

# **Murder in the Hamersley Ranges 1881**

Introduction  
by  
Dr Bill Day

Consulting  
Anthropologist

Maylands  
WA  
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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Reports from the Hamersley Ranges in 1881 indicate that Aboriginal resistance was a serious threat to remote pastoral stations. In March, 1881, after finding a Swan River Aboriginal shepherd dead allegedly with twenty spear wounds in his body, G W Hester wrote from the Ranges, “We do not know what might happen – they may come down and murder all of us”

As a result, Constable Hackett and his Native Assistant set out from Roebourne on March 22<sup>nd</sup> to track down those responsible.

On 31<sup>st</sup> March, P.C. Hackett and a party of settlers came upon an Aboriginal camp in the Hamersley Ranges. Spears were raised and shots were fired, wounding at least three of the Aboriginal men, who escaped into the hills to an unknown fate. Hackett described how one of the men being pursued continued to throw stones from a hill. When one of the stones struck Hester on the chest, Hackett ordered Hester to fire. As a result:

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<sup>1</sup> SROWA, Hamersley matters, Acc 527 CSO Subject 1351

Hester again fired four shots. The last one seemed to take effect as the native stopped throwing the stones, put his hand to his hip and ran away.

Hackett's daily journal then records how he came upon another camp on April 26<sup>th</sup> and "arrested Aboriginal native Yanagar charging him with the murder of the Swan River native Johnny on or about the 16<sup>th</sup> March 1881". Three days later, another wanted man named Tommy was taken prisoner.

Then on April 27<sup>th</sup>, near the Fortescue River, the two prisoners broke away from their captors and "made a bolt for it". After Hackett followed them on foot the escapees once again "started throwing stones". P.C. Hackett called on them to stop. He continues:

I told them if they did not stop I would shoot them seeing I had no chance of overtaking them and calling on them again to stop ... They both turned around and threw more stones at me. This time I was nearly hit in the head by a large stone. I fired on him again this time the natives called out and stopped running.

Sadly, a man named Yanagar was critically wounded and died in the camp the next day at 1 p.m. He was buried on the spot at 4 p.m. the same day. Hackett then

continued to Roebourne with the remaining prisoner, Tommy and an Aboriginal woman named Jinny as a witness, arriving on 4<sup>th</sup> May – an epic journey of 44 days.

In Roebourne the Government resident was concerned about the case. He wrote on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1881:

The identification of the prisoners depends entirely on [native woman] Jinny's evidence, I could get nothing whatever out of another woman who was brought in as a witness, and though I am satisfied of the guilt of the accused the Hon The Attorney General may not deem the case strong enough for trial in the Supreme Court. The Hamersley Range natives have been giving much trouble, and it is desirable an example should be made.

Meanwhile, on Hall's station in the Hamersley Ranges, there was a further incident on 30<sup>th</sup> July. The Government Resident reported:

Mr Hall came to town on the 2<sup>nd</sup> instant and reported that on the previous Saturday six natives in feathers and war paint and fully armed came to his station, having informed his native servant<sup>2</sup> a few days before that they would drive the white men away.

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<sup>2</sup> Presumably the servant was the Aboriginal man, Bobby, named in later pages.

On this occasion there were six able-bodied men on the station who mounted an aggressive defense in the face of the perceived threat. Hall ordered his men to fire over the heads of the advancing warriors, while Hester rode out to cut off their escape. According to a report by the Government Resident:

Mr Hall then went to a creek to look for another who had run in that direction and found him sitting down badly wounded in the abdomen by a bullet. He bandaged the wound, but the native died in two or three hours. Mr Hall could not say which of his party had not obeyed his order to fire in the air, but under the circumstances the act may appear justifiable.

The men taken captive were accused of theft from a hut on the station. J A Hall's "servant", Bobby, had identified the culprits from their tracks:

We saw tracks of 5 men from the creek entering the hut and took care to preserve them ... 2 or 3 days afterwards [I] shewed Bobby the tracks and he said he knew then quite well. He named Dickey, Toby, Petalbung, Windawirrie and Poberfenner [?] as being the natives and when we captured the 3 prisoners on the 30 July he said they were 3 of them who stole the clothes.

