

Frederick Ward – Scindian Convict #29

Frederick Ward's official record is one of inconsistencies. His age upon conviction was recorded as 27 years in 1847 and 30 years upon arrival in the Swan River Colony in 1850. By his later life he was recorded in the Fremantle Prison Registers as being 71 years of age in October of 1882, his birth date having retreated around ten years to 1811. The Wakefield Prison register states his occupation as being that of a pearl button maker although other official documents indicate his trade as being a labourer. Wakefield Prison register also states that he could neither read nor write however official Convict Establishment records list him as being literate. One further intriguing statement in his Wakefield Prison register, not apparent anywhere else, is that his prison term was extended to 15 years because he accused one of the witnesses at his trial of sodomy. Was Frederick Ward an inveterate liar or does inaccurate record-keeping account for the variance?

Frederick Ward was convicted on 5 March 1847 at the Birmingham Borough sessions of stealing 18 shillings from Joseph Jackson. Having previous convictions, and possibly speaking rashly in court about one of the witnesses, he received a sentence of fifteen years' transportation. No details have yet been discovered about his family or prior convictions. He came out to the Swan River Colony as prisoner #29, aboard the first convict ship to sail to Western Australia, the *Scindian*, and arrived on 1 June 1850. His physical description around the time of his arrival was: height, 5' 2 1/4", with dark brown hair, blue eyes, an oval visage, dark complexion, and being of stout appearance.

Ward was one of the first convicts to be employed in the colony, receiving his ticket-of-leave on 2 December 1850 and being assigned to the Toodyay district in the employment of George Syred as a labourer, receiving wages of 20 shillings per month. Syred held a spirit license to trade as a publican at the Halfway House at Baylup, in the Toodyay district around the time that Ward was employed by him. It is not known how long Ward remained in Toodyay however it was not more than a couple of years as by 1852 he was recorded to be in Perth on various occasions:

Inquirer, 7 April 1852, p 3, Police Intelligence:

(March) 26— *Frederick Ward, ticket-of-leave holder, loitering about town, being in no settled employment; directed to form an engagement immediately, or will be returned to station.*

Inquirer, 5 May 1852, p 2, Police Intelligence:

April 21 – Frederick Ward, ticket-of-leave holder, out of district without a pass; dismissed upon payment of costs.

Frederick got himself into further trouble with the law on 30 September 1853 when he was convicted of stealing a bed and pillow from the premises of a Mrs Rogers. He found himself back in the temporary Fremantle prison as a colonial prisoner and was put to work in the prison quarry at the time that the local limestone was being quarried to build the permanent Convict Establishment. During this period of incarceration, he was regularly in and out of the prison hospital with neuralgia and eye problems.

Following the completion of his gaol term he reverted to old habits, of wandering beyond where he was permitted to be as the *Perth Gazette* of 19 January 1855, reported:

"Frederick Ward, t.l., absent from Mount Eliza without a pass, 3 months hard labour."

Official correspondence between 1856 – 1860 records Ward as being transferred between Toodyay and Fremantle, firstly to the Fremantle Invalid Depot in October 1856 at the Governor's pleasure and then returning to Toodyay in August 1860 at the order of Comptroller of Convicts, E.Y. Henderson.

It wasn't long before Ward found himself back in the prison system. Prison registers of 1863 see him being released from a short spell in prison at the beginning of March, a date which coincided with the expiration of his period of sentence, and then returned there for a further period in August. It may have been after this time that he came into the employ of Mr Stephen Chipper, the proprietor of the United Service Hotel in Perth from 1866.

Sadly, the early 1880s show a pattern of drunken behaviour and several short stints of a week or less back in prison for his efforts until he applied for admission to the Invalid Depot in September 1882. He died on 21 May 1885 at the approximate age of 72 years with the newspapers recording his demise with the following brief statement:

"An old man named Frederick Ward for many years in the employ of Mr. Chipper, died at the Invalid Depot this morning."

Frederick Ward appears to have had no permanent home, which was characterised by him wandering beyond his assigned district while still under the control of the Convict system. On the expiration of his sentence in March 1863, it seems he still didn't know what to do with himself. Drunkenness, loneliness and detachment were common attributes of men within the convict system who never gained the stability that having a family or just social acceptance could provide.

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Wakefield Prison Register, HO 24_13, courtesy of Bevan Carter.