

RETURN VOYAGES

Marcia Watson

I've often wondered what the Convict Ships carried on their return voyages to England. It would appear from the advertisements in *The Inquirer* that obtaining paying cargo was not easy. I have only looked at newspapers for this article and more reliable information may be available from Government records or other sources.

The first Convict Ship to arrive on 1 June 1850 was the *Scindian*.

SHIPPING FOR CALCUTTA

The splendid, fast-sailing, first class Indiaman, "SCINDIAN", A 1, 12 years, 800 tons, James Cammell, Commander. This ship has superior poop accommodation for passengers and having lofty heights, offers an excellent opportunity for the conveyance of Horses to India. For Freight or Passage apply personally, or by letter, to the Commander on board, or to

J W DAVEY, Agent, Fremantle

June 4, 1850

Horses were being shipped to India from Tasmania and NSW and the quality of WA horses is discussed in the papers around this time. Horses from NSW had averaged 425 rupees and some from Tasmania averaged 700 rupees.

On June 19, the following appeared -

HORSES FOR INDIA

Captain Cammell of the ship "SCINDIAN", is open to purchase a few Horses, fit for the Calcutta market. Captain C will visit Perth on Friday, the 28th instant, when he will be prepared to treat with parties having horses for disposal. Sales can be offered at any time in Fremantle, on application either to himself, or to

J W DAVEY, Agent

Fremantle, June 17, 1850

By July 17, Captain Cammell was ready to load his ship for London.

Notice to Shippers per Ship "SCINDIAN"

The above Ship is now taking in Wool for London, and will be ready to take in Horses on Monday 15th instant, and until Wednesday, the 17th instant, for Calcutta

J W DAVEY

The ship finally sailed on the 10 August 1850 for Calcutta. Cargo is noted as wool, whalebone, 22 horses, and one cow and calf.

A note in the Perth Gazette of 27 December 1850 announced the safe arrival of the *Scindian* and horses in India. The horses had landed but not been sold.

The second convict ship to arrive in WA was the *Hashemy* on the 25 October 1850. It carried 11 passengers, including the new Colonial Secretary, 100 convicts, 33 pensioners and 98 others.

FOR LONDON DIRECT !!!

The fine first class Ship "Hashemy", A 1, 640 tons, Captain Ross, will take Wool, Oil etc provided sufficient inducement offers. This vessel is a first-rate sailer, and very dry; consequently claims the attention of Shippers.

Apply to Captain Ross, at Fremantle; or to

Lionel Sampson, Agent

Perth October 28, 1850

By November 20, the direct route now included a stop at Madras.

The second convict ship to arrive on 25 October 1850 was the *Hashemy*.

The Ship “Hashemy” for Madras and London

This fine first-class Ship, A 1, 640 tons, will leave her anchorage for Madras on Monday, 25th instant, unless Shippers of Wool will engage to put on board 600 Bales *at least* (to be well packed and pressed in bales of the usual size) by the 23rd December next; in which case Captain Ross will charge 13d per lb. at the Queen’s beam, and stow the Wool on board *without screwing* This Vessel offers a fine opportunity to get Wool home in good order, as her detention in Madras will not exceed fourteen days, and she will arrive home at least six weeks before any other vessel from this Port possibly can. Parties willing to enter into the arrangement, and sign, an agreement to that effect, are requested to apply, within the given time, at the Store of Lionel Sampson, Perth, where the document lies for signature.

N.B.- Superior accommodation for Cabin and other Passengers for India or England

Lionel Sampson, Agent

November 16, 1850

Captain Ross must have been unable to secure any cargo for his return voyage. He entered into a deal with the Government to purchase 533 tons of guano (the *Hashemy*’s registered tonnage), at a rate of £1.2s.6d a ton. This was a ‘modified’ rate according to the paper, as the *Hashemy* would convey a considerable quantity of Government freight to Sharks Bay without charge. The freight included 6 months supply of provisions, water, 2 water tanks and other goods. The guano was to be collected from Sunday Island in Sharks Bay. The paper also stated that Captain Ross was intending to return to WA with his family.

At the same time he arranged a meeting for the 29th November in Fremantle to present a proposal for bringing a steamer to WA, for the Perth-Fremantle run. The estimated cost was £1,000 of which he would subscribe £500, the rest to be raised by a share issue. The Western Australian Steam Navigation Company was set up with a capital of £1,500 by subscription. £1,000 was to be paid up and shares of £10 were issued. The board of the company was Col. Irwin, Captain Henderson, Captain Bruce, Mr L Sampson and Mr F Croft. Mr Piesse, the new Colonial Secretary, spoke in favour of the proposal. (1)

The *Hashemy* sailed for Sharks Bay on December 10, 1850.

The Inquirer Supplement of Thursday 6 February 1851 has a “Report of a Survey of Guano, Pearl Shells, Mining etc by Lieut Helpman R.N.”, in the Shark Bay area. Captain Ross sent a letter (written 6.1.1851) to the Colonial Secretary, with the report, giving his views on the potential of the area.

Collecting guano from Sunday Island was not easy. The Island was steep all around, they could not anchor close to the island due to strong winds and there was an ebb and flow tide of 40 inches. The 600 tons of guano had to be boated to the *Hashemy*. The earlier reports of amount of guano on the islands seem to have been exaggerated.

I don’t know when the *Hashemy* finally left WA but before it did, the crew captured 4 escaped convicts at Sharks Bay in March. The convicts were returned to Fremantle on the *Evergreen*, a ship that frequently visited Shark Bay. (2)

The shipping news in The Times says the *Hashemy*, from Shark Bay to London, was off the Cape of Good Hope on the 1 May 1851. On the 17 August 1851 it has arrived at Gravesend, 10 months after arriving in Fremantle.

References and Notes:

The Inquirer: 19 June 1850; 17 Jul 1850; 14 Aug 1850; 20 Nov 1850; 6 Feb 1851; 19 Feb 1851; 2 Apr 1851.

Perth Gazette; 15 Nov 1850; 29 Nov 1850; 6 Dec 1850; 27 Dec 1850; 3 Jan 1851; 7 Feb

1851; 21 Mar 1851.

The Times: 5 July 1851; 18 Aug 1851.

(1) Meeting of Steam Navigation Co:- correspondence from agents and Capt. Ross was read. An iron steamer of 16 horse power has been ordered from Messrs Wigram. An engineer to service the same at £100 per year for 3 years to be engaged.

Perth Gazette: 12 Mar 1852

(2) The 4 convicts who escaped from Fremantle in a whale boat in January were:- John MORRIS, Thomas Cory ADAMS, Henry PERKINS and William HAYLES. They appeared in the Fremantle Courts on 20th March, charged with larceny and stealing a whale boat. They received 3 years hard labour in chains on some roads and Public works in the colony.

Perth Gazette: 21 Mar 1851; 28 Mar 1851.

First Printed in *Convict Links*, Vol. 14, No. 1, January 2000 - Newsletter of the Convict Special Interest Group, Western Australian Genealogical Society Inc.