

William Drake – Scindian Convict #42

William was aged just 21 years when he was convicted of feloniously stealing a box and £117 from the home of Mrs Harriet Jupe of Calbourne, Newport, on the Isle of Wight. Newspaper reports indicate that he had been released from police custody just three weeks earlier on suspicion of having been involved in a previous crime. This was possibly the reason for his harsh sentence of 15 years' transportation handed down at the Newport Quarter Sessions on 27 October 1847. A baker by trade, literate and unmarried, William found himself on the first convict ship headed to Western Australia, the *Scindian*, arriving on 1 June 1850. His physical description at the time of his arrival was: height 5' 8", brown hair, blue eyes, oval visage, having a fresh, fair complexion and being of stout appearance.

William's fortunes in the new colony fluctuated. He was in charge, working in the bakehouse for the Convict Establishment from 8 October 1850 along with James Smith #9. He obtained his ticket-of-leave on the 28 March 1851, however just six months later on 11 October he was found to be outside after the curfew hour of 10pm and on resisting arrest he was then sentenced to six months' imprisonment with hard labour. Things were looking up the following year however, when he applied and was granted permission to marry Jane Dyer. Their daughter Jane Elizabeth was born in Perth in November 1853. Around the same time the Lynton Convict depot was being established at Port Gregory, 500kms north of Perth and just a few months later Drake was despatched there, along with his wife and infant daughter.

William worked for about a year as a whaler for Captain Henry Sanford, who had resigned from his position as assistant superintendent in charge of the convict depot at Port Gregory in November 1854 when, it was alleged, he had been utilising convict labour to construct his own home. Martin Gibb's study regarding the Lynton depot indicates that it was also illegal for convict labour to be employed at shore-whaling establishments. It seems clear that Sanford was abusing the power of his position. In April 1855, William agreed to take on the duties of pilot, guiding in sailing vessels to the small port. Sadly, during this year, William and Jane suffered the loss of their newborn son, also named William, aged just five days old. Conditions at the small settlement were known to be difficult and many of the convicts there were reported to be suffering from scurvy.

Little is known about what became of William over the next 7 years, apart from him being issued with a conditional pardon on 9 January 1857. Records however, indicate that William Drake died aged just 36 years on 8 April 1862. His widow Jane remarried to another Scindian ex-convict, Luke Jeffrey #56, in Fremantle in 1864. Sadly, Jane died the following year, aged 32 years. William and Jane's daughter, Jane Elizabeth married Joseph Eacott in Mandurah in 1869, and they had ten children born in Barragup and Mandurah between 1869 and 1883.

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