

## **The Victorian-Dickens Era: In the Name of Capitalism; Colonies, Convicts, Charities, and Royals-in-Training**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Capitalism, initially promoted as an economic means to emancipation from feudal control, was increasingly considered as an ideology of exploitation by its critics. This system of trade and exchange might be viewed paradoxically as a unifying force in Victorian England. Together with the spiritual emancipation sought by the Protestants, the economic liberalism of the Victorian era provided opportunities to challenge the feudal powers of Royalty. In its early formation, however, this entrepreneurial spirit could be harnessed by Royalty to connect several seemingly disparate elements of the then growing British Empire: the governance of far-flung colonies, the management of convicts, the need for charities to attend to the growing poverty, the tolerance of emerging critics such as Charles Dickens, and the socialization and training of members of the Royal family in this context. Together these elements formed a package of legitimacy long celebrated as the Great British Empire. A thread that is woven throughout this intricate fabric of Empire is the story of Freemasonry – the activities of the Masons in the dissemination of the idea of democracy and freedom that would craft the conditions of their flourishing opportunities and influence.

Evidence of Freemasonry in Bermuda appears early in the seventeenth century with the appointment of the King's representative Governor Alured Popple who became the first Masonic Grand Provincial Master of the island in 1744.<sup>1</sup> The ironic confluence of enforced labour together with advocates of freedom exported by the Royal Navy can be clearly illustrated in the history of Bermuda, a colony that serves as an excellent study in microcosm of the Empire at large. The issues facing the global economy today takes much of its contemporary character from the values established in Europe during the reign of Queen [Alexandria] Victoria, 1819-1901. The paper considers the expansion of power in the Empire through the use of human bodies as capital<sup>2</sup> such as convicts, philanthropists, and Royals. In contemporary Bermuda, the significant wealth created by business and the expressed allegiance to the inclusive values of democracy appears not to enable the capacity of the government or the creativity of philanthropists to stem the tide of disenfranchisement and the increasing vulnerability of many citizens. We suggest that today many bodies are entrapped on the Rock – a travesty of the emancipatory ideals of both democracy and the Christian values upon appeal to which Bermuda has built its riches.

### **Introduction**

Great Britain expanded the power of its Empire through the strategic development of colonies in the Victoria-Dickens era (1837-1901). It had a high insatiable need for infrastructure and labour. Critical to this end were human bodies as a source of labour

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<sup>1</sup> Milbourne, Alfred J.B. Freemasonry in Bermuda. Translation Quatuor Coronati Lodge. Volume LXXIV, (1961).

<sup>2</sup> Walsh, Susan. Autumn 1993. 'Bodies of Capital: Great Expectations and the Climacteric Economy, Victorian Studies 37:73-98. USA: Indiana University Press.

drawn from the use of convicts, and from those mandated to leadership. In this regard, Royals and Freemasons carried value(s) much as did labour of all types. Charles Dickens was a keen observer, commentator, and critic of the social mores of his time. His literary masterpieces such as *Great Expectations* (1861),<sup>3</sup> *Pickwick Papers* (1837)<sup>4</sup> and *Dombey and Sons* (1848)<sup>5</sup> raised awareness and increased moral concern about the widespread use of human beings as capital in the form of convict labour. Through his writing, Dickens advocated for the reform of aspects of the penal code and more humane treatment of prisoners. This historiographical critique will present the Victorian-Dickens Era in terms of its empirical expansion as examined through the lens of its influence and power over the oldest British colony, Bermuda. The themes explored in this paper are the building and maintaining of the colony with human bodies of capital through leadership (Royals and Freemasons) and labour (Freemasons, charities and convicts).

### **Human bodies serving power**

The use of human bodies as capital in the Victorian-Dickens era can be exemplified in the harnessing of human beings to the expansion of power and wealth, be that as convicts, traders, philanthropists, or Royals. The British Empire of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as with the various Empires of Europe, however, had come under increasing threat from ever growing discontent with the concentration of feudal power in the control of the ruling families of Europe. In the case of the preservation of the interests of the elite of the British Empire, the rise of free trade generated from the increasingly powerful doctrine of neoliberalism required skilful alignment of the emerging influence with that of the established elite as an act of self- preservation. Collaboration with emerging business powers and an apparent support for the liberties called for by appeals to principles of democracy (the channel for ideas of emancipation) might be read as an astute aversion of total rebellion. Our example is the close relationship between Royals and Freemasons and their combined use of convict labour in the establishing of Bermuda initially as a port-of-call and eventually as a powerhouse of capital(ist) brokering. Many generations of bodies, bodies fulfilling many aspects of the building of the Empire, voluntarily or under compulsion, fill the annals of British history.

### ***Royals and Freemasons – an alignment of interests***

Of the many bodies deployed to the colonies for the expansion and maintenance of the Empire, not all were convicts to serve as either manual or skilled labour. There was also a great need to fill positions in leadership, governance, and control. Royals and Freemasons provided such labour voluntarily, embodying a union between an old and a new elite, enabled by a growing doctrine of freedom and framed as a response to the calls for greater democracy. Masonic lodges were seen as a school for democracy<sup>6</sup> and in the spirit of institutional collaboration with The Royal Navy, Masonic lodges provided a training

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<sup>3</sup> Dickens, Charles 1965. *Great Expectations* 1860-61. Harmondsworth: Penguin. Weekly serial in *All the Year Round*, 1 December 1860 to 3 August 1861. Project Gutenberg.

<sup>4</sup> Dickens, Charles 1837. *Pickwick Papers* — Monthly numbers, April 1836 to November 1837. Project Gutenberg.

<sup>5</sup> Dickens, Charles 1848. *Dombey and Son* — Monthly numbers, October 1846 to April 1848. Project Gutenberg.

<sup>6</sup> Jacobs, Margaret C. *The Origins of Freemasonry Facts & Fictions*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, 15

ground for leadership, influencing local governance and cementing connections for members of the Royal family. Freemasons, made up of people of many ranks chose adventure, opportunity, or vocational expression by setting off for distant places often with the blessings and interests of Royalty entwined with their own. They settled and established colonies as far afield as India, Australia, and New Zealand to farm, trade, govern, educate, and proselytise.

