

# Convicts in the Family

---

*John THOMPSON (aka James LITTLE)*

## **PYRENEES CONVICT # 528 – Journey 1.**

James LITTLE arrived in Fremantle, Western Australia 28 June 1851, unmarried and a semi- literate grocer with previous convictions. Aged 27, he was sentenced at Durham, England on 1st January 1849 to 7 years Transportation for Larceny. He received his Ticket of Leave on arrival. A conditional Pardon was issued 23 April 1853 and that year he married Charlotte Ann LEEDER in York, Western Australia. James became a Clerk in the Commissary Department at Guildford in 1855. Six children were all born at Guildford, the youngest child William Thomas LITTLE Baptised 9 July 1865 died as an infant. Several of the daughters, including the youngest girl, Isabella Eliza LITTLE Born 1862 were to continue our trail of connections to other convicts.

James LITTLE expirée, was before the Perth Police Court on 3 March 1869 for being drunk and using obscene language, for which he received one month's Hard labour. Again finding himself before the Perth Police Court 20 March 1871, James was committed for Trial for stealing from the shop of S.T. Mitchell & Son, the sum of 5s. Listed in cases for Trial at the Supreme Court Perth at the next sitting commencing 5<sup>th</sup> April 1871. In the Inquirer and Commercial News, Perth Wednesday 12 April 1871, Page 2. Supreme Court: The calendar of the Sessions, which opened last Wednesday, was unusually heavy, comprising 22 cases, many of which were of a very serious nature and in which there was a large number of witnesses. The Court was occupied up to Saturday – There were however only three sitting days, no business having been done on Good Friday. In the list of the cases disposed of James LITTLE, for Larceny, received a sentence of 3 years penal servitude.

James now becoming **COLONIAL CONVICT # 10015** James LITTLE Died of Bronchitis in the Fremantle Prison Hospital on 17 October 1871. He was most likely buried in the former Skinner Street, Cemetery in Fremantle. His widow Charlotte LITTLE (nee LEEDER) re married 29 December 1876 in York, and became the 3<sup>rd</sup> spouse of convict Joseph WATKINS.

*Joseph WATKINS*

## **PYRENEES CONVICT # 1779 – Journey 2.**

Joseph WATKINS arrived in Fremantle, Western Australia 30 April 1853, he was listed as married with 1 child, a blacksmith's striker. Aged 29, he was sentenced at Worcester on 1st July 1850 to 7 years Transportation for Sheep stealing. Joseph was Baptised 20 December 1822 at Colwall, Herefordshire England. Joseph, aged 21, had been convicted in Hereford for fraud on 21 March 1844 and had been sentenced to 4 months gaol with hard labour for trying to obtain a gallon of gin from a John Cox, pretending he was getting it for Silvanus Vick of Old Castles in the Parish of Colwall. He married about 1849 in Colwall, Hannah maiden name unknown and had a daughter Mary Anne. In Worcester on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1850 Joseph was on Trial for Stealing 3 sheep from Hook Common on 3<sup>rd</sup> June.

He was found Guilty and Sentenced to 7 years Transportation. In the English Census on 30 March 1851 Joseph was residing as a Prisoner in Wakefield House of Corrections. Joseph WATKINS left England on 2 February 1853 bound for the Swan River Colony, on board the Pyrenees, the ninth of 37 shipments of male convicts destined for Western Australia, arriving in Fremantle 30 April 1853. Joseph was granted Ticket of Leave on arrival and had a relationship with Catherine TULLY, resulting in the birth of 4 daughters. They were not legally married. Catherine had arrived on the Irish Bride Ship "Palestine" from Plymouth in 1853. In York, Western Australian on the Census taken 31 December 1859 Joseph is mentioned as a carter ; semi-literate; C/E; with Catherine TULLY, illiterate plus 3 daughters. Another daughter is born in 1862. No death is recorded for Catherine, but Joseph marries at York on 29 December 1876 to Charlotte Ann LITTLE (nee LEEDER), widow of James LITTLE, expiree. They both died in 1901, Charlotte on 20 June at her daughter's in Beverley aged 69 after a long illness & Joseph suddenly on 24 July at Green Hills, near York aged 84. His Funeral departed from the residence of his son-in-law, Mr. R. BOYLE, husband of his youngest daughter Ellen (Helen) Tully WATKINS. Joseph was interred at Green Hills Cemetery.

