

John Bradbury – Scindian Convict #66

John Bradbury was one of the five men convicted for the crime of rape among the 75 men of the *Scindian*, the first convict ship to arrive in Western Australia in June 1850. Such crimes were generally not reported on in any detail in the newspapers. In Bradbury's instance, he was convicted in Chester on 29 March 1848 along with another man, Joseph Fox, for raping Mary Leonard at Dukinfield. The sentence was 20 years' transportation. A hefty but justifiable sentence for a serious crime, and one for which the enormity would have been difficult to grasp at the age of 21.

At the time, Bradbury, an unmarried, engine attendant carter, was living with his father John, a labourer, his mother Ann having passed away when he was just six years old. After sentencing, both he and his co-convicted, 19-year-old Joseph Fox, were held in the notorious Millbank Prison in London. Bradbury was transferred to Wakefield Prison in Yorkshire on 12 December 1848 and subsequently to Portland Prison by 2 June 1849 awaiting transportation aboard the *Scindian* on 28 February 1850.

Bradbury was held in the temporary Convict Establishment in Fremantle, working locally, until his ticket-of-leave was issued on 14 December 1851. He is mentioned in the Superintendent's Orders dated the following day indicating that he was permitted to leave for the District of Toodyay. He left Fremantle on 17 December 1851 for Toodyay with John Roberts #153 and John Morris #67. They "were forwarded to Toodyay by Glydes boat this day." According to author Alison Cromb, at the time Bradbury arrived in Toodyay the settlement consisted of little more than a cluster of buildings near a ford crossing. The buildings included the military barracks with an adjacently-situated store, a couple of inns and a few privately-owned cottages. After straw huts were erected to house the Pensioner Guards, the convicts had been put to work on road construction until December 1851 when work commenced on the 'new' gaol in Old Toodyay. This work took twelve months to complete and is likely where Bradbury's labour was put to use.

In 1855 Bradbury made application for his Conditional Pardon to be issued and the records indicate that he was responded to by Comptroller-General Edmund Henderson on 22 May 1855:

"Your passage money is paid however you will not be entitled to your Cond. Pardon till Dec 15/55."

A note in the column indicates Bradbury was working in Port Gregory, at the site of the Lynton Convict Depot. The May 1855 date places Bradbury at Port Gregory two years after the first contingent of convicts and pensioner guards, three sappers and the superintendent arrived at the location. The first ticket-of-leave men were put to work quarrying the stone and constructing the buildings of the depot, whilst living in tents. Some of them worked on road construction and at the Geraldine Lead Mine, 50km north of the depot site. Bradbury is thought to have been there at least by 1854 when, due to slow progress on the construction of the depot buildings, all labour was redirected to hasten its completion.

Mary Albertus Bain writes in her history of the Victoria District that Captain H. A. Sanford, Superintendent at Lynton Convict Depot during Bradbury's time there, resigned his position

amongst allegations that government stores and convict labour from the depot had been used in the construction of his nearby homestead. Bradbury is thought to have been working for him as a carpenter during 1854 and subsequently called as a witness in the court case against Captain Sanford around December 1854.

In relation to Bradbury's Conditional Pardon, a further Convict Establishment file note records:

"27 February 1855

Reg. No. 66 John Bradbury is informed that his C.P. will become due on the 15th December 1855.

For Compt. Genl. ..."

Bradbury was issued with his Conditional Pardon in February 1856. It is likely he returned to Perth on the next available ship because he is recorded as having married Julianna White there in 1856. The couple had a child named William born in 1858, possibly in Perth as a shipping list printed in the *Inquirer* in on 2 February 1895 records:

"Les Trois Amis for Champion Bay, Port Gregory and Sharks Bay...Passengers Mrs Bradbury and child."

It appears likely that Bradbury had returned to Champion Bay before then and they were sailing up to join him. A further news *Inquirer* report on 11 July 1860 reveals John Bradbury's return to Perth:

"Arrived July 5-Schooner 'Favorite'... from Champion Bay. Passengers - Mr Symmons, Capt Harding, Mr Crowding, Mr Bibra, Mr Hicks, Master Shenton, J. Prosser, J. Patience, J. Bradbury, R. Anderson, and 10 prisoners."

John Bradbury is known to have left Western Australia for Callao in Peru on 10 March 1863. It seems possible that his wife and child remained in the Swan River Colony as on 22 May 1863 the *Perth Gazette* records that a Mrs Bradbury contributed five shillings to the Lancashire Relief fund whose collector at the Gwalla mine was Mrs J. L. Horrocks. A Julia Bradbury married Stephen Pearce Symons in 1867 at Fremantle. Nothing more is known of Bradbury after he departed Western Australia for Peru.

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