The Royal family had multi-generational ties with the Masonic order. The Queen herself was the daughter, niece, mother and grandmother of Freemasons. Victoria's eldest son Prince Albert Edward, the Prince of Wales (initiated into the Masonic brotherhood in Sweden in 1868) became the Grand Master in 1874.<sup>7</sup> Victoria's Diamond Jubilee was "celebrated even more grandly and widely" by the Freemasons because the Empire now stretched over "even more of the terrestrial globe ... and the number of lodges on the role of this [United] Grand Lodge [of England] alone had grown from 646 in 1837 to 2,220"<sup>8</sup> by 1897. Queen Victoria and the Masons together had spun a web of influence that generated economic hubs around the world. These hubs of capitalism were monitored through Her Majesty's Navy and Masonic organizations. Freemasonry served as a cultural network between the British Empire and its colonies. Moreover, these Freemasonry lodges were homes away from home for an immigrating or globally mobile Freemason, who could have found himself, for example, in Canada, Jamaica, or the United States of America.

At the death of Queen Victoria's father Edward, Duke of Kent (a Freemason) "... the last Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England in 1875 ... she announced as a monument to his memory she would appoint herself as Royal Patroness of the Masonic Fraternity in the British Empire."<sup>9</sup> Daniel reports that Lord Carnarvon "emphasised what he saw as the key aspect and value of English freemasonry, namely its alliance with 'social order and the great institutions of the country, and, above all, with the monarchy, the crowning institution of all.'<sup>10</sup> Daniel (2012) saw this as the theme of loyalty that was to be heard throughout the Empire Queen's Golden Jubilee in June 1887 and the Grand Mastership of her son."<sup>11</sup> According to Daniel thousands of Freemasons attended the Special Meeting on 13 June 1887 where the Prince of Wales presided as Grand Master. At his side sat his younger brother, the Duke of Connaught (the Provincial Grand Master for Sussex). This event looked like a family affair since the "Senior Warden was none other than the Grand Master's eldest son, Prince Albert Victor."<sup>12</sup> Moreover, when the 'loyal and dutiful' address was eventually presented to the Queen she received it with pleasure and commented:

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<sup>7</sup> Daniel, J.W. Royal Jubilee Speech. United Grand Lodge of England, Quarterly Communication, Royal Jubilees and Loyal Freemasons, (13 June 2012). Downloaded 26 November 2012 from <http://www.ugle.org.uk/news-events-page/all-quarterly-communication-speeches/royal-jubilees-and-loyal-freemasons/>

<sup>8</sup> Daniel, J.W. Royal Jubilee Speech. United Grand Lodge of England, Quarterly Communication, Royal Jubilees and Loyal Freemasons, (13 June 2012). Downloaded 26 November 2012 from <http://www.ugle.org.uk/news-events-page/all-quarterly-communication-speeches/royal-jubilees-and-loyal-freemasons/>

<sup>9</sup> Daniel 2012

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

*I observe that the Society of Freemasons increases in numbers and prosperity in proportion as the wealth and civilization of my Empire increases. I heartily appreciate the charitable efforts which have always distinguished your Society. I thank you sincerely for your affectionate devotion to my throne and person.*<sup>13</sup>

During Victoria's reign the "search for security was extended ... commensurate with the changing needs of an extremely complex and diversified oceanic empire, based upon the principles of free trade ..."<sup>14</sup> The Victorian influence on trade and the training of Royals can be seen through Colonial calls. The visits of Queen Victoria's children, who acted as her ambassadors, were examples of the young Royals in their leadership training. These visits also popularised destinations throughout the Empire, thus opening the way for increased international trade and tourism. The alignment of royal and business interests as facilitated through the close relationship of the British Royals and the Masonic Lodges is a story not unique to but well demonstrated in the formation of Bermuda. It may be argued that Bermuda became a Rock of growing interest hewed out by convict labourers who were delivered by naval power and who served the interests of the Freemasons and Royal placeholders. Some would argue that benefits flowed both ways.

#### ***Bermuda: Rock for growing interest***

At the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Bermuda, then known as the Sommer's Isles, held little interest to the British. Its relative proximity to the struggling British settlement at Jamestown on the coast of what is now the United States of America, however, ensured the islands gradually took on increased prominence. In 1612, King James I of England granted an extension of the Virginia Company's charter<sup>15</sup> to include Bermuda. In 1615 a British joint stock company, "The Governor and Company of the City of London for the Plantation of the Sommer's Isles," was formed to purchase the Virginia Company's interest in Bermuda.<sup>16</sup>

Bermuda is located in the North Atlantic 918 km (570 miles) east-southeast of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, in the southern United States of America.<sup>17</sup> This isolated limestone archipelago of approximately 21 square miles have few natural resources and are largely surrounded by dangerous reefs. Blown off course by storms, ill-fated mariners in "hurricane alley" increasingly found Bermuda a safe-haven in their trans-Atlantic travels.<sup>18</sup>

Although Bermuda was an island of few resources, it was and still is a fertile market

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Willock, Roger. *Bulwark of Empire*. Bermuda: Bermuda Maritime Museum Press, 1988, 3.

<sup>15</sup> More formally known as the Company of Adventurers and Planters of the City of London, which was comprised of English entrepreneurs.

<sup>16</sup> Hollis Hallett, Archibald C. *Bermuda under the Sommer Islands Company 1612-1684 Civil Records*. Volume I. Bermuda: Juniperhill Press, 2005, 14.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/namerica/bermuda/bmlatlog.htm>

<sup>18</sup> Smith Jr., Clifford E. "The Manila Wreck: Bermuda's Role in the Atlantic Smuggling-Slave Trade." PhD diss., (University of Kentucky, Lexington, 2003), 2.

place for *homo economicus*: the simple acts of exchange.<sup>19</sup> In the Victorian-Dickens Era of sailing ships the re-stocking of trans-Atlantic vessels provided Bermudians with the incentive to create rain-water catchments specifically to enable longer voyages and thus facilitating considerable international trade and bringing much needed commerce and many visitors to the island. This entrepreneurial venture secured Bermuda's reputation as an international business mecca. The Empire's very success ensured that the colony could not avoid becoming affected by the conflicts, politics and economic forces of international powers, especially those that involved Great Britain. Many human bodies were required to labour for many aspects of this enterprise. Convict labour was to be one source of such bodies.

