

Charles Blackell, 634, *Pyrenees*

Researched by Marcia Watson

All court and prison records indicate that his name is BRACKELL.

The printed Convict Description List is where a transcription error has occurred, and he is recorded as Charles BLACKELL.

Most common name variations on other documents: Brackle, Brackel, Brackill

Baptism	15 January 1827, St Leonards, Shoreditch, London
Parents	John Brackill and Mary Richards
Parent's marriage	16 November 1807, St Leonards, Shoreditch
Siblings	Louisa Brackle (1808), John Brackle (1810), Thomas Brackle (1824)
Wife 1	
Married	
Children	

Charles, son of John and Mary Brackwell, of Swan Yard, was baptised on 15 January 1827 at St Leonards, Shoreditch, where his father was a cabinet maker.

On the 1841 census, at Turville Street, St Matthew, Bethnal Green, Borough of Tower Hamlets:

Mary Brackel, 50; John Brackel, 50, cabinet maker; Charles 13, all born in the county. ¹

His brother, Thomas Brackels, 17, an apprentice carver, was living with Charles Webster, a carver, his family, and another apprentice at the New Inn on Broadway, St Leonard, Shoreditch. ²

His mother, Mary Brackall, died on 27 June 1841, aged 51, at Turville Street.

In 1843, Chas Brackells, 18, 5'2", fresh complexion, dark brown hair, grey eyes, slender, labourer, from Shoreditch, was brought into custody on 2 June 1843, for stealing five bed sackings and other articles valued at 20s, the property of Edward Reeves. Charles was convicted on 22 June and sentenced to 2 months in the House of Correction. ³

His short stay in prison did not stop his thieving. On 30 March 1846, at the Central Criminal Court, Charles Brackell, 20, and James King, 19, were indicted for stealing one handkerchief, value 2s 6d, the goods of Frederick Augustus Lewis, from his person. They were found not guilty.

Charles Brackell, 20, 5'4", fresh complexion, dark brown hair, grey eyes, slender, cabinet maker, from Shoreditch. He was discharged on 30 March 1846 from Newgate Prison. ⁴

Transcript available at <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/record/t18460330-859?text=brackell>

Three months later, at the County Adjourned Sessions, Clerkenwell, on 14 July 1846:

Charles Brackell, 21, who can't read or write, attempted to steal from a person and was sentenced to 6 months. ⁵

No newspaper reports have been found of Charles's next appearance in court.

The Prison Registers record that Charles Brackell, 21, single, can read, a labourer, was convicted on 10 April 1849 at the Middlesex Sessions at Westminster of stealing from the person and sentenced to 10 years. He was received at Millbank Prison on 30 November 1849 from Westminster. Charles had been twice convicted before and once imprisoned. On 20 August 1850, he was transferred to Portland Prison, where it was noted that his brother lives at 2 Brick Lane, Healy Place, Spitalfields. Charles boarded the *Pyrenees* on 13 March 1851 for the voyage to Western Australia. ⁶

¹ The National Archives (TNA) UK, HO107/693/2

² TNA, HO107/706/1

³ TNA, PCOM2/208; HO77/50

⁴ TNA, PCOM2/210; HO77/53

⁵ TNA, HO 26/52, p15

A Petition from Charles Brackell, 21, was received on 26 April 1850.

Convicted 10 April 1849, Middlesex Sessions, stealing from the person, sentenced to 10 years, received at Millbank Prison on 30 November 1849 from Westminster.

To the Right Honorable Sir George Grey, Baronet, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department. The Petition of Charles Brackell, a prisoner in Millbank Prison, humbly sheweth that your petitioner was in great distress at the time he committed the robbery for which he is now suffering Imprisonment and that your petitioner pleaded guilty to the charge at his trial. Your petitioner is now sorry for what he has done and humbly trusts his sentence will be shortened, and your petitioner, as in duty bound, will ever pray. Signed Charles Brackell.

Cover. Charles Brackell, 21, Middlesex Sessions, Westminster, April 1849, larceny, 10 years.

Gaol report: thrice before convicted of larceny. Nil G.G. i.e. George Grey declined to act of the petition⁷

On arrival at Fremantle, Western Australia, on 28 June 1851, Charles was assigned number 634, issued with a Ticket of Leave and a physical description was recorded.