Annie Jane LITTLE, eldest daughter of Charlotte & James LITTLE expiree, was born 12 August and Baptised, 23 September 1855 at Guildford. On 28 May 1876 she married Henry MORGAN at Greenough. Henry had arrived in the Colony as a child on 1 June 1850 on board the "Scindian". He was the son of Henry MORGAN an **ENROLLED PENSIONER GUARD**, who died 1850 after arrival that year, aged 47 and had served as a Private in 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Royal Artillery.

Mary Susannah LITTLE, third daughter of Charlotte & James LITTLE expiree, was born at Guildford in 1859. Her first marriage was to Convict Charles CHANCE .

### *Charles CHANCE*

#### **CLARA CONVICT # 4384 — Journey 1.**

Charles CHANCE Baptised 3 May 1829, Mosley Chapel, Kings Norton, Birmingham, Worcestershire, the son of a shoe maker. He married Elizabeth Barrat, 3 September 1854 St Philip's Cathedral, Birmingham. They had a daughter Winifred, Baptised 19 November 1854 Birmingham. Charles was arrested along with William & Alfred SMITH and Thomas HIORNS for a Daring Burglary at Barford in 1855. They were charged with burglariously breaking and entering a dwelling house and stealing a 10/ note, three watches and other articles, the property of Mr. John TIMS at Barford, on the 1<sup>st</sup> May.

A Newspaper report of the Oxfordshire Summer Assizes, states that John TIMS, farmer, living at Barford, near Banbury, said "about one o'clock on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May I woke up, and saw a light shining through the door; I opened the door and saw four men in the passage; they had something over their faces and followed me into the room. They told me and my wife to be quiet, or they would blow our brains out. They demanded that the keys should be given up to them; they broke open the drawers; one of the men had a pistol, and stood over me and my wife while another man tied me

and my wife together by the arms with a cord from the bedstead. They demanded my money, and I had a 10/- note in my pocket, which I gave up to them; it was a Banbury note. They took ten silver tea spoons, 6 table spoons, 3 watches 8/ in gold, 2 rings and about 2 quarts of brandy. “

The Judge summed up and went through the whole of the evidence with great care. With respect to the question of identity, he called attention to several corroborative facts, and to the prisoners being identified by different parties, and that HIORNS had worked on the farm occupied by the prosecutor. He said that the fact that a 10/- Banbury note having been passed the same day in Warwickshire by CHANCE, in company with some of the other prisoners, was well worthy of the attention of Jury, as well as the implements found upon them corresponding with those used on the night of the burglary. The Jury, after consulting a few minutes, returned a verdict of guilty against all four prisoners. The judge ordered them to be Transported for fifteen years on 12 July 1855.

Charles CHANCE arrived in Fremantle 3 July 1857 on board “Clara” He received his Ticket of Leave 4 Jun 1859, Conditional Pardon 1862 and Certificate of Freedom 12 Aug 1870 at York, Western Australia. Aged 47, he married Mary Susannah LITTLE aged 17 at York in 1876, and took up farming in Beverley District. They had a daughter Sarah in 1877, but the marriage didn’t last, she had left him by October 1880. He died on 2nd April 1902, aged 72 and was buried in the Beverley Anglican Cemetery.

Mary Susannah LITTLE meanwhile has a new relationship with Joseph William BILLINGS and their eldest son Joseph William BILLINGS is born 1888 at Pingelly. They married in 1889. Joseph William BILLINGS Jnr., was employed by Mr Trevelyan in contract work for the Beverley Roads Board, and lived in a tent near his employer’s house about a half a mile north of Mt Kokeby, seven miles south of Beverley . On the 11th February 1910, aged 22 years, he is arrested on charges of assault and having caused bodily harm and is committed for trial. In the Perth Criminal Court on 14th March Joe BILLINGS is found guilty of attempted serious offences against Miss Trevelyan aged 15. He had invaded their home at night in a savage way, and carried the girl away by force, also assaulting the mother. He was sentenced to five years’ imprisonment with hard labour for attempted rape, and was sent to Fremantle Prison and also spent time in Rottnest Prison. After his release in 1916, Joe enlisted in the Australian Infantry, becoming a Lance Corporal in the 44<sup>th</sup> Battalion. At age 30, Joseph William BILLINGS, son of Joseph William and Mary Susannah BILLINGS died of wounds received that day on 22 August 1918 in Picardie, France and is interred in The Daours Communal Cemetery.