In Bobby's words: "Mr Hall showed me the 5 tracks going from the hut and then coming out. I knew them they were Toby, Dickey, Petalbung, Chulberfinner [?] and Windawerry. I am quite sure of their tracks."

Bobby was apparently a man of some influence in both cultures. After the attackers fled, it was reported, "Bobby went after Petalbung and brought him back in 1½ hours" – a feat achieved with apparent ease despite the alleged threat from the armed and hostile Aboriginal men, suggesting that the attackers were Bobby's countrymen.

Hall, assisted by his nephew and "a native servant"<sup>3</sup>, were then requested to escort the three men captured in this confrontation to Roebourne in chains. As the Government Resident wrote, "The moral effect of being captured and brought in by Mr Hall will probably be greater than if Police assistance had been obtained." The last statement is a telling comment on law and order in the Pilbara.

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<sup>3</sup> Presumably Bobby.

While some of the accused were found guilty of the murder of “Johnny” on 16<sup>th</sup> March, the Colonial Secretary’s file does not report any charges against those responsible for the death of at least two Aboriginal men in the Hamersley Ranges and the wounding of an unknown number of others for throwing stones, raising the question of who were the real murders?

W B Day PhD

December 2011

Note: All quotes are from SROWA Hamersley matters  
Acc 527 CSO Subject 1351  
1351 items 49, 92, 98, 103\* (1881)  
\*103 contains a copy of Hall’s statement to the Police.

Government Residents Office

Roebourne 20<sup>th</sup> May 1881

My Lord

I have the honor to inform you that on the 21 March dated 18<sup>th</sup> I received a letter from Mr J A Hall a settler at the Hamersley Range Station, that a Swan River native Johnny in his employ had been murdered by the natives of that locality on the night of the 16<sup>th</sup> when they stole two guns, plenty [?] of ammunition, clothing etc.

Mr Halls nephew, Mr Hester, finding that the natives were approaching his hut, ran off to the home station, about 2 miles from the scene of the murder. Mr Hall and Mr Hester at once went to the spot well armed. Not a native was to be seen but their fires were seen not far away. On the afternoon of the 18<sup>th</sup> Johnny's body was discovered with 20 spear wounds.

As Mr Hall apprehended an attack upon his station he begged for assistance. I placed the matter in the... [the next page is missing from the copy provided]

The Colonial Secretary

Perth

[stamped 'Colonial Secretary's Office 4 July 81']

Hamersley Range

March 18<sup>th</sup> 1881

Mr Houlahan

Roebourne

On the sixteenth of March 1881 the natives took away at night Mr J A Halls Swan River native shepherd Johnny, his woman, and two children – Also stole two items: one double barrelled of Mr Hall's and one single of mine, also some gun caps, powder and shot and the native's rations. I was woke in the night at 12 o'clock with the cry of Johnny screaming for help. I got up and to my great surprise, there were about 30 natives around his hut, ready to defend those who were murdering him. After they had secured him there were several crawling about my hut and I suppose intended murdering me, so I was obliged to run for my life. I unfortunately had not any firearms in my possession at the time so I had to go two miles into the station to get some and when Mr Hall and I returned to the camp there was not a soul to be seen.

We should be very thankful for assistance at once as there is only Mr Hall, his family and myself here. The natives are close to the place and might be easily caught. We will be most ready to render any

assistance we can to the party who comes out to catch them as we do not know what might happen – they may come down and murder all of us – I send a piece of a spear that Mr Hall and I found the next morning in the shepherd's hut.

G. W. Hester

Roebourne May 5<sup>th</sup> 1881

I have to report for the information of Sergeant Houlahan a journal of proceedings while out to the Hamersley Range Mr J A Halls Station in pursuit of native offenders Viz. "Charley", "Jerrey" [?] and Tommy and a number of other natives unknown for whom warrants were issued charged with the murder of an Aboriginal native named Johnny a native of New Norcia in Mr J A Halls employ as shepherd also the above natives were charged with the larceny of a quantity of rations, ammuniton and his guns.

March 22<sup>nd</sup>. Left Roebourne to proceed to Hamersley Range taking Native Assistant Tommy and native prisoner Johnny Sambo as Assistants also four horses. Camped for the night at Harding River, distance 14 miles.

