Twitter Thread by Matt Chorley



Matt Chorley
@MattChorley



The war hero and the prisoner.

Family history: a thread

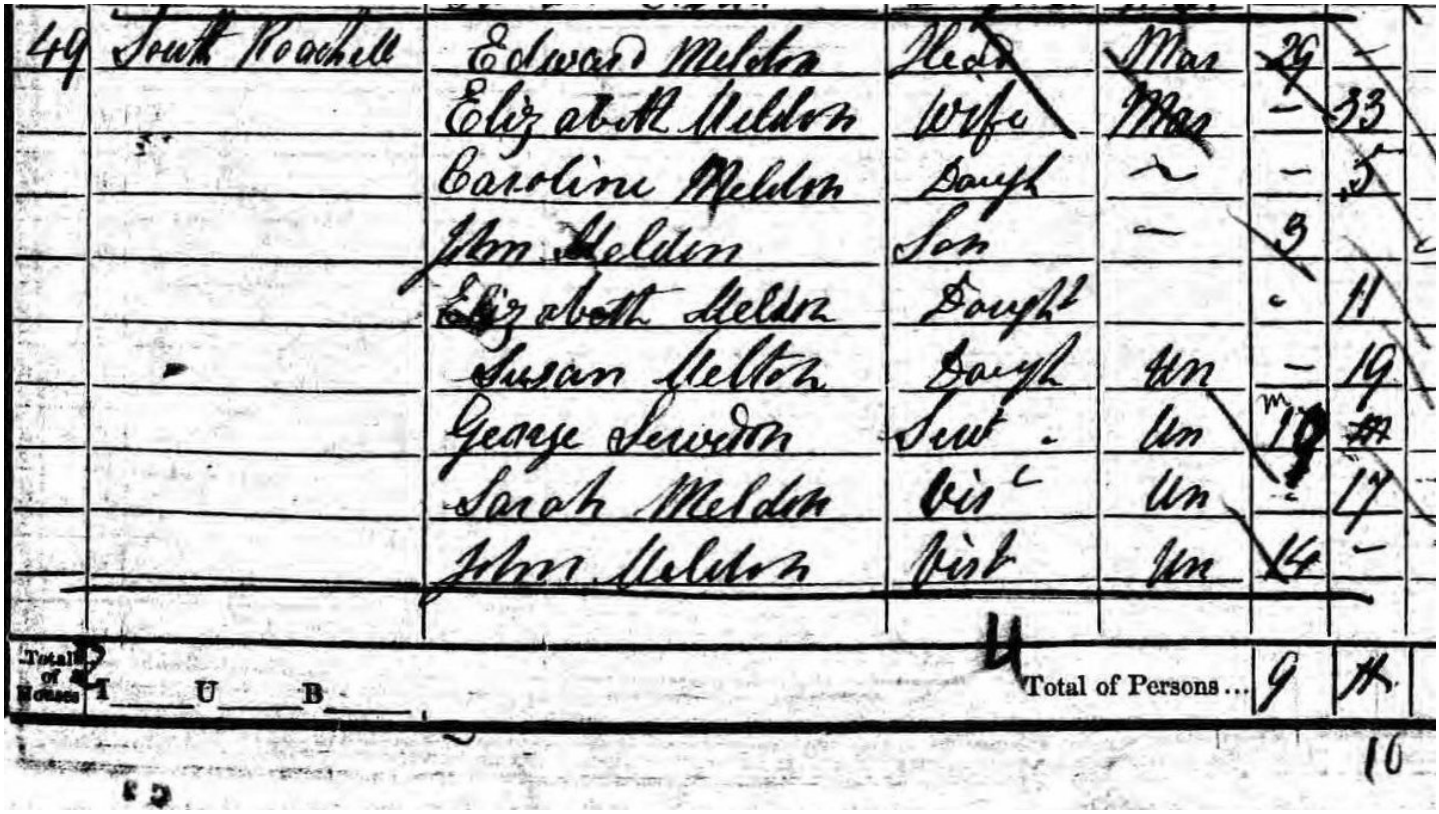
@hugorifkind's brilliant show on @TimesRadio is sponsored by @AncestryUK, so they took a look at my family tree.

The genealogist Simon Pearce is a genius.

Last week we looked at the war record of my great-grandfather, Edward John Mildon, serving in Gallipoli, Palestine, Balkans and the Somme, for which he received medals for gallantry from Britain and France.

