

## 35 – Cobby Abile

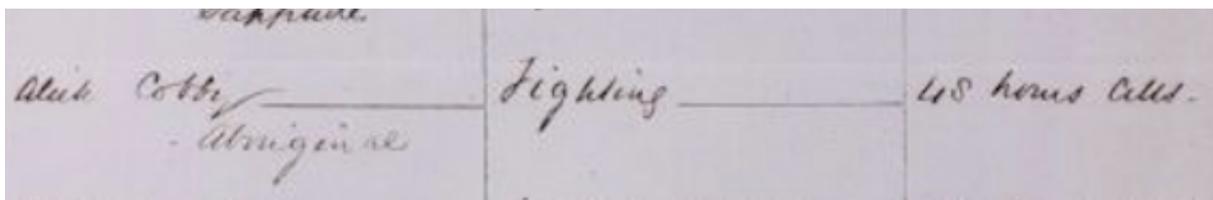
### Language and Content Warning

This file contains language contained in colonial records that is offensive to Aboriginal people today. It also contains descriptions of Aboriginal people who have passed away, and documents colonial frontier violence and incarceration.

Cobby or Cobbie Abile was incarcerated on Cockatoo Island, though the date of his arrival, trial details, and departure from the island remain undocumented in available archival records. Cobby Abile was punished for two offences while in custody between the December 1866 and December 1867 - for fighting and for keeping cards in bed.

### Cobby's Time on Cockatoo Island

Records show that Cobby Abile was punished for two offences while in prison. The first punishment was for fighting. According to the document, seen in Figure 1, Return of Prisoners Tried in a Summary Way Before the Visiting Magistrate at Cockatoo Island (1867, January 2), Cobby was sentenced to 48 hours in the cells for fighting on 18 December 1867. The record also notes that while other prisoners are described as "native," Cobbie is specifically referred to as an "aborigine".



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RETURN of Prisoners tried in a Summary way before the Visiting Magistrate at Cockatoo Island, pursuant to the Act of the Governor and Council, 3 William IV., No. 3, between the 1st day of December and the 31<sup>st</sup> day of December 1866.

DATE	NAME, &c., of ACCUSED	OFFENCE	PUNISHMENT
	5 James Smith a native	Refusing to work	20 days Cells
	5 James Fitzgibbon a native	Refusing to work	20 days Cells
	19 Hugh Lamb a native	Insulting to a Native	10 days Cells
1866 December	19 James Brown or Butler his name	Abusing Language	48 hours Cells
	19 Thomas de Coo Aborigine	Fighting	48 hours Cells
	19 Abile Cobby Aborigine	Fighting	48 hours Cells
	19 Timothy Brown a native	neglect of work	20 hours Cells
	24 James Robinson Ellen	Gambling	48 hours Cells
	24 John Williams Milepore	Gambling	6 days Cells

Cockatoo Island  
2<sup>d</sup> January 1867

The Principal  
Secretary  
&  
Admiral

H. Mason

Figure 1. Colonial Secretary Correspondence. (1867, January 2).

The second offence occurred on 27 December 1867, when Cobbie was punished with four days in the cells for “having cards in his bed” (Figure 2) (Colonial Secretary Correspondence, 1868, January 7). According to secondary sources (Roscoe, 2017, June 21) describing the presence of the Chinese community and diaspora in Cockatoo Island, card playing was influenced by those working in the goldfields, where gambling and bargaining over possessions were common practices. Criminals from the goldfields were often sent to Cockatoo Island from Maitland, which may explain the presence of such activities among prisoners.

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RETURN of Prisoners tried in a Summary way before the Visiting Magistrate at Cockatoo Island, pursuant to the Act of the Governor and Council, 3 William IV., No. 3, between the 1st day of December and the 31<sup>st</sup> day of December 1867.

DATE.	NAME, &c., of ACCUSED.	OFFENCE.	PUNISHMENT.
1867 December	4 George MacIntyre a native	Perjury of Repetitions	7 days Cells
	" James Fitzgibbon a native	Refusing to attend Divine Service	7 "
	11 Robert Perry a native	Leaving his Cell without permission	7 "
	" Henry Martin a native	Evil-taliments of exerts	2 "
	" James Kennedy a native	Fighting	2 "
	" Francis Jackson a native	Fighting	2 "
	" James Wright a native	Obtaining Penalties without his duty	24 hours Cells
	10 James de Cretch a native	Neglect of work	2 days Cells
	" John Jackson a native	Smoking at work	7 "
	" James Fitzgibbon a native	Absent from Camp	4 "
	" Samuel Clarke a native	Absent from Camp	4 "
	27 John Jackson a native	Absent from Camp	14 "
	" Aliek Cobbie Aboriginal	Having Cards in his bed	4 "

Cockatoo Island.  
2 January 1868  
H. Murray

The Principal Under Secretary  
at Sydney

Figure 2. Colonial Secretary Correspondence. (1868, January 7).

The letter that accompanies the table also provides general information about Cockatoo Island, mentioning that “the conduct of the Prisoners has been generally satisfactory” and that “Four Prisoners have been discharged during the month having the number on the island 91820 (182) one Hundred and eighty two” (Colonial Secretary Correspondence, 1868, January 7).

## Community Links

Across all the records there is an absence of specific community and family links.

## References

Colonial Secretary Correspondence. (1867, January 2). *Return of Prisoners tried in a Summary way before the Visiting Magistrate at Cockatoo Island, pursuant to the Act of the Governor and Council, 3 William IV., No 3, between the 1st day of December and the 31st day of December 1867* [Manuscript]. State Archives and Records NSW (Series 4/588 Letter no 67/144), Sydney, Australia.

Colonial Secretary Correspondence. (1868, January 7). *Return of Prisoners tried in a Summary way before the Visiting Magistrate at Cockatoo Island, pursuant to the Act of the Governor and Council, 3 William IV., No 3, between the 1st day* [Table]. (Series 4/616 - Letter no 68/159), Sydney, Australia.

Roscoe, K. (2017, June 21). *Chinese Prisoners on Cockatoo Island, Sydney.*

<https://staffblogs.le.ac.uk/carchipelago/2017/06/21/chinese-prisoners-cockatoo-island/#:~:text=The%20defence%20argued%2C%20based%20on,to%20money%2C%20alcohol%20and%20cards>