Isabella Eliza LITTLE youngest daughter of James & Charlotte LITTLE born 27 May 1862 at Guildford. Her first marriage on 25 December 1877 at the Wesleyan Church York, was to George Henry WHEAT expiree.

### *George Henry WHEAT*

George WHEAT was born on 20 July 1846 to Mary (nee BOND) and Thomas WHEAT. George was Baptised on 23<sup>rd</sup> August at St Lawrence’s Bramshall, just west of Uttoxeter. His brother William WHEAT, also a convict was born on 4 December 1848 in Uttoxeter, Staffordshire. William was Baptised 25 February 1849 at St Mary’s Uttoxeter.

On the March 1851 English Census, the family were residing in Longton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire. Thomas WHEATE Head of the house recorded as a Potter, Slip Maker, Mary his wife at home with children Emma 6, George 4, and infant William 2. Their daughter Emma died shortly after this and was buried at St James, Longton on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1851.

The Potteries were a nightmare of smoke, pollution and wretched places in which to work. Children worked from about the age of seven. They started the day's work, as did their elders, at about 6.30am. The day would end at about 8.00pm, or later. On Saturday, the industry had a half-day, work finished at 4.00pm. Although many children worked from the age of seven, education was seen as the way to possible riches, and therefore something desirable. Children who were at work during the day went to Sunday schools, where they learnt the rudiments of reading and writing.

An article in the Staffordshire Advertiser , 6<sup>th</sup> March 1858, Police Intelligence at Hanley, a Highway Robbery by children is reported. George WHEAT, aged nine, William WHEAT, and Peter Bolderstone were charged with stealing a loaf of bread. The miserable little wretches, who had been in custody three times within two months, met a child in one of the streets in Longton and forcibly took from him a loaf of bread which he was carrying. The youngest boy was ordered to be kept in the police station two days; the other two were sent to Stafford Prison for two weeks, and to be privately whipped.

They appeared again 17<sup>th</sup> April 1858 – two miserable little creatures, named George and William WHEAT, respectively aged eleven and nine years were charged with attempting to break into a house occupied by a widow named Bloor, in Trentham Road, Longton. They appeared to be incorrigible. The bench followed the same course on this occasion, also directing that George WHEAT, while in gaol, was to be whipped. They had tried to obtain admission for the elder boy into a reformatory institution, but they were full. It was drawn to public attention that the County was in need of a reformatory, it was said that one could be filled from Longton alone, and certainly could from the potteries generally.

On 14<sup>th</sup> August 1858, five little boys were brought up for breaking into the garden of Mr Wood of Edensor Road, Longton and stealing there from a quantity of show gooseberries, valued at 12s. The two WHEATES, who have been before convicted of a similar offence, were sent to prison for a month; the other boys were fined 2s 6d each and costs.

Longton, 26 May 1860, Juvenile Offenders – William WHEAT, aged 12 years, Richard Abberley, 12 years and Enoch Mansell, aged 11 years were charged with having stolen a bottle of whisky, the property of Walter Sweattenham, of the Canning Inn, Fenton. WHEAT was a most incorrigible boy, having since he was seven years old been constantly before the magistrates on different charges. They were found guilty and sentenced to 21 days imprisonment. WHEAT, who had been before the magistrates at least eight times for his pilfering practices, told the police that Abberley was the biggest thief, and had taught him to steal. After their sentences they were to be transferred to a reformatory for four years each. Though on the 1861 English Census Thomas WHEAT, carter, Mary Housekeeper, George age 12 , Potter Squeezer and William age 10 Potter Mould make , are recorded at 37 Wellington Court Longton , George is also shown to be residing in Stafford Prison. In the 1864 Staffordshire Advertiser on 10<sup>th</sup> September a Felony reported on states that George WHEAT, William WHEAT, Thomas SPADEMAN and Joseph LOVATT, four youths were remanded last

week on a charge of Stealing a pair of boots at Longton, the property of Messrs Britton , were again remanded for a week. It was stated that Wm. WHEAT had only just come out of a reformatory.