23<sup>rd</sup>. 5.30am left camp camped on George River at 6pm, distance of 36 miles.

24<sup>th</sup>. 7am left camp and camped at Mill Stream at 5pm, distance of 25 miles.

25<sup>th</sup>. Remained at Mill Stream Station today for the purpose of getting in and shoeing horses for the trip.

26<sup>th</sup> 7am left camp and camped on the Fortescue River at 6pm, distance 35 miles

27<sup>th</sup> 6.30am left camp camped at Willimarra at 6pm, distance of 25 miles.

28<sup>th</sup>. 7am left camp 11am arrived at Mr J A Halls Station, distance of 14 miles.

29<sup>th</sup> Remained at Halls Station getting in and shoeing horses and getting the packs and rations ready for starting.

30<sup>th</sup>. 3pm left J A Halls station accompanied by J A Hall, G W Hester, W Robinson and a native of Mr Halls named Georgie and my own Assistants – travelled north east in the Hamersley Range about 15 miles when we came on some natives tracks near a water hole named Cangangmarra and camped at 9pm for the night.

31<sup>st</sup>. 7am left camp and travelled about 6 miles when we saw a fire. G Hester myself and native Assistant Tommy left our horses and started on foot to see if there were any natives camped near the fire we found that a quantity of natives were camped there we returned to our horses and informed the remainder of our party as horses would be of no service to us we started on foot to return to the camp and surrounded it. I directed the two Native Assistants to go round the top side of the camp having given them directions not to fire in any case except they were in danger.

Hall and myself came in on one side Robinson and Hester on the other it was then daylight. The natives happened to see us before we could manage to surround the camp. The side on which Native Assistant Tommy and Johnny Sambo entered the camp were nearer by about 60 or 70 yards leaving them to get to the camp first. On their approach two natives belonging to the camp shipped their spears and were in the act of throwing them at the Assistants when the Native Assistant fired at them, one I believe was wounded Viz. "Charley" the other native was also wounded but both managed to escape by jumping down some rocks and getting further up the gorge one of the natives who was on the side of the hill started throwing stones at Hester who was in front of the Assistants one of the stones striking Hester on the chest. I shouted out to Hester to fire, he did so but missed. The native still continued to throw stones at him. Hester again fired four shots the last one seemed to take effect as the native stopped throwing the stones put his hand to his hip and ran away. Robinson had also fired one shot at the native but it had had no effect. All this occurred in a very short time. J A Hall and I were very close to the camp but in the direction we went

so as to surround the camp had come to a cliff about 50 ft high which we were unable to scale without great difficulty. By the time we had got on to the camp the natives had hid themselves in the surrounding rocks but on searching the camp found one of the stolen guns and quantity of powder and shot and caps. On further search among the rocks we found his women and three children concealed among the rocks. We detained the women and took them back to our camp so as to obtain some information from them. On questioning the native woman they informed us that Aboriginal Winduary, Charley and "Arthur" were three of the natives who had murdered Ab nat[ive] "Johnny" also a native named Timothy was concerned in the murder of Ab Johnny.

After having breakfast at our camp Hester, myself and the three Native Assistants started again on foot for the native camp leaving Hall and Robinson in charge of the horses and packs travelling along on the hills we could see natives also on the hills at a distance off. Native Assistant Tommy also saw one of the wounded natives name Charly [sic]. Tommy spoke to him from a distance and asked him to come to him but he refused to but told Tommy that he was

shot and pointed to his shoulder. Tommy tried to get to him but he ran off with four other natives before he could be overtaken. We remained in the hills searching for the natives but seeing no use of our staying any longer at 5pm left off and returned to our horses and started for Canganmarra which we reached at 7pm and camped for the night.

April 1<sup>st</sup>. 7am left camp travelled about 12 miles to N E course to some small water holes could see not trace of any natives tracks and being unable to find any water for our horses returned to our previous camp which we reached at 6pm.

2<sup>nd</sup>. 6.30am left camp and travelled in a NW direction came on some natives tracks going westward we followed them for about 5 miles in the direction of Willimarra about 4pm we lost the tracks and started from J A Halls station and camped at 6pm

3<sup>rd</sup>. Sunday rested horses all day.