Historically, Bermuda has had a long involvement with the utilization of cheap and abundant convict labour. In 1619 London's Newgate Prison sent male prisoners to work on the island while Bridewell Prison provided women. In the 1650s Scottish and Irish both male and female prisoners of war were sent by the Bermuda Company to the island as a source of cheap labour,<sup>20</sup> a transfer of bodies multiplied over the next century. During the Victorian-Dickens Era (1837-1901) lawbreakers provided an endless supply of bodies of human capital for hard labour. Under the management of the Convict Establishment in the nineteenth century, with the interest of economic opportunity and governance needs in mind, convicts were educated in the services and trades prior to shipment. They were then moved across the Empire as a ready source of skilled labour for the projects of the Royal Navy and Royal Engineers.

It cannot be assumed that the convicts being transported throughout the Empire, and specifically to Bermuda, were simply "common criminals." Lieutenant Mitchell (1863)<sup>21</sup> reported that convict labour was considered by some an investment of sorts, provided it was skilled, with the Establishment "deliberately provid[ing] opportunities for education and trade apprenticeships for the convicts."<sup>22</sup> Overall it is documented that there was an eye to invest in the convicts as communicated by Governor Elliott, also a Freemason, to them where he is reported to have said "the vital importance ... to improve their opportunities ... and that they consider the Public Works to be schools ... they would acquire knowledge of arts and trades insuring to them the means of an honest livelihood ... would place a decent independence within their sure grasp ..."<sup>23</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Jebb, the Surveyor General of Prisons for England, reported that the conditions of the accommodation of convicts in what were known as the hulks, although generally described as "floating mediaeval dungeons"<sup>24</sup> actually provided for convicts who were "better fed, clothed, and lodged, than the classes from which they generally come; even in the degraded state in which they have worked in the dockyards, their lot has been envied

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<sup>19</sup> O'Boyle, Edward, J. Requiem for Homo Economicus, *Journal of Markets and Morality*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 321-337, (2007). USA. Downloaded 14 December 2012 from <http://www.marketsandmorality.com/index.php/mandm/article/view/235/225>.

<sup>20</sup> Smith, J.E., *Echoes of Bermuda's Past : From Slavery to Emancipation and Beyond*. Commission for Unity and Racial Equality (CURE), Bermuda 2006, 48.

<sup>21</sup> Mitchell, E. 1. August 1863. *The Bermuda Convict Establishment*. *The Leisure Hour* (monthly paper). Reprinted in the *Bermuda Journal of Archaeology and Maritime History*, Vol. 9, 1997, 120-128. Bermuda: Bermuda Maritime Museum Press.

<sup>22</sup> Hollis Hallett, Clara F.E. *Bermuda's Convict Hulks*, *Bermuda Journal of Archaeology and Maritime History*. Vol. 2, 87-104, (1990). Bermuda: Bermuda Maritime Press, 102.

<sup>23</sup> Hollis Hallett 1990, 104, citing CO 37/121:207

<sup>24</sup> Hollis Hallett 1990, 87.

by many an honest labourer."<sup>25</sup> Mitchell<sup>26</sup> writes that the convicts are "well housed, fed, clothed, medically and spiritually cared for." Perhaps surprisingly, "lives and movements of those who were deported for their crimes are ... better chronicled than those of the upright citizens who sat in judgement over them"<sup>27</sup> A similar view comes from the convict John Morgan who returned to England in 1847 after serving a sentence of six years where he considered himself "better off ... in Bermuda ... he had more money to spend, better food, and would not have returned to England if he had a choice."<sup>28</sup>

In December 1859, a *Medway* hulk schoolmaster's report on his 414 students tells us that 399 could read and/or write at various levels. Only 15 could neither read nor write. The Irish Society provided reading materials for the convicts that resulted in a library that held 1,377 books. Moreover, it was also documented that convicts had written 2,106 letters<sup>29</sup>. Brown and Maxwell cites words written by the Irish political convict John Mitchel in the *Jail Journal* (1854),<sup>30</sup> that convicts were given "liberty to write home as often as they liked; and when they tell their half-starved friends how well a felon is fed, what can be more natural than that famished Honesty should be tempted to put itself in the way of being sent to so plentiful country?"<sup>31</sup> Was this good news in the convict's letters paying dividends in returning human capital in the form of labour to the colony? Convicted journalist Mitchel's journal provides some support for this idea. He writes that he is told by the commander of the *Dromedary* hulk<sup>32</sup> that "many prisoners ... have been here before, and not a few for their third term; that he has several fathers and sons together; and that it is not uncommon to find families who have been hulked for three or four generations."<sup>33</sup>



While Willock<sup>34</sup> reports that for the heavy construction work convict labour was supplemented only by "pick and shovel, ... wheel barrow and crowbar" to aid their efforts to "hack out of the wilderness a dockyard capable of maintaining a squadron of sailing

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<sup>25</sup> Hollis Hallett 1990, 99 citing CO 37/125:41

<sup>26</sup> Mitchell 1863 reprinted 1997:122.

<sup>27</sup> (Hollis Hallett 1990, 87).

<sup>28</sup> Hollis Hallett 1990, 89.

<sup>29</sup> Hollis Hallett 1990, 95-96

<sup>30</sup> Brown, Alyson and Maxwell, Clarence V.H. *The Receptacle of Our Worst Convicts: Bermuda the Chatham Prison Riots and the Transportation of Violence*. Bermuda Journal of Archaeology and Maritime History, 15, 116 (2004). Bermuda: Bermuda Maritime Museum Press.

<sup>31</sup> Brown and Clarence, 2004, 116.

<sup>32</sup> *Dromedary Hulk*. (IMG\_014504) Image used with permission of the National Museum of Bermuda.