17<sup>th</sup> September there is reported a Theft from a Shop Door, The four prisoners remanded last week on a charge of Stealing a pair of boots from the shop door of William Britton, shoe manufacturer, Longton. It appeared that the boots were missing on the 30<sup>th</sup> August from inside the shop door, and that on that day Spademan sent William WHEAT into the shop to get change for sixpence, which was refused. On WHEAT returning Spademan went into the shop, took down a pair of boots and joined his companions; after which all four went to a field in the direction of Dresden. They were followed and on coming up to them George WHEAT had a boot in each pocket. Spademan offered to sell the boots for three shillings to Frederick WRIGHT, who under the pretext of going to fetch the money, went and informed the police. On an officer making his appearance in the field, the prisoners ran leaving the boots behind them, but Thomas SPADEMAN and William WHEAT were at once captured. The prisoners were subsequently committed for trial at the Sessions. Joseph LOVATT and Thomas SPADEMAN were involved in a further case on the same day with stealing a pair of trousers at Burslem.

As a result of the trial at Staffordshire Quarter Sessions on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1864, George and William WHEAT , Thomas SPADEMAN and Joseph LOVATT were all tried for Larceny, having previous convictions for Felony were each sentenced to seven years penal servitude. Spademan pleaded guilty; the others were found guilty. In sentencing them to a long term of penal servitude , the Court did not do it so much for the purpose of keeping them from committing depredations as for the purpose of preventing them from leading other boys into the same habits which they had themselves pursued.

### *William WHEAT*

## **BELGRAVIA CONVICT # 9040**

William WHEAT was seventeen, single, able to read and write imperfectly and a potter. He was first placed in Millbank Prison, London and then in December 1865 on the Register at Portland, Dorset and in March 1866 is collected for Transportation on the Belgravia to Australia. This was the thirty fourth shipment to Western Australia . The Belgravia arrived in Fremantle on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1866 after a voyage of eighty eight days. William was recorded as aged twenty, five foot ten inches tall, with brown hair, hazel eyes, round visage, of fair complexion, middling stout appearance, slightly pock pitted with scars on both knees, and his next of kin was recorded as father Thomas, carter of Lambton (=Longton) Stoke upon Trent.

The final prison records show William's early demise: Drowned, Swan River 18<sup>th</sup> October 1866. This is recorded in the 31<sup>st</sup> October edition of the Inquirer and Commercial Newspaper, Perth:

FATAL ACCIDENT – A few days since, when one of the Government boats was passing the island at the Causeway flats, one of the crew, a probation prisoner named WHEAT, who was pushing the boat along with an oar, lost his balance and fell overboard. The helmsman, another probationer, named Carlos, immediately jumped in after him, but owing to his heavy clothing and the muddy state of the

water, was unable to recover him. The body has since been recovered, and an inquest held, at which a verdict of accidental death was recorded. The jury having brought the praiseworthy conduct of Carlos to the notice of the Comptroller general, the prisoner has had a portion of his sentence remitted.

William WHEAT was buried at East Perth Cemetery, he had no headstone.

### *George Henry WHEAT*

## **NORWWOD CONVICT # 9610**

On the 24 July 1865 George WHEAT age 18, Thomas SPADEMAN convict # 9580, and Jospheh LOVATT were removed to Chatham Prison. Joseph was transported to Western Australia 6 September 1866. George and Thomas SPADEMAN were both on board Norwood, arriving Fremantle 14 July 1867, after the death of his younger brother William. George's next of kin's residence recorded as Edensor Road, Longton, Staffordshire. His father Thomas and other children at the time of the 1871 English Census were living at 34 Edensor Road, his mother Mary had also died in Longton of Enteritis in June 1866.