April 4<sup>th</sup>. 2pm left camp for Willimarra and camped there at 7pm having seen not tracks today I was accompanied by C Hall C F Stevenson they having taken the places of my party of Robinson and G W Hester.

5<sup>th</sup> 8am left camp and travelled S West all day to a water hole named Wuna not having seen any natives'

tracks during the day. Camped at Wuna for the night 6pm.

6<sup>th</sup> 6.30am left camp for a creek named Calamingina [?] came across two natives tracks followed them up the creek until sundown and camped for the night on the Robe River.

7<sup>th</sup> 7am left camp and travelled down the Robe River. No fresh tracks of natives or fires camped on the Robe at 7pm.

8<sup>th</sup>. 8am left camp searched among the hills went to several small water holes but found no fresh tracks about any of them, camped for the night at 6pm

9<sup>th</sup>. 6.30am left camp and camped at Calamingina at 7pm.

10<sup>th</sup>. Sunday 9am left camp travelled south to a waterhole found no signs of any natives and camped there at 4pm.

11<sup>th</sup>. 7am left camp for Wulana Creek camped at Willimarra at 5.30pm.

12<sup>th</sup>. 7.30am left camp and went to two water holes to the Eastward of Willimarra and camped at the water where we found the natives on the 31<sup>st</sup>. March we were unable to see any fresh tracks about the water holes and camped for the night at 7pm.

13<sup>th</sup>. 6.30am left camp to return to J A Halls Station for fresh supply of rations reached Mr Halls at 12 noon.

14<sup>th</sup>. Remained at station getting in a shoeing fresh horses

15<sup>th</sup>. 1pm left camp for the S East to Halls Station camped at 9pm found no water for selves or horses. In looking over my ..... I found I had lost my pocket book containing my journal since I had left Roebourne and sundry other papers

16<sup>th</sup>. 6am left camp found water for horses and at about 10am left again 12 noon and camped at Wangu Spring at 6pm.

17<sup>th</sup> 8am left camp and travelled east about 15 miles to a water hole and camped at 11 am.

18<sup>th</sup> 7am left camp travelled east could find no trace of any tracks in that direction camped at 6pm no water for horses.

19<sup>th</sup> 5.30am left camp and travelled until 12 noon found no water for selves or horses and were forced to return to the camp we had left the day previous.

20<sup>th</sup>. 8am left camp and returned to J A Halls Station having found no signs of natives in the direction we had been travelling camped at 6pm.

21<sup>st</sup>. 1pm C Hall myself and the two Native Assistants left camp to proceed through the Hamersley Range in search of native offenders camped at 6pm.

22<sup>nd</sup>. Left camp for a spring name unknown we came across some natives tracks going in the direction of Walina Creek – they were apparently about two days old - followed then on and camped at Wallina Creek at 8pm.

23<sup>rd</sup>. 7am left camp for Urena. Picked up the tracks and followed them up until 4pm when I came on to a camp of natives and from information that I received from the native woman Jinni [?] I arrested Aboriginal native Yanagar charging him with the murder of the Swan River native Johnny on or about the 16<sup>th</sup> March 1881, also detained the native woman Jinni [?] as witness in the case of murder of Johnny – camped for the night at 5pm.

24<sup>th</sup> Sunday resting horses all day.

25<sup>th</sup> 6.30am left camp travelling westward camped at 5.30pm left at 8pm on foot for a water hole where I supposed some natives to be camped but found none returned to our horses at 7.30 am.

26<sup>th</sup> 9am started again to a native water hole in the hills came onto a native camp and arrested the native Tommy on warrant. Charged with the murder of an

Aboriginal native named Johnny at Hamersley Range on or about the 16<sup>th</sup> March 1881. Camped for the night at 4pm.