Today we do the other side of genealogy...

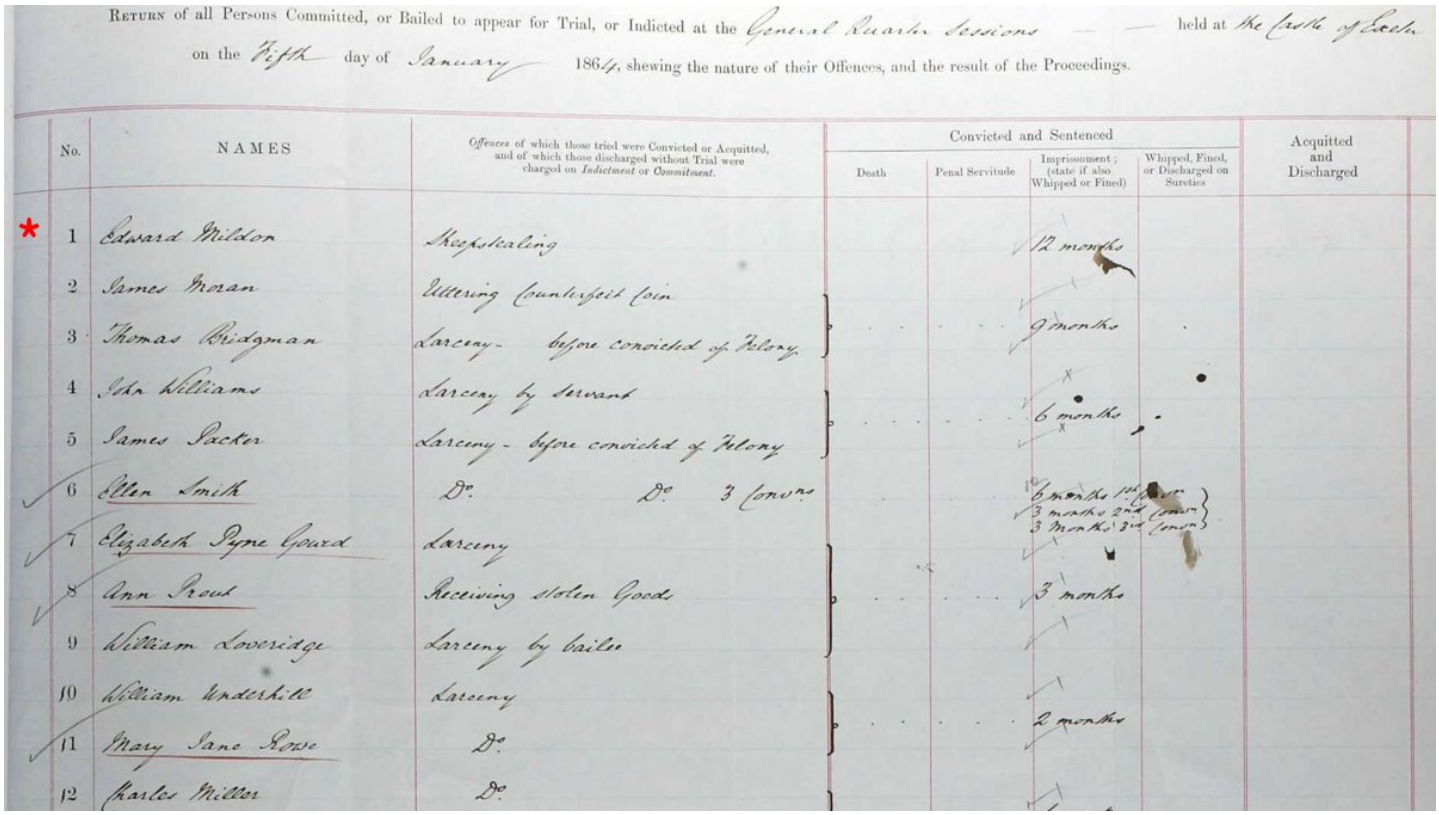
Edward Mildon was my great-great-grandfather.
Here he is in the 1851 census



49	South Woodhill	Edward Meldon	Head		Mar	26	—
		Elizabeth Meldon	Wife		Mar	—	33
		Caroline Meldon	Dau[gh]		—	—	5
		Wm. Meldon	Son		—	3	
		Elizabeth Meldon	Dau[gh]			—	11
		Susan Melton	Dau[gh]		Un	—	19
		George Sewdon	Serv[t]		Un	M 19	
		Sarah Meldon	Visr		Un	—	17
		John Meldon	Visr		Un	14	—
Total of Houses	1	U	B		Total of Persons ...	9	

16

And then here he is in Exeter court records in 1864: sheepstealing



RETURN of all Persons Committed, or Bailed to appear for Trial, or Indicted at the *General Quarter Sessions* — held at *the Castle of Exeter* on the *Fifth* day of *January* 1864, shewing the nature of their Offences, and the result of the Proceedings.