George received an extra 28 Days on his sentence for misconduct prior to arrival. On probation he was released to York, Convict Depot 15 September 1867. He also had one month added for allowing convict 9617, Henry WILLIAMS to abscond from a working party. He eventually received his Ticket of Leave 20 September 1868 and worked in Beverley as a labourer. He got his certificate of Freedom to Road Maintenance in York 19 September 1877. He married Isabella Eliza LITTLE daughter of James LITTLE expirée, on Christmas day 1877 in York. He became a Railway employee, resided at Main Camp, Beverley and died here 23 May 1896 aged 49, leaving his wife with six children still at home.



Isabella Eliza WHEAT (nee LITTLE) widow of Convict George Henry WHEAT, in 1897 had her unregistered dog shot when it was worrying sheep. On 18 February 1900 she applies for Government relief and was almost destitute. She was a domestic, residing at Main Camp, Beverley. In September she re-married Joseph BOYER, a fettler for the railways. Joseph was the youngest son of Convict Griffith BOYER.

### *Griffith BOYER (aka BOWYER)*

## **RUNNYMEDE CONVICT # 4027**

Griffith BOYER was Baptised 7 August 1836 at Little Leigh, near Barnton, Cheshire. By 1851 the family had moved to Yorkshire, where his father was a Contractor for the railways, the sons also becoming railway labourers. Griffith age 19 was indicted at York, for the manslaughter of George Turton at Silkstone. The deceased was a working miner at Silkstone near Barnsley. 14<sup>th</sup> August 1854 was feast day at Silkstone and in the evening the deceased was at the "Bunch of Roses" public House. There was dancing going on and he remained at the public house till a little after 11pm when he went, intending to call for his father who was at a beer house opposite, so that they might go home together. When he arrived at the beer house he found some scuffling going on, the prisoner and his father being of the party. The deceased made some remark as to the impropriety of such proceedings and further altercation ensued. The deceased soon afterwards left the house and there were at the same time on the road the prisoner, his father and a brother and one or two other persons. William BOYER, the brother of the prisoner called out to the deceased saying, "If he would come to him he would give him it" or something to that effect. The deceased did go to him saying, "Now that I have come what would you mean to do" and presently a regular fight took place between the prisoner's brother and the deceased, the prisoner and others standing by. The two men fought. Each hit the other and at last they both went down the deceased being uppermost. While they were scuffling in this position the deceased was stabbed in the arm by someone. When he got up the parties separated. The prisoner and his father however followed the deceased and made a fresh attack on him, the prisoner having a knife with which he stabbed the deceased in three places, twice in the body and once in the thigh. The deceased finding himself wounded screamed out and was carried to the Bunch of Roses and medical aid was called in. The injuries were so severe in nature that it was deemed expedient to take his deposition the next day before a magistrate and he died a few days later on 20<sup>th</sup> August. In his deposition the deceased described the fight between himself and the prisoner's brother. Explained how he was kicked in the arm, the prisoner and his father being about at the time and swore positively that the three stabs he received afterwards were inflicted by the prisoner. For the defence, it was urged that the evidence adduced in support of the prosecution was confused and contradictory and that the identity of the prisoner, as the man who stabbed the deceased was not so conclusively and satisfactorily established as to justify the jury in saying that he was without doubt guilty of serious crime imputed to him. The jury retired to consider the verdict and after three-quarters of an hour they found the prisoner guilty.

Griffith BOYER, unmarried platelayer, sent to Portland Prison had received 15 years for manslaughter. He was transported to Western Australia on board "Runnymede" arriving in Fremantle 11 September 1856. He received his Ticket of Leave 9<sup>th</sup> July 1858, and married Isabella

LUCAS on 7<sup>th</sup> January 1861 at York, Western Australia. Twin daughters were born that year followed by five other children, including Joseph the youngest son born in 1869 who married Isabella Eliza WHEAT (nee LITTLE). Griffith died in the Colonial Hospital aged 43 years with Softening of the Brain and was buried in the Church of England section of the East Perth Cemetery, plot unknown.

## Summary

