

## George Postans - Scindian convict #17

George Samuel Postans, hailing from Hereford in England, was possibly the youngest convict sent to Western Australia aboard the first convict ship the *Scindian*, arriving 1 June 1850. There is speculation over his age when convicted in October 1847 for two charges of cottage robbery. News reports stated that he and his co-accused, 17-year-old blacksmith Richard Heath, were arraigned on several charges of cottage robbery at Ribbesford and Lindridge, in Herefordshire and that there were no less than four distinct indictments against them for similar robberies. Unfortunately for the wayward lads, being convicted of more than one crime meant that transportation was inevitable and both were sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude. Perhaps a testament to the youth of the offenders *Berrow's Worcester Journal* of Thursday, October 21, 1847 reported: "*On the sentence being pronounced one of the prisoners said "thank you, sir," whereat several of the Jury with questionable taste laughed audibly.*" Family sources state that George was 16-years-old at the time of his conviction and they believe that he may have taken the blame for his married older brother who had a family to support.

George's description at the time of his arrival was recorded as being 5' 3" tall, with light brown hair, blue eyes, an oval visage, fair complexion, and being of stout appearance. His name has variously been recorded as Postins, Postings and Postius. His prison record was added to as Convict Establishment records indicate that George was sentenced to 14 days from 10 May 1853 for being drunk. The following year he was held on suspicion of robbery at The Race Horse Public House in Fremantle along with George Brown, Jonas Haynes and Thomas Purcell. He remained incarcerated for a year until August 1855 when he petitioned for the matter to be investigated and supported by a letter from the committing Magistrate stating that Postins should be discharged, the Governor approved his release on 20 August.

George was issued with his Conditional Pardon on 30 November 1858 having served eleven years of his twenty-year sentence and was ready to embark on a new life. He had married widow Harriet Green (nee Lewington) six months earlier, around May 1858, in the Wesleyan Chapel at Fremantle. Harriett Lewington had been born in the early days of European settlement of the Swan River Colony, likely on 1 May 1836, to parents Susannah (nee Maydwell) and William Lewington. Harriet had two children in the four years of marriage to her first husband Edwin Green before his death in 1856. By the time she married George Postans in 1858 only her daughter Mary Green was alive.

George and Harriet had twelve children, the first a son named Samuel who was born in 1859 at Wanerenooka, a copper mine (and the first European settlement in what later became known as Northampton), where George was presumably working. Sadly, Samuel survived for just four days. Perhaps it was this tragedy that factored into the couple's decision to relocate to Pinjarra. According to descendant Daphne Edwards:

*"The family moved to Pinjarra where George worked in the timber industry until 1880 when the family relocated to the Rockingham District and purchased Lot No. 241 consisting of 100 acres situated on the south west corner of Long Swamp and named the area Hope Valley. George helped in the building of the school at Hope Valley on 3 acres of land donated by John Mortimer. In 1887 George acquired another 10 acres, a block adjoining the east and south borders of their existing property for market gardening."*

The next seven children (Emma, George, Harriet, Andrew, Alfred, David and Frederick) born to George and Harriet are all listed as being born at either Dandalup or Pinjarra between 1861 and 1871.

George was working hard and having some success at his trade as indicated by a Government Gazette notice in *The Inquirer and Commercial News*, Wednesday 26 February 1868 advising that the Government had accepted a tender from him to make additions and alterations to the Court House and Police Station in Pinjarrah (sic), for £91.

The family relocated in the next couple of years as two daughters Charlotte and Sarah were born in Rockingham in 1874 and 1876 respectively. The final two children, Charles and Hannah, are recorded as being born in Fremantle in 1877 and 1880. Around this time two tragic deaths rocked the family. The first was that of son Alfred John who died in 1875 aged seven years and then three years later, eleven-year-old Andrew died as reported in *The Herald*, of Saturday 1 June 1878:

*“SHOCKING DEATH.-A lad named Postan, 11 years old, went out on a pony a few day's back into the bush near Fremantle, to look for cattle. Not returning by the time expected a search was instituted and the police discovered the poor lad lying dead under his horse. From the position in which he was found it is thought the horse dropped dead suddenly, and before the little fellow could get out of the saddle, the horse rolled over on him and smothered him. The hind quarters of the horse were on the boy's back and head, the boy's face being pressed into the ground. An inquest was held before the district coroner, and a verdict of "Accidental Death" returned.”*

These were not the only tragedies to befall the family. Two more of their children died young; Charlotte in 1894, aged 20 years, and Charles in 1897, aged 19 years. Five of George's thirteen children died before he passed away at the age of 76 on 28 March 1905. He was buried in the Roman Catholic section of the Fremantle Cemetery. His widow Harriet survived him by twelve years and the following obituary in the *West Australian* on Monday 4 April 1927 reported on her passing:

*“OLD IDENTITY PASSES.*

*The Late Mrs. Harriet Postans.*

*Mrs. Harriet Postans, relict of the late George Postans, of Hope Valley, Rockingham, who was the oldest living white woman born in Western Australia, died on March 30 at the age of 90 years. Her mother, Susannah Maidwell, arrived in this State, accompanied by her parents, when twelve years of age. The party were members of the Peel Expedition of 1829, which comprised the first group of settlers to arrive in Western Australia. Mrs. Postans was married at Fremantle in 1858. After settling for short periods without success in various parts of the State from Toodyay to Pinjarra, the Postans settled near Rockingham, and named their farm Hope Valley, the name by which the district is still known.*

*Mrs. Postans had thirteen children, 63 grandchildren, 180 great-grandchildren, and four great-great-grandchildren, making a total issue of 260. The funeral cortege moved from St. Patrick's Church, Adelaide-street, Fremantle, on Friday morning, after a requiem mass had been*

*celebrated by the Rev. Fathers Neville and Hough. The remains were interred in the Roman Catholic portion of the Fremantle Cemetery, the Rev. Father J. Neville, O.M.I., officiating at the graveside in the presence of a large gathering, which included many old identities.”*

(N.B. Harriet's thirteenth child was her daughter Mary from her first marriage. Mary was married in Fremantle in 1876 to Angel De San Miguel who had arrived from Spain in 1868 with Bishop Salvado.)

George Postans grew from being a youthful multiple offender to a man of enterprise with strong family values. By the end of his life he had an extensive family with links through his wife to the earliest period of European settlement in the Swan River Colony. In honour of the family's market gardening enterprises two suburbs are named for them, Hope Valley and Postans.

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TPG Town Planning, Urban Design & Heritage, Heritage Interpretation Strategy for LandCorp Latitude 32 Industrial Land Development Project, concerning Hope Valley and Wattleup, December 2013, Appendix F.