

The Pioneering Brewers of Brewer Road,
East Brighton now Bentleigh.

John Brewer was born 11th August 1813 in Bampton, Devon, England. He was baptised into the Baptist Church. There is little known of John until he married Ann Hancock in July 1839. Ann was 19 years old at this time, and John was about 26 years old. At the time of John and Ann's marriage we know that Ann already had a son, Henry Hancock, who had been born in 1836.

In 1841, we next learn that John and Ann were living on Richard Sampson's farm at Bampton with Mary Hancock, (it's thought this may be Ann's mother), Henry Hancock, (Ann's son), and Ann and John's little daughter, Thirza, who was born in 1840. Living on the same farm were John's parents, (Thomas and Martha Brewer), and James and Robert Brewer, (John's brothers).

The following details of the Cornwell, Devon and Somerset regions, as well as the details of the emigrant ship, the *Gilmore*, are taken from Francis Chuk's book, "The Somerset Years", Pg 63.

"August 1841 was a cold month in Devon and Somerset; rain was falling daily and although the crops were not affected the harvest was slow. The price of corn was rising steadily, causing hardship amongst the working people.

Emigrants could now travel by coach from many centers, including Taunton, Langton and Castle Cary, to join trains for London at either Bridgewater or Bristol. Emigration agents or parish vestries often supplied a ticket to the port as part of the inducement to emigrate. Improvements in transport had brought their own problems: the Bridgewater mail train had recently run off its tracks twice in one day, making the arrival of mail an hour and a half late.

The Taunton 'Courier' announced the beginning of settlement in New Zealand in persuasive terms aimed at the youthful unemployed:

"the young mind should be 'up and doing' - not resigned to a prescriptive industry, but boldly stepping out of the beaten track, elicit for itself the new and brighter paths to which the genius of age so invitingly points"

It seems most likely, given the economic times, that it would have been a struggle for the small family farm to provide a reasonable living for the expanding Brewer family. So that fact, along with the tantalising prospect of 'new and brighter paths' by the Port Phillip colonists offering Assisted Passage to Australia, assured John Brewer, that here was an opportunity to improve his lot. Whether Ann would have been so keen to leave her mother and the extended family, knowing she was never likely to return, is not so sure.

The Brewers applied to Mr John Marshall, a competent and respected Landing Agent, whose contracted vessel, the *Gilmore*, was well-provisioned to convey the emigrants to their new home in Australia. The *Gilmore* was built of teak in 1824, the ship was lengthened in 1829, and her hull sheathed in metal in 1841. The *Gilmore* sailed from Plymouth, England on August 26th 1841.

"A total of two hundred and twenty-seven souls embarked, comprising 31 families and a large number of single Irish men and women. Records show that amongst the passengers on the *Gilmore* were John and Ann Brewer, Ann's son Henry Hancock, and little Thirza Brewer. John is registered as a "Yeoman". During the voyage there were only 4 deaths at sea, and six babies were born. A surgeon was aboard to assist with the passenger's medical needs. The *Gilmore* took on extra fresh provisions at Cape Town. Other cargo aboard included a quantity of ale and stout, as well as a fine Durham cow." Refer: Frances Chuk, "The Somerset Years" Pg 63.

After a long 4 months at sea, the *Gilmore* arrived at Port Phillip on 24th December 1841. What a shock it must have been for all the emigrants to experience the heat of an Australian Christmas