of the Canterbury Association
- To avoid delays without good reason
- “The Committee regard with much importance the physical comfort and moral wellbeing of the passengers under your charge and confidently rely on your affording to the Surgeon as the representative of the Association on-board, the utmost facility in your power for the efficient discharge of the duties entrusted to him and on your securing for the passengers courteous treatment from your officers and crew.
- Passengers in the Second Cabin to have use of the Poop Deck, as First Cabin.
- Chaplain - Reverend Aylmer
- Schoolmaster - Mr Burt

The Pannetts travelled steerage class on the *Lady Nugent* and Thomas is described as an agricultural labourer in the ship's manifest, and as a farm labourer in the chaplain's list of communicants¹⁸. Little is known about the voyage beyond the Certificate signed by Godley acknowledging the safe arrival of the passengers and goods conveyed from England¹⁹, and the chaplain's report. William Aylmer wrote of the services he conducted which were constrained by the working of the ship and often the weather. Essentially he maintained a regime of morning and evening prayers for the cabin and steerage passengers, and Sunday services on the Quarter deck, with a sermon if weather permitted, after which he catechised the children. He was also required to substitute for the school master, who was incapacitated by illness/fever shortly after leaving Gravesend. That lasted for some six weeks. He visited the 'school' every day when it reopened and provided religious instruction in addition to the catechising, but he adds:

“...I found the children very ignorant in everything, the difficulty of carrying on the school may be judged when it is stated there were 68 children under 14 years of age on board. The crying of infants and the preparation of parents for meals made it an impossibility....

The Doctor being ill for some weeks I was obliged to perform his duties in looking after the stores, and seeing that the Steerage was fumigated and kept clean, the sick were visited by me several times in the day, but of sickness (thank God) we have had little. We have had a happy and prosperous voyage...

Too thankful we cannot be to the Association for its very liberal supply of provisions and medical comforts. We had a very agreeable company. Music and dancing in the evenings when the weather permitted and all cheerful & happy & contented.”²⁰

The Lyttelton Times reported the arrival of the *Lady Nugent*²¹. The Pannetts were allocated to section A.3 of the Immigrants Barracks when they arrived at Lyttelton. 'Pilgrim' has described conditions there:

Our life on landing from our respective ships, and before we went over the hill to the Plains, was decidedly primitive, and I do not know what the emigrants of the present day would say if they had to “rough it” as we did. We lived in the Emigration Barracks provided by the Canterbury Association, and there was great difficulty in finding accommodation for all. Mr. Fitzgerald, our Emigration Agent, had to use all his powers of persuasion to satisfy the Pilgrim mothers and daughters, sisters and wives.²²

It was there, perhaps, that Thomas met Robert Chapman, a Yorkshireman recently arrived from Australia, who was to employ the 14 year old Henry two years later. Henry worked for him at *Springbank* near Rangiora from 1853-1861.

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1. Chambers, J. D. and Mingay, G. E. (1966) *The Agricultural Revolution 1750-1880*. B. T. Batsford Ltd.: London, p. 158.
 2. Macdonald *Dictionary of Biographies*, no. P 56, for Thomas A. Pannett 1811-1889, held by the Canterbury Museum Library.
 3. Torbert, Robert G. (1963) *A History of the Baptists*. Third Edition. Judson Press: Valley Forge. Carey Baptist College *Baptist Churches*. Printed lectures notes and Bibliography. Collected by Kim Peters, about 1998.
 4. Ages at emigration.
 5. *Ibidem*.

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6. Papers for the sailing of the *Lady Nugent* arriving 18 September 1851 held by the Canterbury Museum Library.
 7. Best, Geoffrey (1971) *Mid-Victorian Britain 1851-70*, Fontana/Collins: Glasgow. p..201.
 8. Goring, Jeremy (2003) *Burn Holy Fire - Religion in Lewes since the Reformation*. The Lutterworth Press: Cambridge.
 9. *Op. cit.* , p. 113.
 10. *Op. cit.* , pp. 32-34.
 11. *Ibid.* Short suggests Laughton farms were around 15 hectares in area.
 12. Vickers, J. A. (1989) *The Religious Census of Sussex 1851*. Sussex Record Office: Lewis. p. 43.
 13. Copy of invoice for expenses held by East Sussex County Record Office for April 1846. Source: Bryan Pannett.
 14. Records of Eastgate Baptist Church, Lewes, Sussex, held by the East Sussex Record Office, Lewes, East Sussex. These details were supplied by John Howes, Pastoral Secretary, Eastgate Baptist Church, 21 December 2001.
 15. Poole, Helen (2000) *Lewes Past*. Phillimore and Co. Ltd.: Chichester. p.17.
 16. Adapted from Regulations printed in *Canterbury Papers*, 1850, No.3, pp.64-68.
 17. Papers for the sailing of the *Lady Nugent* arrived at Lyttelton, 18 September 1851, held by the Canterbury Museum Library.
 18. *Ibid.*
 19. *Ibid.*
 20. Report of William Aylmer, Chaplain, *Lady Nugent*, Canterbury Museum. ???
 21. *The Lyttelton Times*, 20 September 1851.
 22. C.L. Innes 'Pilgrim' *Canterbury Sketches* (1879), 11.