

Information Sheet No. 31



City of
Greater Geraldton
Regional Library



Heritage Services

Geraldton Regional Library

HENRY SNOWDEN – First Convict Warden

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| 1806 | - Born in England. |
| 1852, Aug 1 | - Arrived in Western Australia as Warden Convict aboard the Convict ship <i>William Jardine</i>. |
| 1854 | - Assistant Superintendent at Freshwater Bay. |
| 1855 | - Superintendent at Port Gregory. |
| 1857 | - Transferred to Geraldton. |
| 1878, Mar 9 | - Died in Geraldton, WA. |

Everyone has an interesting history to tell of their life. They may not realise it at the time, but even mundane daily activities become of interest to the future historian. But how many people bother to record their life, and how many of these journals are kept for posterity? Although reminiscences may be recited repetitiously to one's children or grandchildren - that's not history, just the monotonous rambling of old people. These stories are soon forgotten as the younger generation gets on with living their own lives.

One person who would have had many interesting tales to tell was Henry Snowden.

On 1 August 1852 the *William Jardine* arrived in Western Australia bringing 212 convicts and 102 passengers. Amongst those aboard was Henry Snowden, an Assistant Warden who had previously seen service in Portland Prison, his wife Elizabeth and their three children.

Henry was the first official despatched to Champion Bay in charge of convicts. He saw duty up at Port Gregory. After the closure of the Lynton hiring station, the remaining dozen ticket-of-leave men, mainly invalids or elderly, were transferred to Geraldton under Henry's command. The convicts and their warders camped in tents on a hill a mile north of the port until permanent buildings were erected there. Snowden's garden supplied fresh vegetables for most of the year to the Depot cookhouse.

And that is Henry Snowden's life! Or rather all we know - just a glimmer of facts.

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His obituary states the predictable - that Henry was “a man of the strictest propriety and integrity, and enjoyed the esteem and goodwill of everybody” and then tempts us with the following, “Few of his friends have not heard him relate, with his usual vivacity and humour, the incidents concerned with his walk overland from Jurien Bay to Geraldton”. The master of the *Preston* mistook Mount Leseur for Mount Fairfax and brought his vessel off shore. After delaying for some days at Jurien, and being unable to sail, Mr Snowden and his party departed to complete the journey on foot back to Geraldton, undergoing many difficulties on the way.

That often-related recollection, like the rest, is lost.

References

*Text taken from **Geraldton: 150 Years, 150 Lives**, Local Studies Department, Geraldton Regional Library, 2001, p. 154.*

Copies are available from the Library, 37 Marine Terrace, Geraldton (PO Box 101, Geraldton, WA, 6531) for \$27.50 (plus \$6.50 postage and handling).