634. Charles Blackell, 24, 5'3", dark brown hair, blue eyes, oval face, fair complexion, slight build, one mole and scar on back of neck, one tooth out of left side of top jaw, labourer, single.⁸

The Superintendent's Journal records:

18 July 1851. Twenty-three men from the *Pyrenees* will be brought ashore and located in Fremantle Prison, Division No. 3, including 634 Chas Brackell.

22 July 1851. Forty men with their trades will proceed to York this day, including 634 Chas Brackell, labourer and bargeman.⁹

THE following is a Return of Ticket-of-Leave holders whose original sentence has expired during the month of April, 1856: 634 Charles Blackell.¹⁰

In The Supreme Court on Wednesday, 13 July, 1870.

Charles Brackell v. Thomas Wilding.

Mr Parker for the plaintiff, M. E. A. Stone for the defendant.

This was an action brought by one Charles Brackell, a Brickmaker, against Mr Thomas Wilding of Northam upon an agreement in writing entered into between them by which the plaintiff Brackell agreed to make and burn 100,000 bricks for Wilding at the rate of £1 per 1000, Wilding on his part agreeing to find and provide rations at market prices for the plaintiff and his two men, and to advance him the sum of £2 per week during the time the said work was in hand. The plaintiff alleged a breach by the defendant in that he did not nor would supply the plaintiff with necessary rations for the use of himself and his two men, and did not nor would advance him the sum of £2 per week or any part thereof during the time he was employed upon the said work. The declaration also contained counts in *indebitatus assumpsit*.¹¹

It appeared from the evidence adduced that Brackell, after working a short time, took to drinking with his men, and in consequence neglected the work, of which neglect and irregular conduct Wilding frequently complained. It was of great importance to Wilding that the bricks should be made and burnt before the beginning of the rainy season this year, and of this he stated Brackell was well aware, as he was digging the clay out of the foundation for the new house. 23,000 bricks had been made in 8 weeks, and a sufficient quantity of clay had been dug to make about 27,000 more, by

⁶ TNA, HO24/4; PCOM2/30; PCOM2/383

⁷ TNA, HO18/275

⁸ SROWA, Acc 128/32

⁹ SROWA, Superintendents Orders, So1-So3, p63, p66

¹⁰ The Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News, 9 May 1856, p2

¹¹ *Indebitatus assumpsit* was a form of action in common law, particularly in England, that allowed a plaintiff to recover money based on an implied promise to pay.

Brackell, when Wilding refused to supply any more rations or advance any money under the agreement.

This was on 1 February last, and the work had then been in hand since 2 December. In consequence of Wilding refusing to pay any money, Brackell's men their wages being unpaid, abandoned the work.

There was evidence adduced for the defendant that all the work done by Brackell ought not to have occupied, with the assistance he had, even three weeks, and the bricks were not marketable and totally unfit to build a heavy building such as Wilding required for them; they were not properly tempered. Rations had always been supplied up to 1 February, but on that day the defendant (Wilding) refused to advance any money to the plaintiff because he had no work to show as an equivalent value to the rations &c., already supplied.

His Honor intimated during the examination of the defendant that in an agreement of this nature, although no time was mentioned in which the work was to be completed, it ought to be carried out with due diligence and despatch and it was not reasonable to suppose that the party found to supply rations and stores was to continue bound if this work was neglected and its value did not equal the value of the supplies.

Mr. Parker, on the close of the defence, briefly summed up the evidence to the court.

His Honor, without any comment whatever, directed a verdict to be entered for the defendant.¹²

Charles appeared before the York Court in September 1870

C. Blackill, 39, Exp 634, Protestant, can read and write, was convicted of assault on 17 September 1870 at York and sentenced to 2 months. He was received at Fremantle Prison on 27 September 1870 and discharged on 17 November 1870.¹³

The last record found on Charles is his murder in 1882. Charles was working for Gooch and Wheelock. Charles Wheelock had been with Charles Brockman on Boolathana to 1877. George Gooch took Charles Wheelock as a partner and together they discovered a fine tract of pastoral country to an area where no white man had ever been before. An old tree which still stands on the banks of the Minilya River is marked 'G.G. — C.W. 30/7/80.' This selection was the nucleus of what is known today as Wandagee and owned by Mr. Gordon Gooch.¹⁴

The West Australian reported on 5 September 1882:

