



## Pewsey and the Threshers Riots

These men of Pewsey were transported to Van Diemen's Land (now Tasmania) following their conviction at the Special Assizes at Salisbury, in early 1831, for their participation in the Threshers or 'Swing' Riots of 1830.

John Alexander  
John Hiscock

Shadrach Amor  
John Moon  
Joseph Pinchin

Richard Groves  
Stephen Moon  
John Wild

William Hibberd  
John Pinchin

Most had been charged with destroying threshing machines. The left behind in Pewsey four wives and fourteen children. Most were sentenced to a term of 7 years. None came back.

Why did they riot? The Threshers Riots started in Kent and spread rapidly throughout southern England. Farm labourers had suffered several years of falling wages and were already in a poor situation, often close to starvation, when the introduction of new mechanical threshing machines threatened the loss of their main source of work during the winter months.

Facing poverty, starvation, and the workhouse, they rioted. They smashed up the machines, set fire to ricks and barns, and demanded "money with menaces" from farmers. After reaching Wiltshire, the rioting spread through the Vale of Pewsey with many separate incidents.

The Wiltshire Yeomanry Cavalry was mobilised and called out to pursue the rioters. Those arrested were taken into custody at Devizes Prison. After trial at the Special Assizes, those found guilty were taken to a prison hulk - a disused warship used as a temporary prison - moored at Portsmouth dockyard before transportation to Australia.

In addition to the ten Pewsey men were four each from Burbage, Enford, and Netheravon; two each from Collingbourne, Great Bedwyn, and Patney; and one each from All Cannings, Allington, Easton Royal, Horton, Manningford Bruce, Marden, Milton Lilbourne, Oare, and Wilcot. Many men from other Wiltshire villages outside the Vale were also transported.

**Text by Richard Giles with acknowledgement to Jill Chambers 'Wiltshire Machine Breakers' Volumes I & II, 1993**