

ALIAS OR CLERICAL BLUNDER?

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When I was extracting the convict absconder (see p) from the Government Gazette, one name was unclear. It looked like William THOMASON (6189) but may have been THOMPSON. I checked the Convict Book, there was no THOMASON but a William THOMAS (SCOTT Henry)(6189). This was odd, as on the list of absconders there was also a Henry SCOTT (6188). The Convict Book was a little confusing as gave both men the same number (6189), appearing to indicate they were the same person, but gave different details. The Bond book listed them as THOMASON(6189) and SCOTT(6188), no indication of an alias.

I checked the printed Shipping List and that added to the confusion, THOMASON had become JAMESON. Back to the Convict Book and under JAMESON was - 'see THOMASON William 6189 or 6188' - but there was no THOMASON!

I then decided to access the Convict Database on line at the Fremantle Prison. This did not really help as it had:

SCOTT, Henry, 6188, aka THOMAS William

THOMAS, William, 6189, aka JAMESON, SCOTT Henry

I was totally puzzled, where did the name THOMAS come from?

Being unfamiliar with the WA convict records and not being related to either of these men, I should have let sleeping dogs lie. But curiosity took over and I decided to tackle the Convict records, Acc. 1156 "R", just looking for registers containing the convict numbers 6188 and 6189.

I looked at Registers R7, R9, R11 and R15. Luckily, Henry SCOTT was re-convicted twice so there was the added bonus of more records, under convict numbers 9375 and 10,220.

The results are in table 1. Convict Registers

1. The microfilm Shipping List, has a correction. At the bottom of the page, the 'x' next to both names is explained. Written in freehand is - 6188 Henry SCOTT and 6189 William THOMASON (Jameson has a line through it). It is unclear if you just change the names or the entire line of information, I think it is the former. This then is consistent with the General Convict Register R11. Unfortunately there is no indication of who or when these changes were made.
2. The Bond Book states it is based on shipping lists and convict registers (probably Register R11 as this General Register contains the most information)
3. The information for the list of absconders would most likely be taken from Register R11.

Therefore we have: Shipping/Bond Book/R11/Absconders – all with similar personal information.
R7 and R9 with different personal information

Table 1. CONVICT REGISTERS

Convict 6188

Name	William JAMESON	Henry SCOTT	Henry SCOTT	Henry SCOTT	Henry SCOTT	Henry SCOTT	Henry SCOTT	Henry SCOTT	Henry SCOTT
	Shipping	Bond Book	R 7	R 9	R 11 Gen. Reg	Absconder list	Shipping list	R 15 Gen. Reg	Shipping list
WA Number	6188	6188	6188	6188	6188	6188	9375	9375	10,220
Trial		1860 CCC	27.02.1860 CCC	27.02.1860 CCC	27.02.1860 CCC	27.02.1860 CCC	04.04.1867 Perth	04.04.1867 Perth	03.10.1877 Perth
Crime		Stealing	Larc. from person	Larc. from person	Larc. from person	Larceny		Simple larceny	
Sentence		8 yrs	8yrs	8yrs	8 yrs	8 years	3 yrs	3yrs	6 years
Status	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single			Single	
R & W		Literate	Both well	Both	Imperfect			Both	
Trade	Bricklayer	Bricklayer	Waiter	Waiter	Bricklayer	Bricklayer	Tailor	Tailor	Tailor/Baker
Age	29	b. 1833	26		29	34	33	33	43
Height	5' 7¼"				5' 7¼"	5' 7¼"	5' 2½"	5' 2½"	5' 2½"
Hair	D brown				Dark brown	Dark brown	Brown	Brown	Light brown
Eyes	D blue				Dark blue	Dark blue	Dark grey	Dark grey	Blue
Visage	Oval				Oval	Oval	Long	Long	Long
Complexion	Dark				Dark	Dark	Fair	Fair	Fair
Appearance	Stout				Stout	Stout	Middling stout	Middling stout	Middling stout
Marks	Cut across nose				Cut across bridge of nose	Cut across bridge of nose	Ring each finger, left hand	Ring each finger left hand	Star & anchor left hand
Working as		Lab/herdsman			lab/herdsman			lab. and baker	
Previous conv.		Yes	4yrs and 2 other	3					
Work areas		Swan, York		Albany 1862	York, Guildford 1863-66	Swan, Jan 1866		Perth	

