

## John Jermyn – Scindian Convict #6

John Jermyn was born in Limpenhoe, Norfolk on 20 December 1825 to parents William and Susannah, the youngest of six children. Although records indicate that Jermyn was unmarried, he had a daughter, Mary Ann Jermyn Cooper, born in Blofield, Norfolk in late 1847 to mother Clarissa Cooper. How was it then that Jermyn committed the offence of rape on Mrs Sophia Ellis of Langley on 13 February 1848 just a short time after his daughter was born?

The crime was an opportunistic one - occurring when the train Mrs Ellis was on went beyond her stop to Reedham, about five miles beyond and the other side of the River Yare from her home in Langley. The railway porter asked Jermyn, drinking at the nearby New Inn, to see her safely to the ferry crossing, however she left with another fellow who said he would take her to where she could catch the ferry across to Langley. Jermyn joined them some way into their journey and said he was asked to show her to the ferry-house as it was on the way to his own home. The pair going on alone, Jermyn offered her money to allow him to have his way and then took advantage of her when she refused, raping her near a ditch alongside the railway line. After she cried out "murder" he stated he would drown her or put her on the railway track to be run over if she continued to make noise. She offered him money and her clothing if he would stop but nothing would deter him. Following the attack, Jermyn continued to walk with her to the ferry-house then ran away. Two days later he was arrested. He was just 22 years of age and his fateful actions, and the sentence of 15 years' transportation brought down on him at the Norwich Lent Assizes in March 1848, was to alter the course of his life. Not less than his actions would have changed Sophia Ellis' life. On 19 November, 1848, nine months after the attack, her third son Edward was baptised. Could Edward have been the son of John Jermyn?

When Jermyn arrived in the Swan River Colony he was described as being 5' 9" tall, with brown hair, blue eyes, a long visage, fair complexion and of stout appearance. He was a labourer and shoemaker, literate and Protestant in religion. On the voyage out he had received a special commendation from the ship's surgeon for good behaviour, and the Character book of 1850 also noted that his character was good. Jermyn was awarded his ticket-of-leave on 14 June 1851 and his conditional pardon on 5 March 1856. During this time, Jermyn worked first at Perth and then later at the Northampton mines. A notice in the Perth Gazette, 28 October 1864 indicates that on 16 November 1864, Northampton Town Lot No. 19 at the upset price of £5 (the lowest possible or reserve price for a property at auction), would come into the possession of John Jermyn.

In the 1870s Jermyn was recorded as working as a shoemaker and was farming at Northampton. Neither Clarissa Cooper nor their daughter Mary Ann joined John in Western Australia. His older brother Benjamin however, married Clarissa's older sister Mary Ann cementing the ties between the Jermyn and Cooper families. When John was living in Northampton in 1873 his daughter Mary Ann married Samuel Sizer in Norfolk. The following year John died a month short of his 49<sup>th</sup> birthday on 17 November 1874 in Northampton. Advertisements relating to his death and estate were published and indicate that he had been married and his wife (details unknown) had died the year before him.

*West Australian Times*, 1 January 1875

*“A death, calling for enquiry, has taken place at Northampton. A man named Jarman [Jermyn], living at Northampton, was found dead in his house. Mr. J. Hosken, going past the house, saw the cattle and goats standing round the well, looking as though they had not had water for some days. This being an unusual occurrence, he went towards the house, when he detected a bad smell; His suspicions being aroused, he at once went for the police, who returned and broke open the door, when they found the body on the floor, evidently dead some time. As a remarkable and melancholy coincidence, Jarman's wife died under similar circumstances about a year ago. The Resident Magistrate and medical officer have gone to the mines to investigate the matter, but nothing yet is known.”*

Jermyn's assets were claimed by John Hosken, Northampton storekeeper in lieu of debts owed. The following notice appeared in *The West Australian Times* on Friday 2 April 1875, and again in *The Herald* newspaper on 17 April 1875:

*“In the Supreme Court of Western Australia. Ecclesiastical.  
To the next of Kin (if any) and all other Persons in general having or pretending to have any interest in the Estate and effects of John Jermyn late of Northampton Farmer deceased.  
Take notice that a Citation has issued under the seal of the Supreme Court dated the thirty-first day of MARCH 1875, whereby you are cited to appear within thirty days after the publication of this notice and accept or refuse Letters of Administration of the personal estate, and effects of the said John Jermyn deceased, or show cause why the same should not be granted to John Hosken the younger a Creditor of the said deceased with an intimation that in default of your appearing the said Letters of Administration will be as granted to the said John Hosken. S. H. PARKER, Agent for A. H. De Boulay; Proctor for the said John Hosken. Perth, April 2, 1875.”*

Over a year after John Jermyn's death his affairs were finally settled. *Herald*, 22 December 1875:

*“John Jermyn. Deceased.  
STATUTORY NOTICE TO CREDITORS. PURSUANT to the 29th section of the Act of Parliament of the 22nd and 23rd Victoria, chapter 5th entitled " An Act to further amend the law of property and relieve Trustees," and to the Ordinance of this Colony, 31st Victoria, No. 8, NOTICE is HEREBY GIVEN, that all creditors and other persons having any claims or demands upon or against the estate of John Jermyn, late of Northampton, in the colony of West Australia, farmer, who died at Northampton aforesaid on the 17th day of November, 1874, and letters of administration of whose personal estate were duly granted to John Hosken the younger, of Northampton aforesaid, storekeeper, by the Supreme Court of the said Colony in its Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction on the twenty-fourth day of July, 1875, are hereby required to send in writing the particulars of their claims or demands to the said John Hosken, at his residence aforesaid, or to Arthur Houssemayne Du Boulay, the solicitor of the said John Hosken, at the office of the said Arthur Houssemayne Du Boulay, at Geraldton, in the said colony, on or before the 24th day of December, 1875. AND NOTICE IS HEREBY ALSO GIVEN, that at the expiration of the last mentioned day, the said John Hosken will proceed to Distribute the assets of the said John Jermyn amongst the parties entitled thereto, having regard to the claims of which the said John Hosken has then had notice; and that the said John Hosken will not be liable for the assets, or any part thereof, so distributed to any person of whose claim the said John Hosken has not had notice at the time of the distribution. Dated*

*this 18th day of November, 1875. S. H. PARKER, Agent for a. H. Du Boulay, Solicitor of the said John Hosken.”*

NB: John Hosken Snr was a mining captain at Geraldine Mine and from 1872 owner of ‘The Miners Arms’ hotel in Northampton. His three sons, Martin, John and William were all hoteliers or storekeepers with interests in the Geraldton Hotel and the Irwin Hotel in Dongara.

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#### Sources:

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NB: *With grateful thanks to Diane Evans and Sue White for references, Midwest Convict Database*