<sup>33</sup> Brown and Maxwell 2004, 116

<sup>34</sup> Willock 1988, 45

frigates"<sup>35</sup>, many of these were men of much skill. Stories of the convicts in Bermuda attest to the calibre, character, skills, and knowledge of some of these individuals. Stranack<sup>36</sup> writes for example that when one draft of convicts was coming to Bermuda in the *Sir George Arthur*, it ran on the rocks of North Shore. The "Captain panicked, the crew mutinied, and it was not until the prisoners were released and took the situation in hand that the ship was saved and sailed to Bermuda."<sup>37</sup>



Watercolour on paper of the Naval Base on Ireland Island in the Bermudas 1837.<sup>38</sup>

Between 1823 and 1861 over 9,000 individuals convicted of such crimes as petty theft or fraud arrived in Bermuda. Stranack<sup>39</sup> reports that many trades and professions were represented in the penal population. The architects and engineers among them were invaluable to the Royal Navy. The Dockyard and fortifications of Bermuda had the reputation of being "incomparable to those of any other colony of the Empire."<sup>40</sup> The Colonial Office Papers on the Convict Establishment report that in 1860 "nearly every stone in Ireland Island ... has been erected by convict labour."<sup>41</sup> Such were the skills of the convict labourers and quality of their work that the Commissioner's house, completed in 1827, was deemed suitable for administrative offices and private quarters for high state officials. The Superintendent of Convicts used Commissioner's house as a ceremonial and utilitarian residence from 1837.

The Royal Navy continued for decades to further build additional fortifications and other structures necessitated by Bermuda's growing importance to the Empire.<sup>42</sup> When the convict labour supply was ended in 1863, a great deal of progress had been made in turning Bermuda into a strategic outpost within the Empire. This attainment had come at a cost, however. Of the 9,094 convicts who had worked as slave labour in Bermuda, some 2,041 convicts died as a "direct result of their conditions of service."<sup>43</sup> Their pain, however, was to serve the Empire well. In time, the British came to realise that possession of the islands of Bermuda was the key to all the British Western Colonies. Bermuda historian William E.S. Zuill quotes the *Royal Gazette* (1827) in writing that if another country of any

<sup>35</sup> Willock, 1988 citing Bermuda Historical Quarterly, Winter 1951, Vol. VIII, No. I, *Account of Life in the Convict Hulks*", Spring 1951, Vol. VIII, No. 2; Summer 1951, Vol. VIII, No.3; Autumn 1951, Vol. VIII, No. 4; *Official Records of Convict Hulk Establishment*" (in three parts).

<sup>36</sup> Stranack, Ian. *The Andrew and the Onions The Story of the Royal Navy in Bermuda 1795 – 1975*. Bermuda: Bermuda Maritime Museum Press, 1990, 104.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

<sup>38</sup> Watercolour on paper of the Naval Base on Ireland Island in the Bermudas 1837 (IMG\_015794) Image used with permission of the National Museum of Bermuda.

<sup>39</sup> Stranack 1990, 104.

<sup>40</sup> Hollis Hallett 1990, 87

<sup>41</sup> Hollis Hallett 1990, 87 citing Public Record Office, London, Colonial Office Papers, CO 37/174:122.

<sup>42</sup> Stranack 1990, 104

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

maritime strength controlled Bermuda, British trade would have been subjected too much annoyance, if not altogether stopped.<sup>44</sup> Her Majesty's Britannic Navy sailed the world and protected the sea-lanes imperative for global trade and provided leadership training and transportation around the Empire. Not incidentally, the Navy also became a training ground for the sons and grandsons of the royal family. For example, the battleship H.M.S. *St. George* set sail with Prince Alfred, second son of Queen Victoria, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January 1861 to join the North American Fleet.<sup>45</sup> A visit to Bermuda on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 1861 was scheduled. As fourteen year old Alfred rode on a barge that passed through "vessels in the harbour richly dressed in bunting",<sup>46</sup> out of respect each ship "gracefully lowered their flags as the Prince"<sup>47</sup> passed by to the dock where he received a welcome from the then Governor His Excellency Sir Harry Ord. Prince Alfred arrived in Hamilton City where the verandas were "festooned by the spoils of many a garden, many proclaiming in various phrases of ... loyalty"<sup>48</sup> to the crown and the city streets were "crowded and the road lined by members of the various Charitable and Benevolent Societies."<sup>49</sup>

During the visit Prince Alfred rode with the Governor in his carriage to visit the Gibbs Hill Lighthouse "then still something of a wonder and not twenty years old."<sup>50</sup> As the Prince had to pass through a number of parishes, the community made an effort "to show their loyalty and delight" by building arches.<sup>51</sup> Mitchell (1863) speaks of the money set aside by the House of Assembly for the Prince's visit had to be increased from £500 to £700, described by Mitchell<sup>52</sup> as a princely sum since the colony earned only £1.500 annually. Mitchell recalls that in response to the address given by the Chief Justice Darrell, the president of His Majesty's Council, in the Council Chamber, Prince Alfred replied in thanking the Members of the Council for their loyal address:

*It is true that Bermuda is but a small colony ... and the reception they have afforded me, is a pleasing indication of the affection which they bear towards the Queen, and one which I shall not fail to communicate to Her Majesty. From their geographical position and configuration, the importance of these Islands to the Mother country cannot be overrated, and I shall always regard them with a peculiar interest, from the benefits which our navy and commerce derive from their harbours and resources. Signed Alfred.*<sup>53</sup>

Like the Royal Navy, the Masonic lodges also provided a training ground for the royal family. Freemasonry served as a cultural network between the British Empire and its

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<sup>44</sup> Zuill, William E.S. Bermuda Sampler 1815-1850. Bermuda: The Bermuda Book Store, 1925, 121.

<sup>45</sup> Smith, A.F. Royal Visitors, 1861 Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh. Bermuda Historical Quarterly. 1953. Vol. 10 No. 4. Bermuda: Bermuda Historical Society, 150.

