

Seymour Taylor – Scindian Convict #28

Born in March 1815 in Yaxley, Suffolk, to parents Charles and Mary Taylor, Seymour Taylor was 32 years of age and an unmarried sawyer when he was convicted of theft on 8 January 1847 and sentenced to 15 years' transportation. In fact, Taylor had been a regular visitor to the Ipswich courts and gaols. At the age of 21 in April 1836 he made his first appearance, was found guilty of larceny and imprisoned for 5 months. At age 23 in August 1838 he was acquitted of a burglary charge. He was not so lucky in March of 1839 when a charge of larceny was proven and he was sentenced to 7 years' transportation. It is not known where he served this sentence however the newspaper report indicates that he had only just returned to England having completed serving that sentence when he again turned to crime.

The local newspaper, the *Ipswich Journal*, gives details of Taylor's latest transgression:

IPSWICH, Friday, January 8th.

Seymour Taylor, 32, was charged with having stolen an oak stud, of the value of three shillings, the property of Mr. William Moule the younger.

Mr. O'Malley appeared for the prosecution; the prisoner was undefended.

The jury found the prisoner guilty, and a previous conviction having been proved against him, he was sentenced to be transported for 15 years.

It was stated that the prisoner only returned from transportation to this country but six months ago.

Taylor spent 9 months in the notorious Millbank Prison in London before being removed to the Wakefield Prison in West Yorkshire on 4 October 1847. Making his way through the system he was duly sent to Portland Prison on 20 December 1848, there awaiting transportation to Western Australia via the *Scindian*, arriving in the newly anointed penal colony on 1 June 1850. On arrival his physical description was recorded as being: height 5' 8 1/2 ", black hair, dark grey eyes, long, sunken visage, very dark complexion, gipsy appearance.

It was only a few months later, on 3 November 1850, that Taylor obtained his ticket-of-leave and was assigned to the Toodyay district working as a labourer for employer John Sewell. He was to be paid at the rate of 20 shillings per month. Taylor at some point moved into the employment of Edmund Brockman. Due to leave the employment of Edmund Brockman on 6 January 1853 to take up another job with Mr Tomkins and Mr Jenkinson, on 4 January Taylor departed for York to report his change of employment to the Resident Magistrate. He never made it into York and sadly, his body was not found until 6 months later.

The *Perth Gazette and Independent Journal* detailed:

Report of a Magisterial investigation into the circumstances attending the discovery of a body near the Salt River in the York district, has reached head quarters. The deceased has proved by papers found near the place where he was discovered, to be a ticket-of-leave holder named Seymour Taylor, who had been for some considerable time past missing. He had been in the service of Mr Edmund Brockman.

Taylor had likely been working at the Brockman property Seabrook near Northam which Edmund was running for his father William Locke Brockman. The walk to York should have taken less than a day, just a few hours. Edmund Brockman would likely have been much occupied with family matters at the time as his wife Deborah gave birth to their first child, a daughter, on the Seabrook, Salt River property on 25 January 1853. Concerned about how his actions may appear, Edmund Brockman wrote to the *Perth Gazette and Independent Journal* to put forward his position on the circumstances of the disappearance and subsequent death of Taylor:

"To the Editor of the " INDEPENDENT JOURNAL."

SIR, — Fearing lest blame should be attached to me, in consequence of the man Seymour Taylor, whose melancholy end has at last been ascertained, I beg you will kindly insert these few lines, containing the facts of the case. Taylor left my service on the 6th of January, and started to go through the bush to Messrs Tomkins and Jenkinson's, to perform a job of threshing which he had undertaken to do for them ; he went into York two days previous to his leaving me, to report himself, but it appears he failed in doing so. Shortly after Taylor's leaving me I went to Perth, and on my return home I inquired of my cook, if he knew how Taylor was getting on with his threshing ; he told me Taylor had never reached his destination. I made this inquiry on Saturday; January 22nd; I reported the loss of the man to Capt Meares on the Monday or Tuesday following ; it was impossible for me, even had I considered it my duty, to leave home at that time to search for him ; I some time after spoke to Mr Cowan about sending after him, and although I do not suppose the man could have lived a week at that season of the year, without food or water, which I stated to be my belief to Mr Cowan at the time, I still think his remains might have been searched for ; they were, however, a short time back accidentally discovered by some natives, and were afterwards taken to York by order of the authorities. Your obedient servant, E. R. BROCKMAN."

Sadly, for Seymour Taylor it seems he became lost or disoriented in the bush on his way to York. In the summer heat, he would have been seeking water and was drawn to a lake, only to find it to be a salt lake with no fresh drinking water. Taylor's date of death is recorded as January 1853. He would have been aged around 38 years.

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Sources:

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