

## **“YORKIE”, “MOONDYNE JOE” and the GREENMOUNT CONVICT STATION CONNECTION**

On a human story note, an article in the Daily News on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 1927 gives an interesting obituary on a man called Yorkie (real name: William Taylor) who it mentions was one of the builders of a Government Compound at Darlington in the 1860's. Yorkie's claim to fame was to have reached the age of 103 and indeed the Metropolitan Cemetery board has this age recorded on their website.

Somewhere Ian Elliot (who unfortunately can't locate the notes) recorded that William Taylor later occupied these abandoned ruins at Darlington. Yorkie features in a few newspaper articles over the time when his longevity is cause for much interest and a number of facts to do with his life are revealed such as he arrived in WA on the ship 'Racehorse' on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1865 from Portland, England and he hailed from Northowram, Halifax, Yorkshire. Some sleuthing, as the convict ship records are now online, found the only William Taylor on the ship Racehorse which arrived in WA on the 10<sup>th</sup> August 1865 was born around 1841 and his prison number was 8436. Further research into England found his family in the 1851 Census with William working part time in a Mill and half day as a student, he was aged 12, his actual year of birth was 1838. He was convicted in York, England on the 5<sup>th</sup> December 1863 for "Robbery and using personal violence and wounding" where he was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. A wonderful red book in the State Records and State Library lists the names of the nearly 10,000 convicts sent to WA from 1850-1868. William Taylor's details are as follow:

**(No. 8436) Unmarried farm labourer, literate, Protestant, convicted York (Eng) 5.10.1863, robbery and wounding 10 years, arrived Racehorse 10.8.1865, Ticket of Leave 13.6.1869, Certificate of Freedom 5.12.1874 York (WA), occupations General Servant, Sawing, Shoemaking, Reconvicted (No. 10503)**

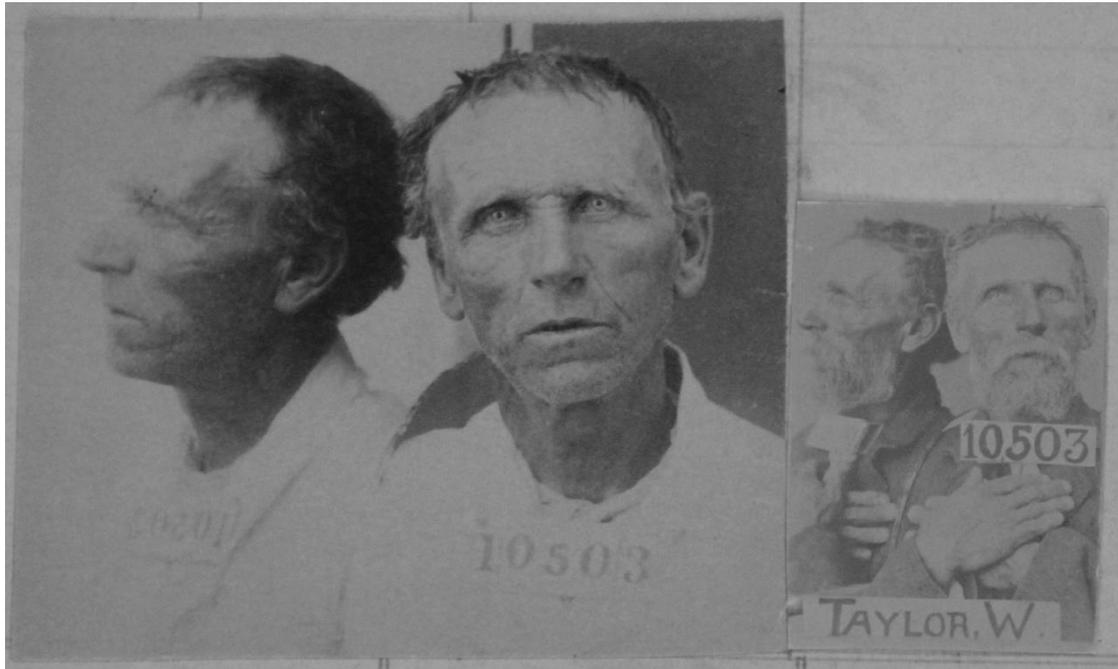
There was a connection between William and the notorious bushranger Moondyne Joe (Joseph Bolitho Johns who came to WA in 1853 on the convict ship "Pyrenees") as well as a connection between Joe and the York Greenmount Station. William and Joe would have been acquainted with each other from as early as November 1865 shortly after William arrived in WA, as he was in the same Canning Flats work party with Joe and a fellow convict named David Evans who came on the same convict ship "Racehorse" as William. Joe and David Evans escaped the work party one evening and the only convict who could be trusted by the warder to raise the alarm was ironically William Taylor. It was during this escape that Joe Johns first used the name Moondyne Joe, a name he gave himself based on the Aboriginal name for the area around the Avon Valley. His connection to the York Greenmount convict Work Station occurred during his next escape from custody - Fremantle Prison in August 1866 - where he teamed up with three convicts from there.