<sup>46</sup> Smith, A.F. Royal Visitors, 1861 Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh. Bermuda Historical Quarterly. 1953. Vol. 10 No. 4. Bermuda: Bermuda Historical Society, 150.

<sup>47</sup> Smith, A.F. Royal Visitors, 1861 Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh. Bermuda Historical Quarterly. 1953. Vol. 10 No. 4. Bermuda: Bermuda Historical Society, 150.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Smith 1953, 151

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> Mitchell, E. The Bermuda Convict Establishment. The Leisure Hour (1 August 1863). Reprinted in the Bermuda Journal of Archaeology and Maritime History, Vol. 9, 127, (1997). Bermuda: Bermuda Maritime Museum Press.

<sup>53</sup> Mitchell (1863, 126)



colonies. The earliest appearance of Freemasonry in Bermuda was in the eighteenth century when Alured Popple took up the post of Governor in 1738 and was appointed the first Grand Provincial Master in 1744<sup>54</sup> with nineteenth century examples Masonic leadership vested in Governor Captain Charles Elliott, R.N., and Superintendent of Convicts Sir William C.H. Burnaby (1790-1853) an English baronet, Freemason,<sup>55</sup> Knights Templar<sup>56</sup> and a captain in the Royal Navy who went to Bermuda in command of the prison hulk *Ardent*.<sup>57</sup> Freemasonry exhibited a truly remarkable level of immersion into all aspects of government, civic, societal, and philanthropic engagement. Many of the powerful and influential men in Bermudian society and government became Freemasons: governors, mayors, ministers, members of the Assembly, Governor's Council, army officers, educators, traders, and ordinary citizens joined the lodge. The overlapping of Freemasonry and Royalty already evident in Queen Victoria's family was also apparent across Bermudian society as shown by the presence of brethren in government, military, and economic interests were nearly complete. Historical records and secondary sources reveal that Freemasonry in Bermuda was an organization that taught governance, leveraged kinship ties, and used its power at all levels of Bermudian society. Bermuda's unique geographic, cultural, and economic landscape became a settled home for Freemasonry in the mid-Atlantic starting in the eighteenth century. Membership in Freemasonry often overlapped with royalty, church-affiliated and military-related associations and that augmented the commitment of Freemasons by carrying on considerable work within the community, ranging from educational missions to epidemic containment. According to Masonic historian Brother Alfred Milbourne,<sup>58</sup> all of the Bermuda Masonic lodges were active and engaged in providing charitable funds to the Grand Charity in England, helping local members in need, and remembering those who contributed their efforts to Masonry.

From the 1830s through the turn of the century, Freemasonry flourished on the isolated island of Bermuda, growing from the eleven Masonic lodges to twenty-seven by 1900.<sup>59</sup> Freemasonry was so integral to the political and societal culture of the island that the Governor rented the State House in St. George to the Masonic Lodge St. George for the nominal charge of a single peppercorn that is paid over in the Peppercorn ceremony still held annually today. Freemasons also set up numerous schools across the island that were supplied with bibles and teachers, and established several Sunday Schools.<sup>60</sup> Smith<sup>61</sup> contends that embedded transactions, that is, business deals that were ensconced within social relationships, engendered a degree of trust that removed much of the risk from an uncertain exchange. Freemasonry brethren included the most powerful and influential men in Bermudian society, from governors down through Bermuda society to the ordinary citizens. Freemasonry demonstrated during this time that it was a school or training arena

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<sup>54</sup> Milbourne 1961,1.

<sup>55</sup> Milbourne 1961,10.

<sup>56</sup> Atlantic Phoenix Lodge Bye-laws & Regulations 1925, MS in Bermuda Maritime Museum Collection.

<sup>57</sup> Milbourne 1961,10.

<sup>58</sup> Milbourne 1961, 6.

<sup>59</sup> St Jane, Michelle. The Bermuda Voluntary Sector 1800-1900. Indiana University Purdue University Indiana, 13 December 2006.

<sup>60</sup> The Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs. A History of Women in Bermuda. The 1994 Heritage Exhibition. Bermuda: The Government of Bermuda, 1994, 34.

<sup>61</sup> Smith 2003,163.

for future [white] government officials. To a lesser degree the Convict Establishment needed literate administrators and skilled labour replicated this.

Masonic lodges formed during the 1830s through to the 1870s had other challenges besides those promulgated in their various objectives. Three yellow fever epidemics occurred (1834, 1843 and 1856). It can be assumed that the brethren must have rallied to the assistance of their members and the community during this time of disease not to mention the need to protect the investment in the convicts who were a valuable resource in the building and maintaining of the colony infrastructure. Freemasonry was fuelled by the arrival in Bermuda of the 47<sup>th</sup> Regiment in 1783 that stayed through 1801. The 47<sup>th</sup> Regiment travelled with their Masonic lodge, Military Lodge, No. 192. It is well documented that the 47<sup>th</sup> Regiment assisted with the constitution of several Bermuda lodges such as the Prince Alfred Lodge #233 (originally Bermuda Lodge No. 507 established 1793). Rider<sup>62</sup> writes about the world travels of Queen Victoria's grandsons Princes Albert Victor and Prince George of Wales (1880-1882) with their tutor Reverend John N. Dalton, as sourced from their private journals, letters and notebooks documenting their three-year voyage aboard the HMS *Bacchante*. The fifteen-day Bermuda visit started on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March in 1880. Festivities included the usual duty calls, lunches, dinners, dances, with other highlights including a trip to Gibbs Hill Lighthouse, visits to forts, a fishing trip to North Rock resulting in the prize of a fifty pound rockfish that the Princes' diarised as "one of the most favourable days we ever spent."<sup>63</sup>

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of April 1880 Princes Albert Victor and George of Wales, laid the foundation stone for the Bermuda Sailors and Mariners Home at Ireland Island.<sup>64</sup> As noted by the editor of the *Royal Gazette*, Donald McPhee Lee, in his Annual Summary for 1880, both princes supported the effort by "contributing funds from their own pockets,"<sup>65</sup> thus providing an example of royal philanthropic awareness and willingness to contribute to a cause. Having had enjoyed the socializing, sailing and swimming, McCallan writes that the Princes concluded their visit with a diary entry saying that their Bermuda "bright cheery memories ... will ever remain with us."<sup>66</sup>

### **Hospitality labour.**

Bermuda has gone through several phases of public opinion. In 1857 it was "A Colony, A Fortress, A Prison."<sup>67</sup> By the later 1800s, however, Bermuda had apparently redeemed itself from a "pesthole" to "Nature's Fairyland."<sup>68</sup> This elevation in desirability was due in part, to the advent of the Little Ice Age that occurred in the late 1880s in North America.<sup>69</sup> To Bermuda's advantage in this regard was the introduction of "nineteenth century

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<sup>62</sup> Rider, Freemont and Cooper, Frederic T. 1928. *Rider's Bermuda: a guide book for travellers*. USA: Macmillan Co. Volume I.

