

# JOHN HENRY BEESON, Hashemy Convict #161

by Roland Rayfield

John Henry Beeson arrived in Fremantle 25 October 1850 aboard convict ship *Hashemy* along with his older brother William.

This is where John Luff and John Henry Beeson, along with brother William, make their appearance in the Swan River Colony in Western Australia. All were fellow convicts aboard the *Hashemy*, the second convict ship to arrive in Fremantle. *Hashemy* was a 523-ton Class AE1 barque built in Howra, Calcutta, Bengal, India in 1817. She sailed under the command of John Ross, the Surgeon-General being John W. Bowler. The *Hashemy* left Portland, England on July 22, 1850 bound for the Swan River Colony. The voyage took 95 days and arrived in Fremantle on October 25, 1850 with 100 convicts and 131 passengers. Of these 104 were pensioner guards and their families, the number being made up of 32 guards, 24 wives, 24 sons and 24 daughters. [Erickson].

Prison records provide the following information about John Beeson:

Height: 5' 6¼"; Hair: Light brown; Eyes: Light hazel; Visage: Oval; Complexion: Fair; Appearance: Stout; Marks: Smallpox; School? Traditional school; Read? Well; Write? Indifferent Attended divine service? Attendance better in earlier days than latterly; Received sacrament? Never; Habits? Sober and attentive to work usually; Intellect? Sound; State of mind? Hopeful; Knowledge secular? Very limited; Religious? Limited Alleged cause of crime? Bad company.

Lived at Geraldton and Fremantle; Occupation: Warehouseman, Painter. Semi lit. C/E; Death Reg. 2212 Burial: Grave 158 Wesleyan. Buried with wife Sarah.

FOLLOWING is an account by John Herbert (Jack) Spencer recalling what he had been told about his grandfather John Henry Beeson. Dictated to his daughter Margaret when Jack was in his late eighties, between 1987 & 1990.

“John Henry Beeson was commonly known as Bill. He used to drive a team from Geraldton to the copper mines at Northampton. When the railway went through between Northampton and Geraldton teamsters were out of a job. John Beeson was born in Derbyshire. Dad thinks he came to Australia in the 1850s. He did not have a trade and did various labouring jobs. (We now know he came here as a convict in 1850). After he lived at Geraldton he worked for the firm Batemans in Fremantle. John Bateman operated about six whaling boats and when a signal, a huge basket, was hoisted on a mast at the Round House meaning that a school of whales had been seen between Fremantle and Rottneest Island, all the workers would then down tools and rush to board the whale boat. They might be away for up to a week or more, then come back and continue the building job. Sometimes they would chase a big fellow all day. When they made fast with a harpoon the whale would go like mad. You couldn't see the boat for foam, and when the whale came up to blow, two great fans of water would shoot out. They would never cut away unless darkness was coming on - they thought too much of the oil.

His wife, formerly Sarah Ann Woodward, was a big strong woman. She supplemented the family income by serving as a midwife.  
Margaret Hodgson nee Spencer.

John spent some time in the Geraldton area before returning to Fremantle until he died. He married Sarah Woodward, the daughter of William and Ann Woodward. She arrived in Fremantle 6 April 1859 on the Bride Ship *Hamilla Mitchell*. Her occupation shown on ship's register was Housemaid. They had 10 children, although one was stillborn. Their son Sydney, aged 58, was killed in a railway accident after falling off a railway trolley."

## CORONIAL INQUIRY

Into the death of Sydney Beeson

Before the acting coroner and a jury.... an inquisition was opened on Saturday last on the body of Sydney Beeson, railway employee, who was killed through a fall from a motor trolley on the railway line near Malcolm on the 27th. After identification of the body, Mr. August, station master at Leonora had been given, the inquiry was adjourned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> when the following evidence was submitted by Constable Newnham.

Dr. H. Carlisle stated *"I am a medical practitioner residing at Leonora. On the 27th when deceased was admitted to Leonora district hospital. Prior to being admitted to institution received a communication to the effect that a man had been injured on the railway line through being thrown from a trolley. In consequence of the message went to Gwalia railway station and was there when the deceased arrived. Deceased was very seriously injured, though at the time I examined him he was conscious. At the hospital made a thorough examination and found the following injuries: compound fracture of the right thigh, compound of shin bone and multiple fractures of all small bones in the right foot. The left leg was fractured above the ankle, the skull was fractured in two places, one at the baulk and the other at the base. Deceased lingered until about 4 am on the 28th of December. Shock through injury was the cause of death.*

*The injuries could have been sustained through being run over by a motor trolley. "*

Alfred Hanes sworn. *"...on 27th December was at the washaway on the railway line between Malcolm and Gwalia. Finished the work there about 3pm. Everything went all right until half a mile the other side of Malcolm. Deceased was sitting on the left-hand side driving the trolley, none of the tools were on my side.*

*Deceased was sitting on the opposite side to me. A man named McGuire was sitting alongside of the deceased. The bar slipped off the trolley and caught deceased under the legs. The point of the bar caught in one of the sleepers. The cause of the bar fall falling off in my opinion was the vibration. Deceased was thrown about 9 yards in front of the trolley and about 4 feet in the air. He fell on his head."*

The deceased was the leading hand. It was his duty to look after the tools. All the men on the trolley were perfectly sober.