Convict 6189

Name	Henry SCOTT	William THOMASON	William THOMASON	William THOMASON	William THOMASON	William THOMASON	<p>How did they make Register R11? Could they have gone through and put the name and number on each page and added personal information later? When other details were added to this register over the following years, the clerk would probably have located the convict by his number.</p> <p>What if there was a clerical error when the personal information was added to Register R11.</p> <p>If you swap just this information (from Status to Marks) on both convicts it then appears to make more sense.</p> <p>See <i>Table 2</i>. Swapping Personal Information on Register R11.</p> <p>William THOMASON would become a bricklayer and would be working as a bricklayer.</p> <p>Henry SCOTT (6188) would then match the information for 9375 and 10,220.</p>
	Shipping	Bond Book	R7	R9	R 11 Gen Reg	Absconder list	
WA Number	6189	6189	6189	6189	6189	6189	
Trial		1860 Chester	26.03.1859 Chester	26.03.1859 Chester	26.03.1859 Chester	26.03.1859 Chester	
Crime		Sacrilege	Sacrilege	Sacrilege	Sacrilege	Sacrilege	
Sentence		15 yrs	15 yrs	15 yrs	15 yrs	15 years	
Status	Single	Single	Married, 1 child	Wife, 1 child			
R&W		Semi-lit	Imperfect	Imperfect			
Trade	Waiter	Waiter	Bricklayer	Bricklayer	Waiter	Waiter	
Age	28	b. 1834	26		28	33	
Height	5' 2 ³ / ₄ "				5' 2 ¹ / ₂ "	5' 2 ³ / ₄ "	
Hair	L brown				Dark brown	Light brown	
Eyes	Blue				Blue	Blue	
Visage	Long				Long	Long	
Complexion	Fair				Fair	Fair	
Appearance	Middling stout				Middling stout	Middling stout	
Marks	Stars and anchor left arm				Stars & anchor, left arm	Anchor on left arm	
Working as		Bricklayer			Bricklayer		
Previous conv.		Yes	2	2			
Work areas		Bunbury		Perth, Guildford 1862	Bunbury	Bunbury, Jan 1865	

Table 2. SWAPPING PERSONAL INFORMATION IN REGISTER R11.

Name	Henry SCOTT	Henry SCOTT	Henry SCOTT	Henry SCOTT	Henry SCOTT	Henry SCOTT	Henry SCOTT
	R 7	R 9	R 11 Gen. Reg	Absconder list	Shipping list	R 15 Gen. Reg	Shipping list
WA Number	6188	6188	6188	6188	9375	9375	10,220
Trial	27.02.1860 CCC	27.02.1860 CCC	27.02.1860 CCC	27.02.1860 CCC	04.04.1867 Perth	04.04.1867 Perth	03.10.1877 Perth
Crime	Larc. from person	Larc. from person	Larc. from person	Larceny		Simple larceny	
Sentence	8yrs	8yrs	8 yrs	8 years	3 yrs	3yrs	6 years
Status	Single	Single				Single	
R & W	Both well	Both				Both	
Trade	Waiter	Waiter	Waiter		Tailor	Tailor	Tailor/Baker
Age	26		28		33	33	43
Height			5'2½"		5' 2½"	5' 2½"	5' 2½"
Hair			Dark brown		Brown	Brown	Light brown
Eyes			Blue		Dark grey	Dark grey	Blue
Visage			Long		Long	Long	Long
Complexion			Fair		Fair	Fair	Fair
Appearance			Middling stout		Middling stout	Middling stout	Middling stout
Marks			Stars & anchor, left arm		Ring each finger, left hand	Ring each finger left hand	Star & anchor left hand
Working as			Lab/herdsman			lab. and baker	
Previous conv.	4yrs and 2 other	3					
Work areas		Albany 1862	York, Guildford 1863-66	Swan, Jan 1866		Perth	

Name	William THOMASON	William THOMASON	William THOMASON	William THOMASON
	R7	R9	R 11 Gen Reg	Absconder list
WA Number	6189	6189	6189	6189
Trial	26.03.1859 Chester	26.03.1859 Chester	26.03.1859 Chester	26.03.1859 Chester
Crime	Sacrilege	Sacrilege	Sacrilege	Sacrilege
Sentence	15 yrs	15 yrs	15 yrs	15 years
Status	Married, 1 child	Wife, 1 child		
R&W	Imperfect	Imperfect	Imperfect	
Trade	Bricklayer	Bricklayer	Bricklayer	
Age	26		29	
Height			5' 7¾"	
Hair			Dark brown	
Eyes			Dark blue	
Visage			Oval	
Complexion			Dark	
Appearance			Stout	
Marks			Cut across bridge of nose	
Working as			Bricklayer	
Previous conv.	2	2		
Work areas		Perth, Guildford 1862	Bunbury	Bunbury, Jan 1865

My Conclusion:

1. There was a clerical blunder and the personal information was entered under the wrong convict, in General Convict Register R11. This led to the confusion on the Shipping list and the convict registers having the conflicting personal information.
2. William THOMASON did not have an alias of JAMESON or Henry SCOTT and his surname was not THOMAS. (There is no mention of an 'alias' on any of the records I looked at.)
3. Henry SCOTT did not have an alias of William THOMAS.

Lesson From The Story: Check as many sources of information as possible. An index is a finding aid, not a source of facts. Clerical errors can and do appear everywhere.

Alias or Clerical Blunder? What do you think? Any other suggestions?

References:

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