No.	NAMES	Offences of which those tried were Convicted or Acquitted, and of which those discharged without Trial were charged on *Indictment* or *Commitment*.	Convicted and Sentenced				Acquitted and Discharged
			Death	Penal Servitude	Imprisonment; (state if also Whipped or Fined)	Whipped, Fined, or Discharged on Sureties	
* 1	Edward Meldon	Sheepstealing			12 months		
2	James Moran	Uttering Counterfeit Coin					
3	Thomas Bridgman	Larceny - before convicted of Felony			9 months		
4	John Williams	Larceny by Servant					
5	James Packer	Larceny - before convicted of Felony			6 months		
6	Ellen Smith	Do. Do. 3 Convs			6 months 1st Conv[n] 3 months 2nd Conv[n] 3 months 3rd Conv[n]		
7	Elizabeth Pyne Gourd	Larceny					
8	Ann Prout	Receiving stolen Goods			3 months		
9	William Loveridge	Larceny by bailee					
10	William Underhill	Larceny					
11	Mary Jane Rowe	Do.			2 months		
12	Charles Miller	Do.					

Here is a local newspaper report about it. He basically said he'd bought the sheep from a man, he then that man had died.

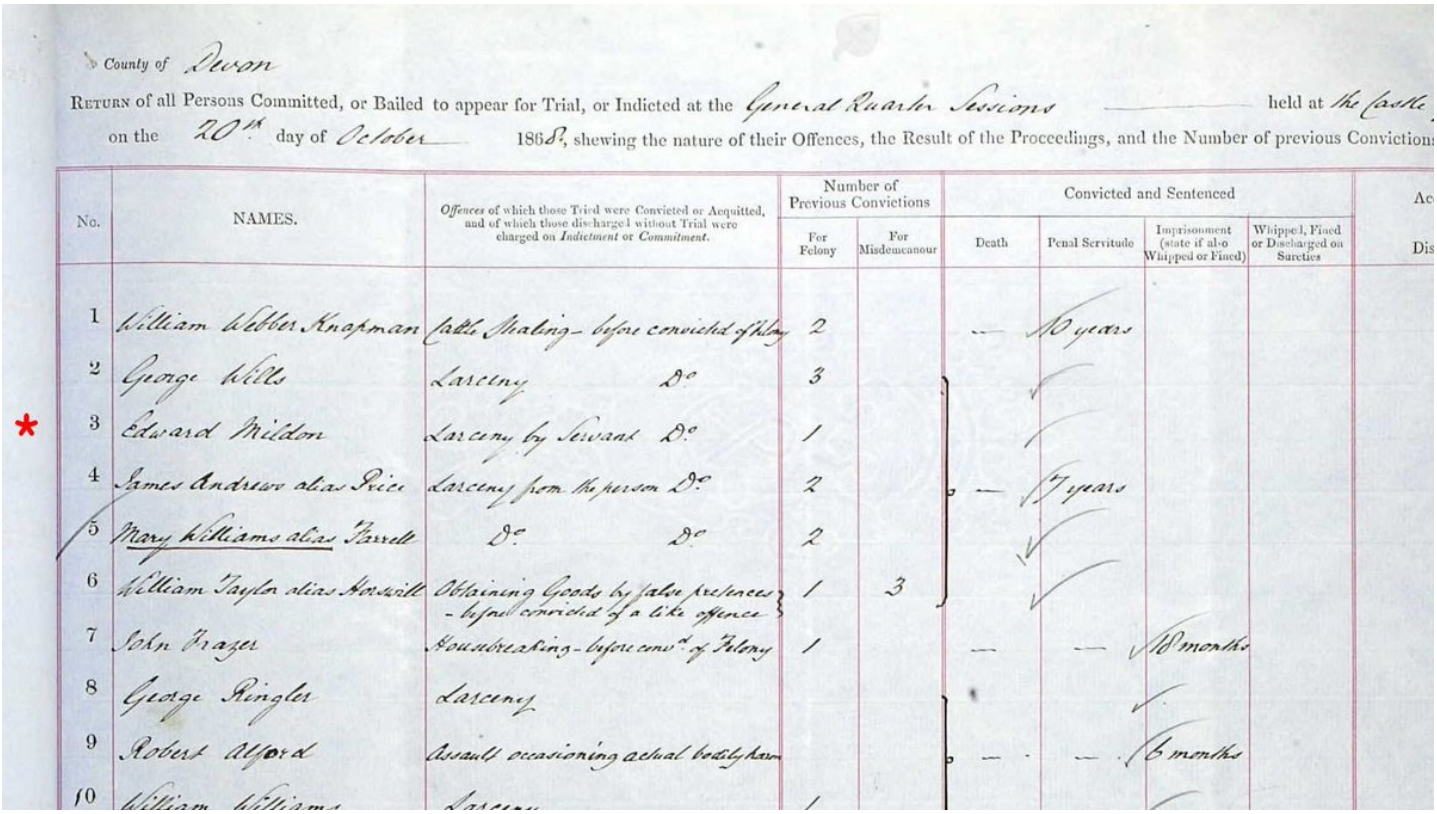
The jury didn't believe him. He got 12months in prison with hard labour.
For one sheep.

