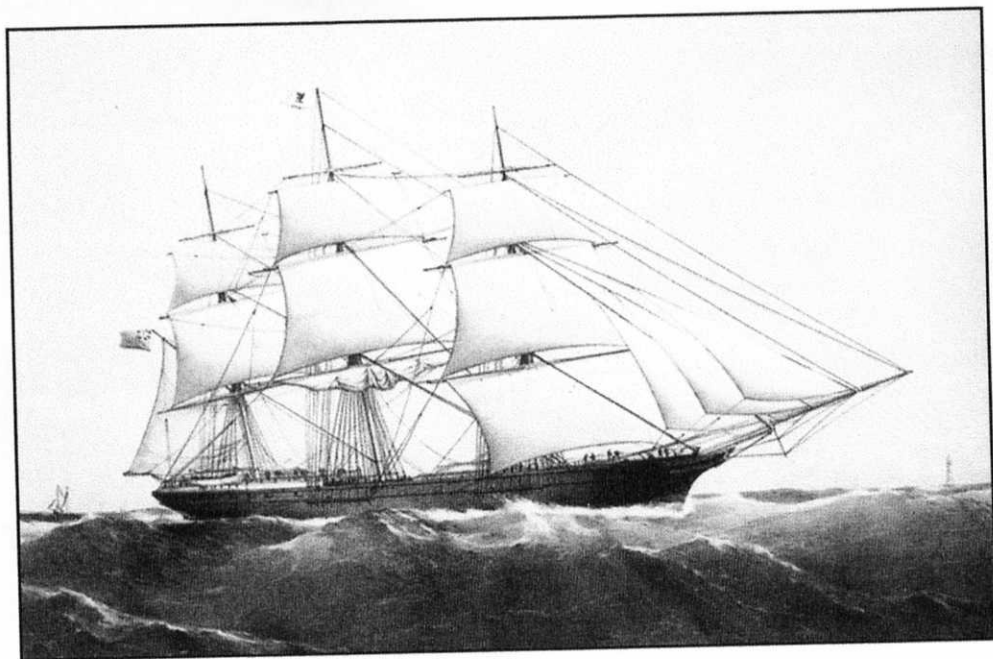


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## The Other Lewis Grant

*Elspeth Grant*

My great-grandfather, Lewis Grant, led a relatively quiet life in the Adelaide Hills, raising ten children and working for the South Australian Railways. From a researcher's point of view he suffers from 'historical invisibility', whereby people who lead 'average' lives leave fewer traces of their existence in historical records. In contrast, 'the other Lewis Grant' left quite a large footprint in Australia's police and court records, being incarcerated more often than not in gaols from Ballarat through to Townsville.

This year I have been tracing the life stories of the 17 boys from the Kibble Farm School, a reformatory in Paisley (near Glasgow), Scotland, who participated in the South Australian Government's youth migration scheme of 1913–14. This meant searching systematically for each boy's surname in databases and indexes (leading me to appreciate the unusual surnames of some of the boys and to become frustrated by Messrs Taylor and Wilson!) The support of dad Peter, an experienced genealogist, proved to be integral.

When searching the index to the *South Australian Police Gazette* at the SAGHS Library, I only entered my great-grandfather's name for the sake of completeness. After all, I knew that he had generally been too busy raising a large family to commit any crimes! When several records appeared in the name of Lewis Grant, I noted the details, but only in order to double check my assumption that there was another man of this name living in South Australia at the time. However, I came to a sudden halt when one of the listings also stated 'alias Hugh Lawson'.

Hugh Lawson was another of the boys that I had been researching and at the time he was on my list of 'unresolved mysteries'. When I had previously located each boy's World War I service record at the National Archives, Lawson's file had proved slim but puzzling. He was 'struck off' as a deserter from the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) whilst still in camp in Adelaide during 1915. However, the few pages in his file included a cable from AIF Headquarters in London, dated 1919, advising that a soldier who claimed he was Lawson had been arrested in Paris. Yet there was no further correspondence on the matter and it seemed that 'Hugh Lawson' had effectively disappeared.

I located the reports referring to the disreputable Lewis Grant in the *Police Gazette* and found that the police believed that Hugh Lawson was just one of his many aliases, as well as 'Robert Taylor', 'William Brennan', 'John McDonald' and 'Henry Van Buren'. This criminal lived a solitary life, continually wandering and thieving in order to feed his alcohol addiction. A mug shot confirmed that it was not my great-grandfather living a hitherto unknown double life! However, as Robert Taylor was the name of yet another of the boys I had been researching, it was time for some lateral thinking.



*The 'real' Lewis Grant*