27<sup>th</sup>. 8am left camp for the Fortescue River with the native prisoners Tommy and Yanagar when suddenly they made a bolt and ran for a stony hill. I was close behind the two natives C Hall was close alongside. I tried to cut them off from the hill and started up it and got into a narrow gorge finding I could do no further good by following them on horseback I jumped off my horse while following the natives. As soon as they saw me on foot they started throwing stones at me then ran off again. I called on them to stop. I told them if they did not stop I would shoot them seeing I had no chance of overtaking them and calling on them again to stop of which I took no notice I fired on them. They both turned around and threw more stones at me. This time I was nearly hit in the head by a large stone. I fired on him again this time the natives called out and stopped running. I then went up to them and caught hold of the two prisoners also Native Assistant Tommy came up to us. I examined the native to see where he was shot I found that one of the bullets had entered the posterior coming out about four inches above the

penus [sic] also another shot had struck him in left thigh breaking the bone. I at once released him from the chain and tearing up a blanket I made a stretcher and conveyed them to the nearest water and camped for the night. I then started Native Assistant Tommy to Fortescue station for rations. Tommy returned at 5 pm with R Jones and Mr Hall I then reported the matter.

Memo: Jones informed me that he had received instructions to inform me to at once return to Roebourne.

28<sup>th</sup> 8.30am we started for the Fortescue conveying the wounded native Yanagan as he seemed no worse from the night before. At 12 noon we camped to give him a rest and as he wished to go on to where the natives were camped on the river but noticing him getting worse and stopped and gave him a water but he expired at about 1 pm.

4pm P Jones F C Stevenson and myself and the two natives buried the remains and went on to the Fortescue River. I would have remained at the camp where I first took the deceased when he was wounded but I believed it better to try and get him better treatment than I was able to give him at a camp.

29<sup>th</sup> 8am left camp for Roebourne escorting native prisoners Tommy and one native female witness named Jinny 5.30pm camped on the Fortescue distance travelled 25 miles.

30<sup>th</sup> 7am Left camp for Roebourne and camped at the Mill Stream at 1pm.

May 1<sup>st</sup> left Mill Stream at 12 noon and camped on the Table Land at 9pm.

Left camp at 6am and camped at Mr H H Hicks at 5pm

3<sup>rd</sup>. 8.30am Left camp and camped at Andora at 6pm

4<sup>th</sup> 8am Left camp and arrived at Roebourne at 11.30am and handed over the prisoner to M Claffey

I beg to state that the journey should have been completed much sooner had it not been for the great scarcity of water in the Districts travelled through and also the very rocky and hilly country that had to be contended with having at times being without water for the horses for 30 hours and but very little for ourselves

I also beg to state that I have had 6 horses out on this journey and one occasion I had to hire a horse from Mr C Hall for several days.

Signed James Hackett

Roebourne

6<sup>th</sup> May 1881

[Note] A true copy of James Hackett's report forwarded for the information of the Superintendent of Police Houlahan - 15-5-81 Sergeant

Some prisoners charged with stealing clothing on or about the 23 April [1881]

J Anderlin Hall sworn saith

I was at the Hamersley in April and Mrs Hall and my family were there too. We had shifted after the native Johnny was killed to where the sheep were. We left in the hut boxes and chest of drawers containing a quantity of clothing. Someone went there every day to water cows that were there. The hut was closed by a sheet tied in the door way. Hester went one day to water the cows and found the hut had been entered. I went down next morning and found the place had been turned upside down and missing 3 female hats, dresses, sheets, trousers, and a monkey jacket. We saw tracks of 5 men from the creek entering the hut and took care to preserve them. I afterwards 2 or 3 days afterwards shewed Bobby the tracks and he said he said he knew then quite well. He named Dickey, Toby, Petalbung, Windawirrie and Poberfenner (?) as being the natives and when we captured the 3 prisoners on the 30 July he said they were 3 of them who stole the clothes.

Western Australia

Resident's Office, Roebourne

23 July 1881

Sir

I beg to enclose Depositions in the case of Reg and Jerry and Cullinjee for the murder of a Swan River native. These two prisoners are also under sentence on summary convictions, of 6 months and 12 months: I have not therefore bound the witness Hester to appear at the October Sessions, nor forwarded the witness 'Jinny', thinking it best to submit the Depositions first. If the crown decides to prosecute the witnesses can be subpoenaed for October or January.

