

Theodore Johnson, 2923, *Sea Park*

Researched by Marcia Watson

Theodore Johnson is a mystery man as far as family goes. He appeared at Glamorganshire County Sessions held in Swansea in October 1849, where he received one month in prison for larceny.

Theodore was hardly out of gaol when he was convicted again for stealing in December 1849, one Guernsey frock valued at sixpence and other articles of clothing, the property of Ebenezer Morris. It is unknown if the clothing was for himself or if he intended to pawn the articles. He was sentenced to three months in gaol, part of which was solitary confinement. Newspapers described him as 'the black', a man of colour' and 'real black'.

Two days after being released, Theodore was in trouble again. This time, he was armed with a knife and stole sixpence, a velvet coat and a neckerchief from Philip Lewis at Merthyr Tydfil. According to the arresting policeman, Theodore wished he had "finished Lewis off." When being called upon to plead at his trial, he said he was a native of North America and therefore claimed he needed a jury with six of his countrymen and six Englishmen. The judge told him that, being an alien, he was entitled to have on the jury six foreigners but not six of his countrymen. The trial was postponed to the next day to enable a jury to be assembled, making little difference; Theodore was sentenced to be transported for ten years.

The prison registers give a little insight into Theodore:

Black hair, black eyes, black complexion, stout, single, 5'8¼", can read and write imperfectly, a labourer, and Methodist. The remarks recorded he was a man of colour and had tattoos – sailor dancing on the left forearm; woman and anchor on the right forearm. The residence of his family or friends was unknown.

Theodore spent eight weeks in Cardiff Gaol, then ten months and six days at Millbank Prison, where his behaviour was good. The 1851 census taken while he was there shows his occupation as a mariner. From Millbank, Theodore went to the *York Hulk* at Gosport; he continued to be very well-behaved. Finally, in June 1852, he was transferred to Portsmouth Prison. Theodore spent three years, five months and 12 days on public works in England before boarding the *Sea Park* on 20 December 1853 for Western Australia.

During the voyage, the Surgeon's journal records:

Folios 6-7: Theodore Johnston, a 'black man', aged 23, prisoner; case number 5; catarrh. Put on sick list, 16 March 1854 while at sea, sent to hospital on arrival at Fremantle.

On arrival at Fremantle on 5 April 1854, Theodore received a Ticket of Leave, but it was of little use to him as he died on 8 April 1854 from pneumonia.