Hardly a coincidence that these three were all from the convict ship "Racehorse" with one, John James, being David Evans's accomplice



Moondyne Joe - Portrait taken 1870's  
by Alfred Chopin

from the same burglary at Cardiff in England for which they were both convicted and transported to WA.



Yorkie - Fremantle Prison photos

William was reconvicted in October 1896 for larceny of a watch, chain, rug, blankets and personal items stolen on the night of August 18<sup>th</sup> from Morgan Morgan who was a barman at the Empire Hotel in Murray St, Perth. He was sentenced to 5 years and it was noted that he had a lengthy record of convictions after his arrival in WA.

Presumably when William was released from prison in 1901 he spent his remaining years, according to a Daily News article published when he died in 1927, at Wanneroo pottering about earning a livelihood chopping wood, gardening and doing odd jobs.

His death notice in the West Australian paper noted he was a loving father of 3 children, Annie, Maud, William and a grandson Jim. No records can be found of a marriage for William in Western Australia however a newspaper article in July 1926 reported there was a fracas caused by Yorkie and his daughter gives her married name as Maud Rogers.

This information led to finding Maud's father was William Taylor and her mother was Hannah Maskiell / Meskel. Only one registered birth with these parents can be found in 1883 for Hannah Taylor (presumably the daughter called Annie). William appears in a number of newspaper articles cited for committing numerous offences and is often in the company of a woman named Hannah Brown who appears to be the mother of the three Taylor children. Hannah Brown died on the 20<sup>th</sup> October 1906 and this matches the information William gives reporters about the time his common law wife died. She is buried in the Roman Catholic section of Karrakatta Cemetery, Perth.

Rather than 103 Yorkie's age would have been 88.

William's photo taken from Police records and placed in a recent publication by Friends of the Battye Library Inc. puts a face to this name. Similarly Ian Elliot's 1998 book on Moondyne features a newly discovered portrait photo of Moondyne Joe on its cover also giving a face to this name.



**102 AND STILL GOING STRONG.**

Mr. William ('Yorkie') Taylor, whose 103rd birthday will occur on August 10 of this year. Born in Yorkshire, England, on August 10, 1823, Mr. Taylor came to Australia in the sailing ship Racehorse, which arrived on his birthday, August 10, 1865. He has resided in the Wanneroo district for the past 62 years, and has followed the occupations of charcoal burner, wood cutter, and general bush worker. At present he is looking after a small property, cultivating fruit trees and experimenting with strawberries. Mr. Taylor enjoys exceptionally good health and hopes to live at least another 20 years. Here he is telling his tale to a 'Western Mail' representative. Can any district in this State produce an older citizen?

**SOURCES**

Moondyne Joe – The Man and the Myth by Ian Elliot;  
Metropolitan Cemetery Board of Western Australia;  
Births, Deaths and Marriages of Western Australia;  
The Daily News Wed 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb. 1927 page 2;  
Western Mail 24<sup>th</sup> May 1923;  
West Australian 16<sup>th</sup> July 1926 and 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb 1927;  
Find My Past 1851 Census;  
Mirror 9<sup>th</sup> Jan 1926;  
Convicts in Western Australia 1850-1887 – Rica Erickson and Gillian O'Mara;  
Australia's Last Convicts – Friends of the Battye Inc.