EXETER CROWN COURT.—WEDNESDAY.

SHEEP STEALING AT MOLLAND.

EDWARD MILDON (on bail), an elderly man, was charged with having stolen an ewe sheep, the property of Mr. Wm. Elworthy, at Molland, in the month of August or September last.—Mr. Turner prosecuted, and Mr. Carter defended the prisoner.—The prosecutor is a farmer living at Ford Farm, in the parish of Molland, North Devon. There are certain moors in the parish and during the last summer the prosecutor put several sheep on the Molland Common to pasture. In August he lost three sheep and two more in October, from the common. One of the sheep missed in October was an ewe, which he had seen about a week or fortnight before. In December last from certain information, he went to see a sheep at Mr. Ellis, Westcott farm, Oakford, which he identified as the ewe he had lost in October. He knew it by a pitch mark on the rump. He had put a letter "G" there and a similar letter on each shoulder. The letters were partly obliterated.—In cross-examination the prosecutor said Molland Common was several hundred acres. There were a large number of sheep on the common in the summer. Principally, however, Exmoors. These sheep were also Exmoors; and were of the same breed as many others on the common. The prisoner lived in his neighbourhood, but he did not know that he dealt in sheep and cattle. He had seen his sheep safe in the beginning of October. He saw the sheep in December and recognised it by its countenance. He found the mark "G."—Mr. John Harris, a farmer of West Anstey, proved having found the sheep in Mr. Ellis' farm, and suspecting it to be the prosecutors he sent for Mr. Elworthy.—Mr. John Ellis, farmer of Westcott Farm, Oakford, deposed that the prisoner brought the sheep in question to his farm on the 30th October, and asked him to keep it for him for 3d. per week, and it remained there over six weeks. Prisoner was formerly a farmer, but of late years dealt in cattle,—Prisoner having stated before the magistrates that he had got the sheep in a fair way of business. At that time Knott had met with an accident and been killed. To disprove this the prosecution called Mrs. Knott, the widow of the man in question, who stated that she never knew of any dealing with the prisoner whom she never saw before. She managed the mill of her husband, and kept the books.—Mr. Carter made an ingenious defence. There were two points for the consideration of the jury, first, was the identity of the sheep proved? And if so, did the evidence go to prove that the prisoner stole it. His learned friend made much of the fact that the prisoner had stated he got the sheep from a man who had since died. But he would ask them what would have been the position of Mr. Ellis, had the prisoner died during the time the sheep had been in the possession of the farmer. He would have said I got it from Edward Mildon to keep for him. His learned friend would say it was a lame defence, but yet it would be true. Then why was not the butcher called to whom the prisoner had sold one sheep in October, and who had bid for the sheep in question, but the offer had been refused? Why was the man not called to disprove this statement if it was untrue? The policeman knew him well, and he must say the prosecution ought to have called him. He then went on to argue that there was no proof of stealing whatever, or the least tittle of evidence to prove receiving knowing it to be stolen.—His Lordship went carefully through the evidence, advising the jury to direct their attention to the charge of stealing without reference to that of receiving, knowing it to be stolen.—The jury found the prisoner guilty, and his Lordship sentenced him to twelve month's imprisonment with hard labour.