We give the following particulars in regard to the late unfortunate murder of Charles Brackell in the Gascoyne district. James Smith and Charles Brackell, were stationed with a lambing flock at a distance of four miles from Messrs. Gooch and Wheelock's, both being in the employ of the firm. On the night of the 31 July, Smith left the camp for the place where Messrs. Gooch and Wheelock were stopping, Brackell remaining behind. About midnight, Smith returned, and his attention was at once drawn to the absence of the fire at the natives' camp. Upon going to see, he found that they had left. When thinking something had gone wrong, he proceeded to Brackell's hut, and, pulling away a coat with which he had been covered, found him lying in a pool of blood. Smith then hastened back to inform the other whites, who at once got their horses and rode out to the scene of the murder, which they reached before daybreak. As soon as it was light enough to see them they examined the tracks and found that a blackfellow named Billy had left the native camp, had walked round to a place where he picked up an axe and had then approached Brackell, standing over him, it is presumed, while he dealt him the blows from which he died. The unfortunate man's head had been almost severed from his body, and death must have been instantaneous.

The tracks of Billy's woman were also found beside Brackell, whom she had approached, it is supposed, either with the object of seeing whether he was asleep or of covering him up after he had been murdered. No other natives' tracks were found except those of Billy and his woman. The track

¹² The Herald, 16 July 1870, p3

¹³ SROWA, Local Prisoners Registers, Acc 1156/V16a-V16c

¹⁴ The West Australian, 9 Feb 1935, p5

of the man was easily recognised on account of the shortness of one of his toes. They stole half a bag of flour, tea, sugar, a quarter of mutton and Smith's rug and kit. Messrs. Wheelock and Bunbury traced the murderers into the range, but it was so precipitous that they could not get over it and were obliged to return for food. Afterwards, Wheelock and Johnny, an aboriginal from the South, went out to continue the search. This Billy was minding ewes and lambs, and had been working on the station for some months. Once before, he had been caught crawling over to Brackell's, but it was then thought that he was merely trying to steal. This affair has caused much uneasiness; the settlers feel that their lives are in constant danger; the longer all these murderers are at large, the more serious the situation becomes. The natives are imbued with the idea that they can commit any sort of crime with impunity, as long as they retire to the ranges afterwards. With the natives, and with being short-handed while lambing was going on, having to cart their rations 150 miles over badly watered country, etc., the pioneers on the Minilia [Minilya] seem to have been experiencing very troublesome times lately.¹⁵

The native named Nannacrow, *alias* Billy, who has been committed for trial on the charge of having wilfully murdered Charles Brackell at Minilia River, in the Gascoyne district, on the 31 July, 1882, has arrived in Perth. He will be placed on his trial on Friday next.¹⁶

An account of his trial can be found at:

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/109667143?searchTerm=brackell>

On Friday last, Nannacrow, the aboriginal native, was hanged at Rottnest Island, with the usual formalities, for the murder of Charles Brackell at the Gascoyne. Only a limited number of natives were present at the execution, as a large number of them are stricken down with an epidemic, which, as far as we can learn, resembles influenza, to which complaint we regret to learn several natives have already succumbed.¹⁷

Charles died on 31 July 1882 at Wandagee Station about 185km north-east of Carnarvon.¹⁸

An entry from *More Lonely Graves of Western Australia* by Yvonne and Kevin Coates, Hesperian Press, 2000

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**BRACKELL** Charles died 31.7.1.1882 - buried at an outcamp on **WANDAGEE STATION** north east of Carnarvon.

Brackell was a man employed as a teamster by Gooch and Wheelock, when they first started Wandagee Station. The natives were bold and treacherous then, and Brackell was in the habit of sleeping under his wagon, as he thought it safer than being out in the open. However, natives speared him one night and cut off his head. As other unprovoked outrages had been committed, a punitive party went out and shot a good many of the men, after which there was not much serious trouble around those parts.

**Further Reference:** *No Sunday in the Bush* from the Diaries of Tom Carter; *Lure of the North* by Rev W Gunning.

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<sup>15</sup>The West Australian, 5 Sep 1882, p2

<sup>16</sup> The Inquirer and Commercial News, 11 Jul 1883, p5

<sup>17</sup> The Herald, 4 Aug 1883, p1

<sup>18</sup> Death certificate: Charles Brackell, 50, Gascoyne, 1882/11631.