<sup>63</sup> McCallan, Ernest A. *Royal Visitors, 1880 Prince Albert Victor, Duke of Clarence and Prince George, Duke of York*. *Bermuda Historical Quarterly*. 1953. Vol. 10 No. 4, 1953, 152. Bermuda: Bermuda Historical Society.

<sup>64</sup> Stranack 1990, 144.

<sup>65</sup> Mudd 1991, 567.

<sup>66</sup> McCallan 1953, 153.

<sup>67</sup> Fernand Whittingham 1857 title of A Plate emphasizing Bermuda's heat.

<sup>68</sup> McDowall, Duncan. From 'Pesthole' to 'Nature's Fairyland': The Aesthetic and Practical Origins of Bermuda Tourism 1800-1914, *Bermuda Archaeology and Maritime History*, Vol. 8. 1996, 125. Bermuda: Bermuda Maritime Museum Press.

<sup>69</sup> Grove, Jean A. *Little Ice Age*, USA: Routledge, 1988, 231.

climatotherapy.”<sup>70</sup> During that time Bermuda became known as “the land beyond icy grip of winter, a place of perpetual spring.”<sup>71</sup> The Governor of the day, General John Henry Lefroy, coined the phrase “this green oasis in the desert of Atlantic waters.”<sup>72</sup> The increasing glacial temperatures in the more northern climes<sup>73</sup> no doubt encouraged Princess Louise (1848-1939) the fourth daughter of Queen Victoria, to visit Bermuda as an escape from the harsh Canadian weather. In the winter of 1882 H.R.H. Princess Louise spent ten weeks at “Inglewood” a large house owned by the Honourable J.H. Trimmingham in Paget Parish Bermuda. She enjoyed the social life of the colony that included a garden party at Government House, cricket matches, amateur theatrics, dinner parties, sailing and dinghy racing for which she gave out the cups for the Royal Bermuda Yacht Club and Amateur Dinghy Club.<sup>74</sup> Mrs Alice Gosling MBE quotes the newspaper as reporting Princess Louise as saying that “everyone in Bermuda has given me such a warm welcome; even the red birds come to my window every morning and say, “Louise, Louise.”<sup>75</sup>

The visits of Princess Louise, the most famous visitor of this time, in all its pomp and ceremony caught the attention of the American public and travel writers.<sup>76</sup> The Hamilton Princess Hotel (1884) was named for Princess Louise. It has a portrait of the Princess in the foyer. On the upper level balcony of the hotel, photographs of her earlier visits escaping the cold Canadian winter hang today in proud display with other memorabilia showing the hotel’s development from a wooden two story veranda building to the multi-storied luxury resort hotel of today. One photo caption capture’s the Princess’ enjoyment of her twelve week visit where she is recorded to have said “My sojourn upon these islands, in that eternal spring ... among such ... genteel people, will, I assure you, be ever gratefully remembered by me.”

Frequent Royal visits were remembered and recorded, such as Prince George’s second visit to Bermuda, during his command of H. M. S. *Thrush* in 1890-91. Ernest McCallan (1874-1966)<sup>77</sup> writes of the Prince’s fondness for cricket, sailing and picnicking while in port at St. George’s. The Royal relationship with Bermuda was firmly established during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Bermudians recognised and seized upon the idea of combining dining, lodging, and activities to create the world’s first ever luxury destination vacation. Historically Bermudians had been creative in finding ways to attract business to her shores. Enterprising Bermudian hoteliers learned how to put an inviting spin on just about anything that would increase trade. For example, early in the summer of 1890, the Royal Barracks at St. George’s got wind of a rumour that the Second Battalion, *The Grenadier Guards* of London had been given an order to depart for Bermuda.<sup>78</sup> As the story goes, the normal business of *The Grenadier Guards* involved ceremonial appearances during peacetime, but it appears that “there was an incident ...

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> McDowall, 1996: 131.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid

<sup>73</sup> Grove, 1988: 231.

<sup>74</sup> Gosling, Alice E. Royal Visitors, 1880 Prince Albert Victor, Duke of Clarence and Prince George, Duke of York, Bermuda Historical Quarterly. Vol. 10 No. 4, (1953). Bermuda: Bermuda Historical Society, 1953, 153-155.

<sup>75</sup> Gosling 1953, 155.

<sup>76</sup> McDowall 1996,131-4

<sup>77</sup> McCallan 1953, 158.

<sup>78</sup> Willock, 1988:131.

involving the refusal of a few guardsmen to go on parade.”<sup>79</sup> Such action required a suitable punishment and, as such, *The Grenadier Guards* were “packed off to Bermuda” as recorded by the Army in the Parl Papers 1898.<sup>80</sup> Although the added pressure on military resources was not welcome, the local hoteliers were quick to market and promote this occurrence by “advertising the development in the New York newspapers” and going so far as to planning festivities that would increase business during the winter season. The targeted visitor was “wealthy Americans with attractive, eligible daughters intent on contracting marriage with several of the titled young bachelor officers.”<sup>81</sup> The winter ball held at the Hamilton Princess Hotel was attended by the commander of the H.M. S. Thrush none other than H.R.H. Prince George.<sup>82</sup> This enterprise too required a diverse pool of bodies to enable its functioning. Bermuda, in the Victorian era, was deeply entwined in the servicing of wealth and power of the confluence of interests of Royalty and the emerging commercial elite. The complexity of servicing the Empire, however, was not without its critics. One such was Charles John Huffam Dickens.

