

## Benjamin BAKER (1837-?)

Benjamin was a migrant on the 'Trade Wind' to Tasmania arriving in 1858. He was aged 20, single, CE, no education, a collier from Staffordshire. Benjamin's age on the Destination List was 29. Benjamin was discharged on 29 March 1858 from the Quarantine Station, Impression Bay, on his own account to New Town.



Benjamin was born in Kingswinford, Staffordshire in England. Kingswinford is situated in the West Midlands, situated five miles west-southwest of central Dudley. Records show that by 1291 coal was being mined in the area and in the 1600's there are entries to show the mining of ironstone and coal pits being sunk. Coal mining was greatly developed during the 1700's. It was dangerous work, with frequent accidents, so much so that the Parish awarded endowments of £10 to miner's widows. Benjamin's father, George, was probably one of those who died as a result of an accident.

In the 1841 England Census Benjamin's mother, Jane Baker (nee Edge), who was aged 45, was a widow. Benjamin was aged 6. Jane's family (Edge) lived one house away. In the 1851 Census Jane and Benjamin were living at Moor Lane, Brierley Hill, Staffordshire. Jane was aged 66 and Benjamin was aged 12, unmarried son and a coal miner.

Benjamin was sponsored by John Foster from Hobart Town. Foster arrived in Tasmania in 1823, establishing himself at Fosterville, near Campbell Town. At an early period, he exported grain to Mauritius, and became an importer of British goods. He was the owner of property at Cape Portland, and other properties at Gippsland. John was initially a shareholder in the Douglas River Coal Company and later it was passed into his hands. It is likely Benjamin worked for Foster at the Douglas River.

Benjamin did not remain in Tasmania. He was next found, by 1861, in Ballarat, Victoria. He may have been one of the many diggers who joined the gold rush. It was in Ballarat where Benjamin married another 'Trade Wind' immigrant, Malvina McPherson, at Christ Church on 11 March 1861.



Two children were born to Benjamin and Malvina in Ballarat: Mary Jane (abt 1862) and Charles (1863). Mary Jane was named after both grandmothers. Mary Jane died in infancy in 1863, aged 1. Charles, was born the same year (1863) as his sister's death.

Malvina, went to New Zealand with William Growcott (1816-1905), another gold miner from Ballarat, sometime between 1863 and 1865, settling on the West Coast of the South Island. Charles grew up with the name Growcott and not by his birth name of Baker. It is possible he was William Growcott's son.

Benjamin was still in Victoria in 1875 as he was recorded in the 'Victoria Police Gazette' of 21 June 1875 for being released from prison from Sandhurst. He was tried at Sandhurst on 15 June 1875 for two counts of larceny and received a sentence of 6 months. He was a native of Staffordshire, miner, born 1834. He was described as: height 5' 4", fresh