Fast forward 1868 and we are back at court again. This time for “larceny by servant”



County of Devon

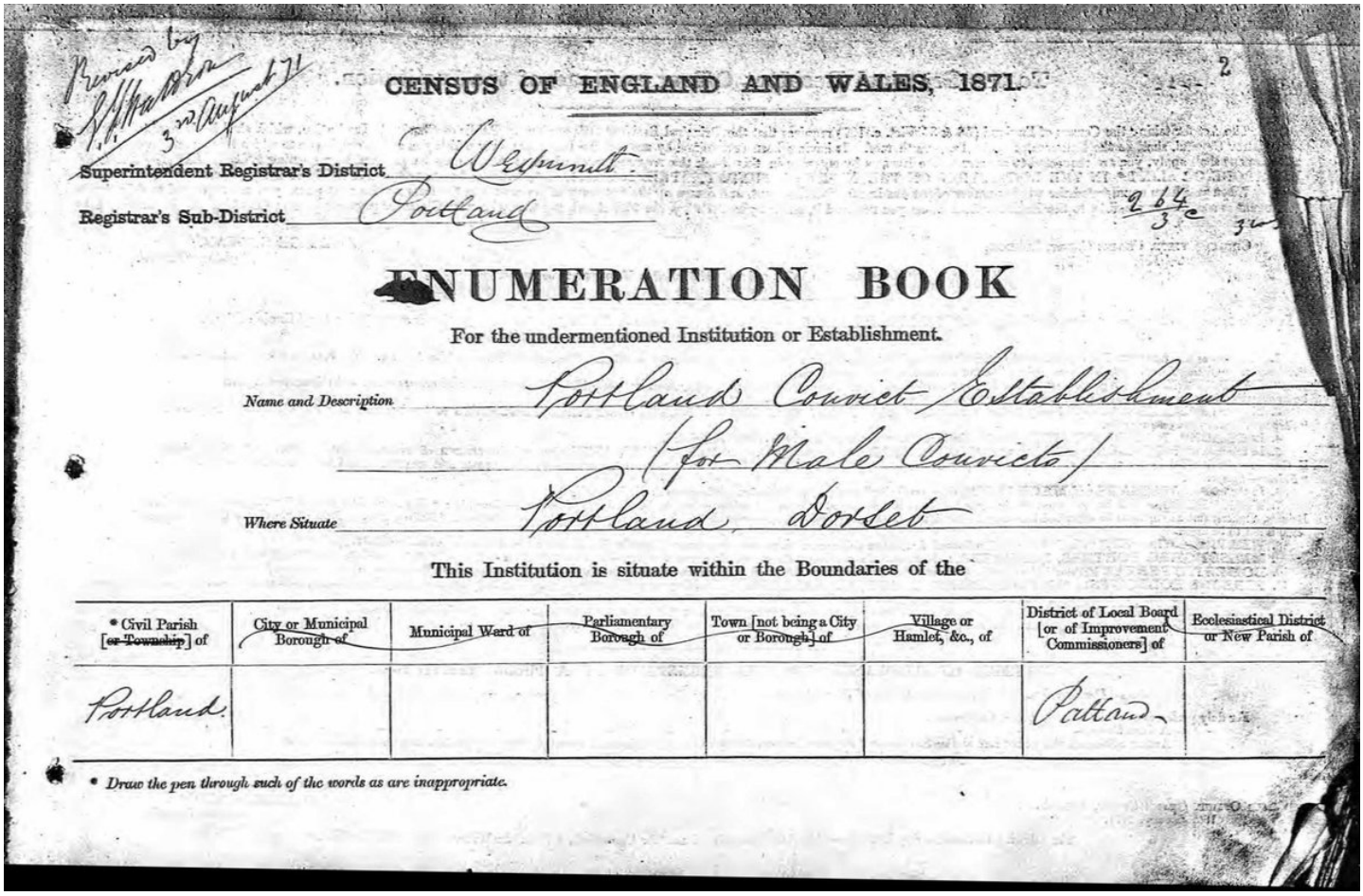
RETURN of all Persons Committed, or Bailed to appear for Trial, or Indicted at the General Quarter Sessions held at the [illegible]
on the 20th day of October 1868, shewing the nature of their Offences, the Result of the Proceedings, and the Number of previous Convictions

