

## William Loveridge – Scindian Convict #34

On 6 March 1848, 26-year-old William Loveridge was convicted of committing arson at the Aylesbury Assizes. The descriptions of his actions read like those of a madman. Certainly, inviting someone to watch you set alight an oat stack knowing that it is a transportable offence sounds irrational. He was charged with perpetrating three acts of arson and found guilty. He was sentenced to 15 years' transportation.

*Lloyd's Weekly London Newspaper* reported on his trial on Sunday, March 12, 1848:

*"ASSIZE INTELLIGENCE, Aylesbury, Wednesday.*

*A Desperate Incendiary – William Loveridge, a labouring man, was charged with committing three desperate acts of incendiarism, on the night of the 18<sup>th</sup> of February, in the parishes of Great Brickhill, Little Brickhill, and Waler Eton, in the neighbourhood of Bletchley. Loveridge is twenty-eight years of age, and set down in the calendar as totally illiterate. He was charged with setting fire to a hovel belonging to Mr. A. Bradshaw, Little Brickhill. He was shown to have been in a public-house in the neighbourhood on the evening in question, and to have bought a box of lucifer matches from a shopkeeper. Soon after this, the fire at Mr. Bradshaw's broke out, and the prisoner was seen near it. The second fire occurred on the premises of Mr. Hammond, Great Brickhill; and again he was seen in the vicinity. Some minutes after the third fire was discovered at Waler Eton, on the premises of Mrs. Elizabeth Hall. A constable then seized him, and carried him to a lock-up. On searching his person, the box of lucifer matches was found in such a state as to show that it had been used. The destruction of property was very great. The jury returned a verdict of "Not Guilty." He was next charged with setting fire to a stack of corn, belonging to Mr. Hammond, which was destroyed. The evidence in this case was much stronger. A servant at Mr. Morris's farm, in the same locality, came out to see the fire at Mr. Hammond's; on getting into his master's farm-yard, the prisoner made his appearance, and went towards an oat-stack, putting his hand in his pocket as if to take out matches; the servant cried out to him in alarm, when he replied by swearing at him, and saying, "You may watch me if you choose." Prisoner then went away towards Waler Eton, where another fire broke out a quarter of an hour afterwards. Mr. Linnell, engineer, found him at Waler Eton, and apprehended him, when prisoner endeavoured to strike him, and said, "After I get my liberty, you'll be next." The jury without any hesitation, found him "Guilty" of this last charge. He was next charged with setting fire to a bean stack and a barley stack at Waler Eton; but this was not gone into. Sentenced to transportation for fifteen years."*

The prison registers reveal more information about William Loveridge and his journey through the prison system. As a 16-year-old Loveridge received his first conviction. He served three weeks in Parkhurst Prison from 15 July to 5 August 1838 for stealing wearing apparel. The following year he was charged with an alleged assault and rape of a woman named Eliza Harsant on 3 May 1839. During the case, the woman, who was described as "labouring under a very high degree of religious excitement," swore that Loveridge was not the person who had assaulted her and so the prosecutor moved onto proving the other charge. It was however, quite evident from the testimony of Loveridge's companions that night that he had been the one who went back and assaulted her in some way that they chose not to interfere with. The judge and jury subsequently found him guilty of violently assaulting and stealing a bundle of

clothing from Harsant, and a sentence of 7 years' transportation followed. The later prison registers recorded the conviction as being for rape. The sentence was likely served out on a prison hulk, however the evidence to confirm this theory has not yet been located.

His earlier crime and sentencing was reported as follows by the local newspaper *The Buckinghamshire Herald* on Saturday, July 20, 1839:

*"Bucks Summer Assizes*

*William Loveridge was charged with having at the Parish of Little Brickhill, feloniously and violently assaulted Elizabeth Harsant, and stolen from her a basket and a bundle, containing divers (sic) articles of wearing apparel. Verdict – Guilty - Sentence Seven years transportation."*

It was less than two years after completing this sentence that Loveridge committed multiple acts of arson. Once again sentenced to transportation, he served the initial 9 months of his time in the notorious Millbank Prison in London before being transferred to Wakefield Prison in West Yorkshire on 12 December 1848. The register at Wakefield records Loveridge's previous conviction as being for rape rather than larceny. He spent a further 9 months in Wakefield Prison before being transferred to Portland Prison on 8 August 1849, this time in readiness for transportation to Western Australia.

Loveridge arrived on 1 June 1850 as convict #34 aboard the *Scindian*, the first ship to transport convicts to the newly designated Swan River Penal Colony. His physical description was recorded in the prison registers as: height of 5' 7 1/2", with brown hair, blue eyes, a prominent visage, dark complexion, and being of stout appearance. The same records indicate that both of his parents, Benjamin and Anna Loveridge, were still alive and living in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire. His trade was that of a tinsman or brazier, an occupation in high demand as the new colony began to expand.

He was mentioned shortly after arrival as working as a blacksmith in the Superintendent's Orders dated September 20 1850:

*"Extra rations for men employed at sawyers, blacksmiths, mortar mixers and washers on such days as they are fully employed at their respective trades or occupations.*

*Blacksmiths - 6oz, bread, 8oz meat, 1 Pt Beer*

*48 James Baker, 10 Thomas Hurst, 34 Wm Loveridge, 44 Alexander Mathison."*

The opportunities to work and better himself possibly steadied Loveridge as records indicate that he was able to employ two ticket-of-leave men in 1852 and 1866 in Perth. However, in between these times he was reconvicted (details unknown) as he was released from Fremantle Prison on 20 January 1859 as a reconvicted prisoner, and in late 1860 he had a brief spell in the Perth lock-up for drunkenness.

*Inquirer, Weds 31 Oct 1860, p 2*

*“Perth Police Court*

*W. Loveridge, t.l., worse for liquor, and refusing to give a satisfactory account of himself to the police; 24 hours in lock-up.”*

No details have yet been found concerning his activities between this time and the early 1880s. Loveridge was in Toodyay when he was recommended for admission to Mt. Eliza Invalid Depot on 23 February 1883. He died at the Depot the following year on 11 October 1894, aged 73 years, and was buried in the East Perth Cemetery.

© Joanne Hyland, December 2019

Sources:

Births, Deaths, Marriages, Western Australia;

Erickson, R., O'Mara, G., *Convicts in Western Australia 1850-1887 : dictionary of Western Australians*. Volume IX, p 344;

Fremantle Prison Convict Database;

National Library of Australia, Trove Digitised Newspapers:

*The Inquirer and Commercial News*, Weds 31 Oct 1860, p 2;

Portland Prison Register, PCom2\_383, courtesy of Bevan Carter;

State Library of Western Australia: British Library Newspapers Online:

*Lloyd's Weekly London Newspaper* (London, England), Sunday, March 12, 1848; Issue 277. British Library Newspapers, Part I: 1800-1900;

*The Bucks Herald, etc* (Aylesbury, England), Saturday, July 20, 1839; pg. 2; Issue 394. *British Library Newspapers, Part III: 1741-1950*;

State Records Office of Western Australia, Convict registers: Cons 488-30, p. 100, letter 526; Cons 1156 R&D1-R&D2, R17, R21A, R21B;

Toodyay Historical Society, Convict Database, courtesy of Beth Frayne;

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