The identification of the prisoners depends entirely on Jinny's evidence, I could get nothing whatever out of another woman who was brought in as a witness, and though I am satisfied of the guilt of the accused The Hon The Attorney General may not deem the case strong enough for trial in the Supreme Court. The Hamersley Range natives have been giving much trouble, and it is desirable an example should be made. From the depositions you will

see that a number of others are concerned, but there is no likelihood of their being apprehended for some months.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant

E H Laurence

Govt Res[ident]

To

The Crown Solicitor

Perth

Western Australia

Resident's Office, Roebourne

15 August 1881

My Lord

I regret to report that the natives at the Hamersley Range continue to be troublesome and aggressive, Mr Hall came to town on the 2<sup>nd</sup> instant and reported that on the previous Saturday six natives in feathers and war paint and fully armed came to his station, having informed his native servant a few days before that they would drive the white men away. Fortunately Mr Hall with his sons, nephew and servants were a party of six, an unusual and probably to the natives an unexpected number.

Mr Hall states that he sent his nephew to get a horse to cut off the retreat of the assailants in the direction of the hills with a view to making them prisoners that they approached with spears raised until within 25 yards when he ordered his party to fire a volley into the air. This being done the natives all ran away. Hall went after one and captured him after a struggle his nephew secured another and the native servant a third. Mr Hall then went to a creek to look for another who had run in that direction and found him sitting down badly wounded in the

abdomen by a bullet. He bandaged the wound, but the native died in two or three hours. Mr Hall could not say which of his party had not obeyed his order to fire in the air, but under the circumstances the act may appear justifiable. When the natives captured are brought in I shall direct special enquiry to that point. The three prisoners were left by Mr Hall chained up and watched by the rest of his party while he rode in 150 miles to report.

As I had no Police or horses available I desired Mr Hall to bring the prisoners in with the help of his nephew and native servant who are required as witnesses of this attack and of certain robberies charged against the same men. These prisoners are also among those concerned in the murder of Swan River native "Johnny". The moral effect of being captured and brought in by Mr Hall will probably be greater than if Police assistance had been obtained. I expect they will reach town in the course of this week.

I have the honour to be  
My Lord,  
Your Lordship's very obedient Servant  
E H Laurence  
Govt Res[idnet]

Valentine Hester sworn saith: I was at the Hamersley Range in the 30<sup>th</sup> July on that morning I saw the prisoners and 3 other natives coming towards the place. When I first saw them they were about 80 yards they wore [?] wilgies and feathers and had a lot of spears each. There were 6 of us in our party. My uncle told me to get my pony. When we saw the natives we got our revolvers – I got on my pony the natives were then quite near the hut and were carrying their spears shipped in their wommeras [sic]. I heard Mr Hall tell them to put down their spears and they said “No”.

I got on the pony and rode to cut them off. As soon as I got between them some of them ran and some stopped. I turned them back and they rushed down towards the creek. The huts were between me and the creek. I then heard the revolvers fired. I fired 2 shots in the air as I was riding alongside of them.

Toby split off from the others and I followed him and caught him and afterwards caught Dickey in the creek. When the revolvers were fired I saw the natives fall and them get up and run away again. Afterwards I found “Tracker” [?] in the scrub in the creek wounded. We chained up the 3 that were caught and brought them in on Monday last.

7<sup>th</sup> September 1881

Present

Govt Resident and F McRae JP

“Dicky”, “Toby” and “Petalbung” charged with assault with intent to murder on 30 July at Hamersley Range  
J Anderlin Hall sworn saith

I was at my station on Saturday the 30 July, my nephew Val Hester, my sons Clarence and Willy, a man Wilkinson in my service and a native servant Bobby. Between 6 and 7 in the morning the 3 prisoners with 3 others came just as we were going to breakfast. I saw them coming towards the place. I first saw them about 80 yards off. They were dressed up in war costume with feathers and *wilgie*. I told my people to look out for themselves – I had had warning that they intended to come – they advanced to about 20 or 25 yards of us. I called out to the natives to put down their spears they said they wouldn't. My party were all provided with revolvers and had got them ready. I told Hester to get on a horse and get between the natives and a hill to cut off their retreat intending to take them prisoners. As soon as Hester got towards them they attempted to run towards the hill.