No.	NAMES.	Offences of which those Tried were Convicted or Acquitted, and of which those discharged without Trial were charged on *Indictment* or *Commitment*.	Number of Previous Convictions		Convicted and Sentenced				Ac
			For Felony	For Misdemeanour	Death	Penal Servitude	Imprisonment (state if also Whipped or Fined)	Whipped, Fined or Discharged on Sureties	Dis
1	William Webber Knapman	Cattle Stealing - before convicted of Felony	2		—	10 years			
2	George Wills	Larceny do	3			✓			
* 3	Edward Mildon	Larceny by Servant do	1			✓			
4	James Andrews alias Price	Larceny from the person do	2		—	✓7 years			
5	Mary Williams alias Farrell	do do	2			✓			
6	William Taylor alias Hoswill	Obtaining Goods by false pretences - before convicted of a like offence	1	3		✓			
7	John Frazer	Housebreaking - before conv.d of Felony	1		—	—	✓18 months		
8	George Ringler	Larceny					✓		
9	Robert Alford	Assault occasioning actual bodily harm			—	—	✓6 months		
10	William Williams	Larceny	1						

Turns out great-great-great grandad wasn’t the best master criminal.
His foolproof plan to steal his boss’s coal didn’t work.
Committing theft while a policeman watches the whole thing also isn’t ideal

STEALING COAL AT TIVERTON.—*Edward Mildon*, *Ann Palfrey*, and *Thomas Palfrey*, the former a carter, the latter man and wife, not in the calendar, were charged with stealing a quantity of coal, the property of Mr. Beadon, a gentleman living near Tiverton.—Mr. Jerwood appeared for the prosecution. Mildon pleaded guilty. He was in the employ of the prosecutor, and a short time since he was sent to Tiverton for some coal with a horse and cart. On returning with his load he was seen to stop at the house of the prisoners, a wayside cottage, and to take something from his cart, which he handed in at the door. Policeman 76, who watched those proceedings, immediately went into the cottage and asked the prisoners where the coal was that the prisoner Mildon had taken in there, and they both denied that they had any. The constable searched, and found 76lbs. of coal at the back of the house. Both the prisoners denied their guilt, but the jury convicted them.—Mildon was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude. The other prisoners were sentenced to two months' imprisonment each with hard labour.

Seven years penal service at Portland Convict Establishment is tough



Received by
[illegible] 3rd August 71

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1871.

2

Superintendent Registrar's District Weymouth.

Registrar's Sub-District Portland

264
3

ENUMERATION BOOK

For the undermentioned Institution or Establishment.

Name and Description Portland Convict Establishment
(for Male Convicts)

