

Joseph Thomas Atyeo, Convict No. 8261 – by Harold Coppock

Twenty male convicts convicted of rape or attempted rape arrived in Fremantle on the *Racehorse* on the 10th August 1865. The following is the story of one of them.

Joseph Thomas Atyeo - Convict No. 8261, was born on 31st July 1844 in Hewish, Somerset, England and was the eldest of five sons of John and Phoebe Atyeo. When old enough he worked as a labourer on his father's farm. By the time he was nineteen he was a stonemason/labourer.

In the district a woman of the same age as Joseph was working as an assistant to her father who owned a stone quarry. The quarry employed two boys and two men so it is possible he may have been one of these. On 1 August 1863 Joseph raped the stone quarry owner's daughter. At the Somerset Assizes he was sentenced to eight years imprisonment and was transported on the convict transport ship on the *Racehorse* in 1865 to Fremantle.

The victim married a local farmer in 1874 when she was thirty but never had any children. She died in Somerset in 1921. I have decided to withhold her name and her other details.

Joseph was transferred to Chatham prison before embarking on the *Racehorse*. He was described as being 5 foot 5 ½ inches high with a stout build with red hair and hazel eyes. He was granted his ticket-of-leave on 16 March 1867. He worked in Fremantle until 23 August 1867 when he transferred to the Toodyay hiring depot.

On 22 February 1868 he was fined 5 shillings for leaving a cart in the middle of the road. While at Toodyay he was granted his Conditional Release on 2 October 1869. In February 1871 he and another man were arrested for not handing in a large sum of money found on a road leading into Toodyay. The money was lost by Mrs Eliza Tracey and she advertised a number of times about it without result.

LOST.

ON the 19th inst., on the Toodyay Road, between Baylup and Newcastle, a parcel containing £35, in £1 bank notes. Any person restoring the same to the undersigned, will be handsomely rewarded.

ELIZA TRACEY,
Warriloo, Toodyay Road.

Oct. 21st, 1870. 12 xi

Joseph was initially sentenced to three years for this offence and his conditional release was cancelled. For some reason this sentence was withdrawn. On 20 March he given a new ticket-of-leave and on the 25 March 1871, he left Fremantle and returned to Toodyay. He gained his Conditional Freedom at Toodyay on 26 September 1871.

Note: his family name has been incorrectly spelt in the government records as Etyeo. I have been unable to find out any more about him after 1871.

Harold Coppock Member No. 7983

Sources: UK BDM records; UK census records; British newspaper archives; National Library of Australia-TROVE; UK and Western Australian Convict records.

Editor's Note: Thanks Harold for sending us your interesting story about convict Joseph Thomas Atyeo, we greatly appreciate your contribution. The Toodyay Convict Database lists Joseph Etyeo employed as a stonemason by George Meredith, a former Racehorse convict #2820.

Our January meeting generated great interest and has encouraged several people to share their research. This is exactly what we had hoped for! We were very happy that afterwards, several attendees expressed they were inspired to review their own research and potentially submit stories for the WA Convict Publication Project! We look forward to that!