

Thomas Faulds – Scindian Convict #22

Thomas Faulds was aged about 20 years when he and three other men assaulted and robbed a sheriff-officer, John McLaren, in Glasgow in April 1847. They were tried in the High Court of Glasgow in September 1847 and each sentenced to 14 years' transportation for the crime of robbery with violence. Some particulars of the trial were reported in the Greenock Advertiser and Clyde Commercial Journal, on Friday 1 October 1847:

“Alexander McQueen, Thomas Lauchlan, and Thomas Faulds, and John Dewar were charged with assaulting, robbing and stealing from the person of John McLaren, sheriff-officer, Steel Street, on the 13th of April, 1847, a gold watch, gold chain, gold seal, gold key, and gold ring. The prisoners all pled not guilty. After a lengthened trial, and addresses to the Jury from the Depute-Advocate, and Mr White, counsel for the prisoners, and the summing up by Lord Wood, the Jury returned a verdict of guilty against McQueen, Lauchlan and Faulds, and the charge against Dewar not proven. Dewar was dismissed from the bar, and the other three sentenced each to fourteen years' transportation. The prisoners on being removed from the bar behaved in a very improper manner.”

Faulds arrived in Western Australia on 1 June 1850, convict #22 aboard the *Scindian*, the first ship to transport convicts to the new Swan River Penal colony. Shortly after arrival Faulds' physical description was recorded as: height, 5' 4 1/2", brown hair, grey eyes, round rather flat visage, dark complexion, and stout appearance. His trade was recorded as carpenter and iron moulder, skills that were in high demand in the fledgling colony.

He was issued his ticket-of-leave on 14 February 1851 and shortly after found himself again in trouble with the law, and also again acting with violence:

The Inquirer and Commercial News, 6 March 1851:

“Thomas Faulds was fined 10s, and 3s costs, on Monday, for an assault on William Liles, mason, of Perth.”

After this he seems to have kept himself out of trouble for about 18 months until a theft that saw him returned to prison:

The Inquirer and Commercial News, 29 September 1852:

“Thomas Faulds, 22, ticket of leave holder, re-examined and sentenced to twelve months imprisonment with hard labour in irons for having stolen some goods from a boat belonging to James Dyer.”

Faulds must have behaved himself while back in the prison because the Convict Establishment records for August 20, 1853 reveal:

“Comptroller-General Henderson seeks the Governor’s sanction for a return of Faulds’ TOL and a remission of 27 days on Faulds’ sentence for industry and good conduct.”

Hard labour in irons at this time was likely quarrying limestone for the building of the Fremantle Prison. Returning to his own trade of carpentry and iron moulding would have been a much better use of Faulds’ skills. By November 1854 he was working out of the Bunbury Convict Depot.

There was more trouble ahead for Faulds though. The *Perth Gazette* of 4 July 1856 recorded:

“At the Quarter Sessions on Wednesday 2 July 1856 Thomas Faulds, ticket-of-leave man, was brought before judge and magistrates and charged with the manslaughter of Henry Barron at Busselton. Faulds had been drinking at Macgregor’s public house on 22 May when he was challenged by Barron to fight. Barron offered him any sum from £1 - £5 to take him on. Faulds was not interested in fighting and said he had no money, so Barron offered to fight him for a meal. He asked Barron his weight, to which he answered “9 stone” and Faulds replied “I am too heavy for you and it’s a good job for you”. Barron was not to be deterred and persisted in provoking Faulds by abusing him and his home country, Scotland. This was well-judged to get a reaction and Faulds stood and aimed a single punch at Barron, catching him above the left eye. This was typical of a one-blow knockout and Barron fell to the ground. Faulds subsequently got water and washed Barron’s face however the man had died. Evidence by the coroner who carried out the post-mortem on Barron indicated that there was a pre-existing medical condition that made it probable that his excitement combined with the blow caused his death. Faulds, to his good fortune, was found not guilty.”

He was lucky to get off with this charge although it seems likely that his reputation for hot-headedness was well-known and on this occasion every effort was made to provoke him into fighting.

One more Convict Establishment entry indicates that by the end of 1858 Faulds was still attracting the disapproval of the authorities. The Convict Establishment Stamp Book for 14 January 1859 records:

“22 - T. Faulds has forfeited claim to C.P.”

Fortunately for Faulds, this situation didn’t last for long. He was finally issued with his Conditional Pardon on 3 August 1859.

No further mention of Faulds can be found in the records after 1859. There are no marriage or death records for him in Western Australia and it is possible that he left the colony like many other Conditionally Pardoned convicts were doing at that time.

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