I then told my party to discharge their firearms in the air not at the natives to frighten them. They were then only about 20 to 25 yards off. One volley

was fired and the natives scattered away. As they ran they kept tumbling down. I thought they were wounded but they got up again and ran, Hester went then after one Toby and caught him. I took him in charge and Hester went after Dickey and caught him. The other 4 had got away. Bobby went after Petalbung and brought him back in 1½ hours. Then I asked these 3 where the others had gone and they said there was one hiding. Hester and others went to look and found Tracker [?] wounded. I went to see him, a ball had gone through him from the kidney to the right side. He could talk. He was a young fellow. I bound up the wound with oil and a bandage. His mother was there. He was carried to Bobby's hut but died about 7 in the morning. When we fired the natives were dangerously near. Some were moving away others not. I know the natives, they were formerly in my service. Some of them said they wouldn't put down their spears. We got guns – I had no revolver. I heard guns go off. I know the prisoners well, they came after a woman.

Dickey says “meta” [?]

Toby says he knows nothing about it.

Petalbung says he knows nothing about it.

N Claffey sworn saith

In July or the end of June I was out on the Hamersley after natives. Petalbung was caught by one native and he got away. At the camp where he was got there was a hat and other things which were brought and identified by Mr Hall.

Dickey says "meta"

Toby says "he was not there"

Petalbung says "Toby took the things".

Convicted on both charges

For attack on 30 July - 12 months h.l. [hard labour] each

Robbery in April - 6 months h.l. [hard labour] each.

E W Laurence

Govt Res[ident]

F McRae JP

Bobby affirmed saith: Mr Hall showed me the 5 tracks going from the hut and then coming out. I knew them they were Toby, Dickey, Petalbung, Chulberfinner [?] and Windawerry. I am quite sure of their tracks.

Bobby, Aboriginal native affirmed saith: Mr Hall is my master, I was with my master when the three prisoners came with Charley, Chubringinna and Winderwerrer [?]. They had *wilgie*. I saw them coming towards the hut they all had spears. They came to fight. I think they meant to throw spears. They came close to the house. I heard master speak to them.

References:

Day, W B (ed) 2004 *Murder, Trial and Execution in the Pilbara: the death James Coppin*.

Green N and S Moon 1997 *Far from Home: Aboriginal Prisoners of Rottnest island 1838 - 1931*. Nedlands; UWA Press.

Rottnest Island Aboriginal prisoners  
(From Green N and S Moon 1997 *Far from Home: Aboriginal Prisoners of Rottnest island 1838 – 1931.*)

**Jerry @ Yendern** 942, 1881 Roebourne. Received 20 Sept sentenced to 1 year for wounding and murder. RICB.

**Cullinger** 941, Cullingee, Cullinjee 1881 Hamersley Range. Received 20 Sept charged with murder and stealing (6 months) for trial 7 Oct 1881 RICB. He was charged with the murder of Legood and was returned to Roebourne for trial. He complained of sickness and died of what Dr O'Meehan claimed was inflammation of the intestines CSR 1444-68/1881, 3 Dec. The Governor, after reading the report, asked for the opinion of the Colonial Surgeon, who replied that on the information given there was no reason to doubt the doctor's treatment of Cullinger. The Governor added a note, 'I am not at all satisfied...' CSR 1444-72/1881, 30 Jan 1882.

**Dickey** 950, 1881 Roebourne. Received 26 Sept sentenced to 18 months for stealing and assault. Discharged 7 March 1883. RICB.

**Toby** 948, 1881 Roebourne. Received 26 Sept sentenced to 18 months for stealing and assault. Discharged 7 March 1883. In July 1882, permission was given for serving prisoners to be assigned as police assistants and mail carriers. It was claimed that free and capable Aborigines could get better paid work. Governor Robinson added a comment, 'I do not like this arrangement'. Nevertheless PC Lawrence visited Rottnest to select 2 or 3 prisoners. Toby was one of those considered CSR 1480-69/82, 12 July.

**Petalbung** 949, 1881 Roebourne. Received 26 September sentenced to 18 months for stealing. Discharged 7 March 1883. RICB.