

Thomas Robinson – Scindian Convict #68

Thomas Robinson was a labourer, single and 21 years of age when he was convicted of two separate offences of housebreaking and theft of clothing and food which together amounted to him being sentenced to 14 years' transportation. The news article describing his crimes and trial portrays him as a vagrant living in a barn. He was found wearing some of the items of clothing he had stolen. The details were reported in the *Maidstone Journal and Kentish Advertiser* of 23 March 1847:

"Housebreaking at Wrotham

Thomas Robinson, 21, (N.) burglary, and stealing a quantity of provisions, a pipe, a pair of shoes and a hat, the property of James Hoppe, and one shawl, the property of Mary Baker, at Wrotham. Mr. Tassell conducted the prosecution, and Mr. Addison defended the prisoner. James Hoppe, examined. – He was a farmer at Wrotham. On Tuesday the 1st of December last he went to bed soon after 1 o'clock leaving the doors and windows secured. On going down stairs on the following morning about seven o'clock he discovered the shutters had been prised open and the parlour window unfastened, the glass being broken near the fastening, and the house entered. A pipe, a pair of shoes, a hat, shawl, and other articles were missing. About two o'clock in the afternoon James Venison came to him and asked if he had been robbed – saying he knew where his things were. They then went to a barn some distance off, where most of the articles he had lost were discovered, with the exception of the shawl and pipe which were not there. The hat, shoes, and pipe produced were his property. Afterwards ordered one of his workmen to watch the things in the barn.

James Vanison, examined. – Was a labourer at Wrotham. At about six o'clock in the morning of the 2nd December he went to work at a barn belonging to Mr. Larking. After working until eleven o'clock he was about to go out, when he perceived the prisoner clip out of a door opposite. Witness saw him distinctly, and halloed to him to come back to pay his lodging, he, however, walked away. Did not suspect anything until he heard Mr. Hoppe had had his house broken open, when he made search and found the articles produced, and some tea and butter in among the straw. Afterwards told Mr. Hoppe what he had discovered.

James Davis, examined. – On Wednesday the 2nd of December he watched in Mr. Larking's barn by order of Mr. Hoppe. Went about six o'clock at night, and between nine and ten o'clock the prisoner came into the barn, and laid down near the things. He laid till about 12 o'clock, when he came down into the door and the witness took him. Witness asked him if he was the man that slept there the night before and he said he was. Witness then told him he must go with him to his master, and prisoner offered him a shilling not to take him. The prisoner walked a little way with witness, and then ran away, and on witness overtaking him, prisoner pulled out his knife and said he'd give it him, upon which witness knocked him down, and afterwards took him to the prosecutor's. He was afterwards searched by the constable, and the shawl and pipe were found upon him.

Thomas Upton, constable of Wrotham deposed to taking the prisoner into custody at the house of the prosecutor. He at first refused to be searched, but subsequently submitted, and the pipe was found in his pocket and the hat on his head. The shawl was wrapped around his body.

Mary Barber, servant to the prosecutor, identified the shawl found upon the prisoner. Guilty.

The prisoner was charged upon a second indictment with burglariously breaking and entering the dwelling-house of Elizabeth Turner, at Kemsing, and stealing a coat, hat and other articles, the property of Thomas Turner, on the 27th of October."

The second crime was proven also and with a further term of 7 years added to his sentence, it became 14 years' transportation.

Robinson was sentenced on 15 March 1847 at the Maidstone Assizes, Kent. He was transferred from Maidstone to Millbank Prison in London on the banks of the Thames River, on 16 April 1847. He remained in the dank, illness-inducing conditions until 4 October 1847 when he was moved north to Wakefield Prison in West Yorkshire. His final transfer was to Portland Prison on 24 November 1848 and it was there that he served his sentence until collected by the *Scindian* on 28 February 1850 for transportation to the Swan River Colony.

After five months in the colony, on 7 November 1850, Robinson received his ticket-of-leave and was sent to work as a mason for Marshall Waller Clifton in the Wellington District at Australind, receiving £25 per annum wages. Robinson received his conditional pardon on 27 January 1854 and he is thought to have stayed in the region. A Thomas Robinson married Mary Burns (born in County Clare in 1837 to father Michael Burns) in the Vasse district in 1859. The couple had four children: John born in Dunsborough in 1860, Ann Maria born in Busselton 13 August 1861, Bridget born in Vasse on 1 March 1863 and Mary born in Sussex district on 16 November 1864.

Thomas did not have long with his wife and children. He is thought to have died in Busselton 9 November 1864, aged 38 years. This was a week before this youngest child Mary was born. With four children to support it was not long before his wife Mary married again. Records indicate that Mary Robinson married James O'Donnell in 1865 and the family moved to Quindalup where the couple had four children of their own. Mary O'Donnell died on 10 January 1912 in Quindalup aged 75 years.

Thomas and Mary Robinson's four children all married in due course.

John Burns Robinson was married with two children when he met with an accident where a bullock kicked him in the chin. He underwent a complicated operation however he died a few weeks later on 15 September 1903 aged 43 years. He was well-known in the Busselton area as a carpenter, and a jockey and for driving the mail coach for some time between Bunbury and Busselton. When he died a benefit concert and dance was held to raise funds to help support his wife and children.

Ann Maria Robinson was born in Busselton 13 August 1861. Ann married Arthur Charles Hutchins in Busselton in April 1885. The couple had 9 children born between 1885 and 1902. Ann died on 16 August 1937 in Nannup aged 76 years.

Bridget Burns Robinson married Edmund Ludlow Warner on 11 October 1882 in Busselton. The couple had 7 children born between 1883 and 1889 in various locations in the south west. Bridget died in Busselton on 13 November 1936, aged 71 years.

Mary was born in Bunbury, on 16 November 1864. She married Simon Carroll in Quindalup in 1886. The family had moved to Quindalup when Mary Robinson remarried to James

O'Donnell. It is not known if the couple had any children. None were listed when he died in 1920, just that he had been survived by his wife Mary. She went on to live to the age of 90 years dying on 6 December 1954 in Bunbury.

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Sources:

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