### **Dickens: a Critic of the Realm**

Charles John Huffam Dickens (1812 - 1870), the world-renowned author and social reformer who lived in England during the reign of Queen Victoria, was a keen observer, commentator, and critic of the social mores of the time. His literary masterpieces such as *Great Expectations* (1861), *Pickwick Papers* (1837) and *Dombey and Sons* (1848)<sup>83</sup> raised awareness and increased moral concern about the plight of the convict within the British Empire. Through his writing, Dickens advocated for the reform of aspects of the penal code and more humane treatment of prisoners. Indeed, *Great Expectations*, as Reid writes, was a “potentially destabilizing power” in that it “both drew upon, and was embedded within, wider cultures of exile.”<sup>84</sup> Irish convict John Mitche, a lawyer and author of the *Jail Journal* that was published in both Ireland and New York, may have added depth to Dickens’s concerns. After all, the Dickens family contains numerous mentions of bad debt. John Dickens, Charles Dickens’ father, a clerk in the Royal Navy, was arrested for debt in 1824 and stories of Charles Dickens’s sons relate that they were often living beyond their means resulting in large debts. Walter Landor Dickens (1841-1863) though achieving the rank of lieutenant in the East India Company, died leaving many unpaid bills (Adrian 1957, 85).<sup>85</sup>

Dickens did a stint on a Chartist Newspaper writing articles<sup>86</sup> for the radical *True Sun*.<sup>87</sup> His attention must have been captured when he read of the experiences of Irishman and lawyer, Jonathan Mitchel<sup>88</sup> as a result of outspokenness against the

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<sup>79</sup> Willock1988, 131

<sup>80</sup> Willock, 1988:131 footnote 7

<sup>81</sup> Willock 1988, 131

<sup>82</sup> Willock1988, 132

<sup>83</sup> Dickens, Charles 1848. *Dombey and Son* — Monthly numbers, October 1846 to April 1848. Project Gutenberg.

<sup>84</sup> Reid 2004, 62.

<sup>85</sup> Adrian, Arthur A. (1957). *Georgina Hogarth and the Dickens Circle*. New York: Kraus Reprint Company.

<sup>86</sup> <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/Jdickens.htm>

<sup>87</sup> <http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/21cc/struggle/chartists1/historicalsources/source5/chartistnewspapers.html>

<sup>88</sup> Brown and Maxwell 2004, 102.

debilitating effects of English public policies during the Irish potato famine. Mitchel "undertook a courageous denunciation" of the English policy makers [and] ... as chief writer for the newspaper the "*Nation*" Mitchel encouraged passive resistance in response to the policies of the English that were exacerbating the effects of the famine on the population. The English government "passed special legislation that would allow for him to be convicted as a felon" resulting in Mitchel's transportation to the Bermuda Convict Establishment at "ironically at Ireland Island."<sup>89</sup>

In contrast to Her Majesty, Dickens had no love of Freemasonry. He went so far as to mock their rites and social occasions in his writings, *Sketches by Boz* (1835) and *Barnaby Rudge* (1841).<sup>90</sup> The only formal documented evidence of the Dickens family link to Freemasonry is through his oldest son, Charles Culliford Boz Dickens (1837-1896), and in "the year after his father's death in 1871, joining Maybury Lodge on the 15th March" (Slater, 2002).<sup>91</sup> Unlike Charles Dickens' distaste for all things tied to the Brethren there were plentiful informal links between the Dickens family and the Freemasons. Dickens's father and sons were firmly entrenched in organizations with a strong masonic influence from the top down or in the colonies as Bermuda demonstrates with the presence of Freemasons in government, parliament, military-related associations, and economic interests. Charles Dickens' father, John Dickens was a clerk in the Royal Navy. Charles Dickens's sons, Walter Landor Dickens (1841-1863) achieved the rank of lieutenant in the East India Company; Brother Francis Jeffrey Dickens (1844-1886) served in the Bengal Mounted Police and then joined Canada's Northwest Mounted Police. A third son, Sydney Smith Haldimand Dickens (1847-1872) had a naval career. Edward Bulwer Lytton Dickens (1852-1902) joined his brother Alfred in Australia and became a member of the Parliament in New South Wales. The youngest son Henry Field Dickens (1847-1933), knighted in 1922, had a career in law and on the bench. Do Dickens's concerns hold any value for modern-day Bermuda?

Dickens provided an astute depiction of how wealth breeds political influence. As powerful Bermudian families opened up trade and economic opportunity this dynamic became entrenched on the Rock. Members of powerful families such as the Butterfields and Trimingham, most of whom were Freemasons, played important roles, not only in the island's governance but also on every civil platform. As Bermuda gained importance within the Empire, these families opened networks and developed relationships with members of the British Royal Family. As a result, the British Protectorate of Bermuda stayed under the British flag. Bermudians of British lineage have long recognized the political and economic benefits of staying within the British Empire. Although the sun has long since set on the "Empire" Bermudians managed to combine the best of British and Bermudian intellectual capital to raise Bermuda to new economic heights by using the international web of trade and influence to the benefit of the colony and the motherland in the twenty-first century. Certainly, this infrastructure was to be essential for the development of Bermuda as a centre for financial services, a thread of history that has left us with some significant questions as we trace the connections from the early activities of

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Dickens, Charles 1841. *Barnaby Rudge* — Weekly serial in *Master Humphrey's Clock*, 13 February 1841, to 27 November 1841. Project Gutenberg.

<sup>91</sup> Slater, Michael. October 2002. *MQ Magazine*. Issue 3. UK. Downloaded 10 December 2012 from <http://www.mqmagazine.co.uk/issue-3/p-55.php>.

the Knights Templar to modern day Bermuda.