Where Situate Portland, Dorset

This Institution is situate within the Boundaries of the

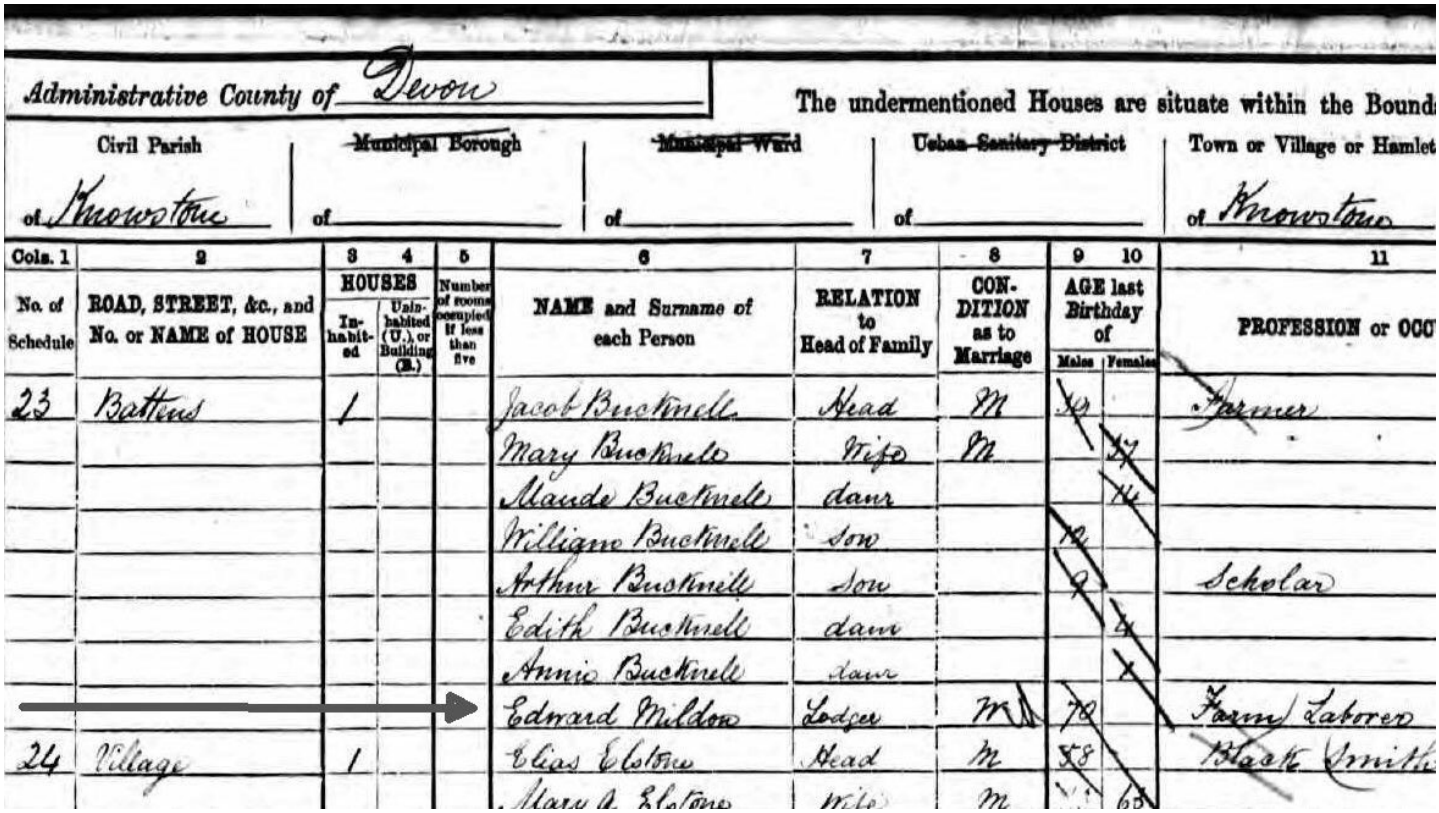
* Civil Parish [~~or Township~~] of	City or Municipal Borough of	Municipal Ward of	Parliamentary Borough of	Town [not being a City or Borough] of	Village or Hamlet, &c., of	District of Local Board [or of Improvement Commissioners] of	Ecclesiastical District or New Parish of
Portland.						Portland.	

* Draw the pen through such of the words as are inappropriate.

These are photos from around the same tome he was there of prisoners in their uniforms cracking rocks



Great-great-great grandad turns up again in the 1891 census. By this time his wife had died. He was 70, working as a farm labourer and living as a lodger with the Bucknalls



Administrative County of Devon — The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Bound

Civil Parish	~~Municipal Borough~~	~~Municipal Ward~~	~~Urban Sanitary District~~	Town or Village or Hamlet
of Knowstone	of	of	of	of Knowstone

Cols. 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
No. of Schedule	ROAD, STREET, &c., and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES Inhabited	HOUSES Uninhabited (U.) or Building (B.)	Number of rooms occupied if less than five	NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CONDITION as to Marriage	AGE last Birthday of Males	AGE last Birthday of Females	PROFESSION or OCC
23	Battens	1			Jacob Buckmell	Head	M	~~39~~		~~Farmer~~
					Mary Buckmell	Wife	M		~~37~~	
					Maude Buckmell	daur			~~11~~	
					William Buckmell	Son		~~10~~		
					Arthur Buckmell	Son		~~9~~		~~Scholar~~
					Edith Buckmell	daur			~~6~~	
					Annie Buckmell	daur			~~4~~	
					Edward Mildon	Lodger	M	~~70~~		~~Farm Laborer~~
24	Village	1			Elias Elstone	Head	M	~~58~~		~~Blacksmith~~
					Mary A. Elstone	wife	M		~~63~~	

What I learned from this is:
Life in 19th century rural England was tough.
Local newspapers are so, so important.
@AncestryUK is brilliant.
I won’t steal coal from Mr Murdoch.

Listen to me learning this story on @TimesRadio with @hugorifkind from 12.30pm today