After visiting the scene of the accident, he returned the following verdict: *"That the deceased met his death from injuries received by being thrown from a motor trolley running on the line between Malcolm and Kookynie while in the execution of his duty."*

No blame being attachable to anyone. Jury added after that they thought that some provision should be made to prevent the tools falling off either end of the trolley.

Also son Henry, aged 28, was killed falling from a horse.

## **INQUEST AT THE COURT HOUSE**

ON THE BODY OF HENRY BEESON-DIED 26 OCT 1895

### **VERDICT OF ACCIDENTAL DEATH**

The adjourned inquest touching the death of Henry Beeson, who died at the Hospital on Sunday last, was held at the Courthouse on Tuesday afternoon. The Coroner, Mr. Brown, G.R. presided. The jurymen were:- Mr. P. Stone (foreman), Mr. J. Stokes and Mr. G. H. Eaton.

Sergeant Lavery examined the witnesses on behalf of the police.

Joseph Lake, a farmer living on the Front Flats, said: - *"I recollect the 26<sup>th</sup> of October, I saw Henry Beeson about three miles from Geraldton, between 11 and 12 o'clock on Saturday night. He was by himself and was singing. I said, "What is all the row about?" Deceased replied that he thought Tom Tracey and George Baker were coming, and asked me if I had seen them. Beeson was not sober. We were somewhere about half a mile the other side of Southgate's old house. I was behind the deceased when I saw his horse fall. In getting off my horse I fell onto my face. I lifted up Beeson, and asked him if he was hurt. Deceased did not answer, but commenced to vomit. I sent my son to Cane's house for assistance. The Canes came down to the road. We found that the deceased did not have any of his limbs broken, but there was a lump and a dent on his head. Mrs. Cane told her son not to take charge of deceased, so my son and I lifted Beeson into the bushes, and came back at once to see the police. On the way back we met Tom Tracey, George Baker, and Henry Riches. I told them Beeson's horse had fallen down, and that the deceased could not speak. We returned to where deceased was lying. We came to the conclusion that he was not hurt, but had been stunned, and that the drink was affecting him. I wanted to know what we should do. Someone said it would be as well to take him to Paddy Butler's place, as deceased had been working there. We could not get a vehicle at Cane's, so Riches said he would carry him to Paddy's on a horse. We eventually left him at Butler's. When I got home it was after midnight. It is not true that I and Beeson were racing that night. I saw deceased horse go down. I pulled up before I got to him."*

The son of the last witness next gave evidence. He said: *"I was with my father when we caught up to Beeson, who was singing. My father asked deceased what the row was all about. Beeson replied, "I am having a song to myself." We rode along talking, and when we had got past Southgate's house we made our horses go into a slow canter. Beeson's horse stumbled and fell. My father, while trying to get off his horse, fell on his face. I was sent to Cane's for assistance. They did not do anything, so I with my father put deceased off the road, and went*

*back to get the police. We met some men on the road, and we turned back and took the deceased to Butler's house.*

*Patrick Butler said the deceased had been in his employ for some time. On Sunday morning, about 12.30 a.m., deceased was brought to his house by Luke and others. Beeson appeared to be in a heavy sleep. He put him on a bed. The men went away to their homes. Witness went to have a look at Beeson, and found him breathing freely. Butler blew the light out, and went to bed. He intended to have a look at deceased at about 3 o'clock, but witness fell asleep, and did not see him again till daylight, when he found him just as he had left him. He tried to wake Beeson, but could not do so. He went and got Mr. McConkey, who said he thought Beeson was dead, as his hands were so cold. McConkey advised witness to take deceased to the Hospital. Butler came to Geraldton for the doctor, and he told him to fetch the deceased to the Hospital."*

To Mr. Stone: Luke was under the influence of drink. He (witness) had never seen Beeson drunk in his life.

Dr. Elliott stated: *"Henry Beeson was brought to the Hospital on the morning of 27<sup>th</sup> October. He was in a comatose state and died at two o'clock in the afternoon. On the morning of the 28<sup>th</sup> I made post mortem examination of the body and the following was the result:- Rigor Mortis took place two hours after Beeson died at the Hospital. His neck, arms, back, and legs were congested. There was an abrasion on the thigh about six inches long, also a contusion and abrasion on the right side of the skull over the parietal bone. Deceased was 28 years of age. On the removal of his scalp, I found a large clot of blood reaching from one temporal bone to the other. The inside of the scalp was congested and clotted. The right temporal muscle was very much congested and discoloured. I also found that on the removal of the cranium, that the membranes of the brain were congested especially on the left side. There was a large clot of blood extending over the left hemisphere of brain. On taking out the brain I discovered a fracture extending from the centre of the right parietal bone to the centre of the base of the skull. The base of the brain was very much congested, especially on the right side. On opening the chest I found that the right side was full of liquid blood. The left side was empty, otherwise, the heart was healthy. The stomach was healthy. It contained a quantity of light-coloured fluid. The cause of death was occasioned by the fracture of the skull at the base, also haemorrhage and concussion of the brain. The skull was very thin."*

The jury, after a few moments' consideration, returned a verdict that the deceased, Henry Beeson, had met his death through accidentally falling from a horse.

**By Roland Rayfield (descendant of Hashemy convicts John Luff and John Henry Beeson)**

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