The Knights Templar, credited with starting the banking system through the encrypted letters of credit out of Italy (Addison, 2001:10)<sup>92</sup> were a famous Christian military order whose symbols and rituals are controversially reported as being integrated into the formation of the Freemasons. Perhaps they were the initial seed for Bermuda's development into a financial services jurisdiction which started with the encampment of the Knights Templar Bermuda Preceptory No. 38 constituted under the Grand Lodge of England in 1797 that is still current today (Voorhis1962, 16).<sup>93</sup> N. T. Butterfield, founder of Butterfield Bank, established in 1852 still in business today, was admitted as a member of the Knights Templar in 1815.

With the dawning of the 1840s, the Atlantic Phoenix Lodge laid the foundation stone for their lodge on Reid Street in the City of Hamilton. The cornerstone was laid by Mrs Elliot who was "the wife of Captain Charles Elliott, R.N., the Governor, assisted by Bro Lord Butler, the youngest son of the Marquis of Ormonde, then serving in the Royal Navy, and Bro. Sir William C.H. Burnaby, both of whom were members of the Lodge."<sup>94</sup> Sir Burnaby, who joined the Knights Templar in 1845,<sup>95</sup> was a past Superintendent of Convicts. Governor Elliott took every opportunity to encourage the convicts in furthering their education and knowledge of the trades. These sorts of crossover cultural and political connections were the rule, rather than the exception, in Bermuda.

## Conclusion

During Victoria's reign the "search for security was extended ... commensurate with the changing needs of an extremely complex and diversified oceanic empire, based upon the principles of free trade ..."<sup>96</sup> The Victorian influence on trade and the training of Royals can be seen through Colonial calls. The visits of Queen Victoria's children, who acted as her ambassadors, were examples of the young Royals in their leadership training. These visits also popularised destinations throughout the Empire, thus opening the way for increased international trade and tourism. In time, the British came to realise that possession of the islands of Bermuda was the key to all the British Western Colonies. Bermuda historian William E.S. Zuill quotes the *Royal Gazette* (1827) recognized that if another country of any maritime strength controlled Bermuda there was a high probability of not only interrupting trade but possibility stopping it altogether.<sup>97</sup>

Due to Bermuda's genesis as a corporation nation,<sup>98</sup> we can study the Victorian-Dickens Era through the broad compass of the economy, extending our insights into

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<sup>92</sup>According to Addison, many Portuguese explorers were Knights Templar and the Knights Templar operated in countries and Mediterranean islands with strong links to Portugal, France, Holland, England and Scotland (Addison, 2001:8).

<sup>93</sup> Voorhis, H.V. 1962. Freemasonry in Bermuda. The American Lodge of Research Free and Accepted Masons. New York: Self-Published.

<sup>94</sup> Milbourne1961, 10

<sup>95</sup> Atlantic Phoenix Lodge Bye-laws & Regulations 1925, MS in Bermuda Maritime Museum Collection.

<sup>96</sup> Willock1988, 31.

<sup>97</sup> Zuill, William E.S. 1925, 121.

<sup>98</sup> Derber 2000.

business, the dynamics of wealth, and social issues. Willock<sup>99</sup> makes it clear that the Royal Navy's functions were broader than taking on "enemy battle fleets on the high seas." The Royal Navy was imperative to the maintenance of "uninterrupted oceanic communications, trade and commerce, the life threads of Britain's economic posture" and Britain's freedom on the high seas had to continue unimpeded by "enemy commerce raiders." An important bulwark of the Royal Navy's global reach was fortified by safe havens such as Bermuda with the infrastructure to support it. Building that infrastructure was accomplished largely through the hard work of convict labour sent in from other regions within the British Empire. Together with the Royals it could be said that the Masonic fraternity engraved the original template for international trade and tourism to be established in Bermuda.

We are concerned with the experiences of the past given in the account of colonial history and how human bodies of capital are mobilized today. Global companies extend their empires around the world and find very useful hubs such as Bermuda that run as a corporate nation<sup>100</sup> with the focus on profit and not on the human community. The nineteenth century need for abundant efficient pool of convict labour came, as technically skilled expatriates still do today, from around the globe. As Bermuda entered in to the twentieth first century the same complaints echo as it did during the nineteenth century when Governor Henry LeGuay Geary that "the present rate of wages of ... unskilled labourers is exorbitant, and almost prohibitive [because of] the scarcity of labour."<sup>101</sup> This statement is still relevant in the Bermuda market place of today. Convict labour, in particular, foreshadows elements of disenfranchisement that are still evident within Bermuda's financial services jurisdiction. Have the medieval hulks of yesteryear been replaced by the long hours tied to the markets as viewed from the desk and computer screen ... leaving employees with health issues and burn out. With market down turns, faced with redundancy, many Bermudan citizens, often the descendants of these early labourers are designated to unemployment and are thus left with no access to the means to provide for the high cost of living on the island. Did the penal system in Bermuda truthfully end in 1863? Could it be that the system was absorbed or imbedded into the Island's social structure? Referring to Bermuda's "unfortunate experience as a penal colony," Willock<sup>102</sup> says that the most pleasant thing that can be said about the Convict Establishment at Bermuda was that it closed in 1863. The archaic criminalisation of individuals for a civil debt, however, is alive and practiced in the courts of Bermuda today. Being criminalised for a civil debt in essence bans a person from ever being able to compete in the market place again. With one's name on the 'stop list', travel becomes impossible. One is unable to participate in the economy or escape The Rock. What connection must now be drawn between the principles of emancipation that has its roots in the promotion of democracy and freedom, was employed by the Masons and harnessed by Royalty for their mutual interest and resulted in the entrapment of the impoverished of Bermuda, the micro-example of the contemporary system of global trade and exchange?

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<sup>99</sup> Willock 1988, 58

<sup>100</sup> Derber 2000

<sup>101</sup> Brown, and Maxwell 2004, 121.

<sup>102</sup> Willock 1988, 44.

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### **Image of a Work of Art from a Database**

- Watercolour on paper of the Naval Base on Ireland Island in the Bermudas 1837 (IMG\_015794) Image used with permission of the National Museum of Bermuda.
- Dromedary. (IMG\_014504) Image used with permission of the National Museum of Bermuda.