

George Porter, 135, *Hashemy*

Researched by Marcia Watson

Baptism	8 April 1828, Halstead, Essex ?
Parents	George Porter and Elizabeth
Parent's marriage	
Siblings	Susannah (1827), Elizabeth (1833), Sarah (1836),
Wife	
Married	
Children	

George said his father was George Porter, a labourer, Halstead, Essex.

This appears to be his family in 1841, living at Halstead:¹

George Porter, 40, labourer; Eliz Porter, 40; Susannah, 15; George, 10; Eliz, 10; Sarah, 5; Susannah 3[name error?]

Possible death of his parents:

Elizabeth Porter buried on 4 January 1848, aged 54.

George Porter, labourer, possibly in the Halstead workhouse in 1851. He was buried 13 April 1853, aged 58, and was from the workhouse.

The Millbank Prison register said George Porter had been five times imprisoned for poaching.

Possible previous offences - There are at least two people called George Porter in Halstead in the 1840s, and a few others living nearby.

Halsted Petty Session, 11 June 1842:

Abraham Rayner, George Porter, and John Cook, all of Halsted, labourers, were charged with having injured number of fir trees in a plantation near Crow Bridge, the property of J. T. Fowke, Esq. to the amount 6d.

Mr Firmin stated that the damage which had been done in the plantation at different times by the prisoners and others had completely ruined the trees.

Convicted, and sentenced to pay the damage, 6d. and costs, 11s each; and in default were committed for 21 days.

The prisoner Rayner, although only about 10 or 11 years of age, has been twice convicted of felony; on the last occasion he was sentenced to 10 years' transportation, but was afterwards pardoned: he has besides been several times summarily convicted, instance of youthful depravity happily seldom witnessed. Though feelingly addressed by the chairman, neither Rayner nor the other prisoners showed the least compunction.²

Probably not George:

1843. Charge of Stealing Fifty Pigeons.— Frederick Gooday, William Fairhead, and George Porter, all of Halstead, labourers, were on Friday last examined before the magistrates at that place, charged with having broken open dove-house at Stansted-hall, Halstead, and stolen fifty pigeons.

Francis Cressey Bridge stated, that the pigeons were his property, as trustee under the will of the late Mr Stephen Bridge, his brother, and that his foreman, William Arnold, had the care and management of the dove-house.

William Arnold deposed that the door of the dove-house, containing about twelve dozen live pigeons, was secured on Thursday evening last. On the following morning, about six o'clock, he discovered that the door had been forced open, and he believed about four dozen of pigeons were stolen. He noticed footmarks near, apparently made by boys' feet. The pigeons were principally blue. Porter had been in the habit of coming to the dove-house for pigeons for his late master, Mr Gilson.

¹ HO107/332/3, p38

² Chelmsford Chronicle - Friday 14 June 1844, p3

James Allen, butcher, of Halstead, proved seeing the prisoners in the tap-room of the Three Crowns on the above evening, and that they left together about nine o'clock.

Harriet, wife Tobias Wicker, of Halstead, fishmonger, proved that on the 9th instant James Smith offered her two pigeons for sale, which she refused to buy; he said he had them of young Fairhead. [*there it quite a bit of evidence – not copied*] The were fully committed for trial

Chelmsford Chronicle - Friday 22 December 1843, p4

1844. At the County Sessions on 2 January 1844, Frederick Gooday, 18, was found not guilty. William Fairhead, 18, and George Porter, 18, were found guilty and sentenced to four months imprisonment. HO27/72, p252

1844. Duck Stealing.—Yesterday, two men of suspicious appearance named Alfred Drury and George Porter, from the neighbourhood of Halstead, were examined before J. F. Fortescue, Esq. on charge of stealing four ducks, the property of Elisabeth Chipperfield, a shopkeeper living Great Leighs.— It was stated in evidence that during the night of Saturday, Mrs C.'s poultry-house was broken open, and four ducks were stolen from amongst 16 others. About six o'clock on Sunday morning, John Burton, the parish constable of Little Waltham, met with the prisoners in the road, each carrying bundle. They stopped at the house of a person named Bird, after which they proceeded along the road towards Chelmsford. Hearing from Bird that the parties had offered cherries for sale, and suspecting they had stolen them, Burton pursued and overtook them. They were sitting behind the hedge in field by the road aide. He inquired of Porter what he had in his bundle; to which the reply was—a pair of trousers. The constable then took the bundle and found it to consist of pair of ducks, which had apparently recently been killed by their necks being broken. Upon searching the other prisoner, he found another pair of ducks in his coat pocket. They were conveyed the police station Springfield, and the same day the ducks were identified by William Skinner, the service of Mrs Chipperfield, who was in the habit of attending the poultry.—The defence made by Drury was that purchased the ducks on the road from Halsted.— Porter said was not aware that they had been stolen. They were both committed for trial the Quarter Sessions.

Essex Herald - Tuesday 02 July 1844, p3

Geo Porter, 19, labourer, was sentenced to 14 years, and Alfred Drury, 18, labourer, to 7 years transportation, for stealing four ducks from Elizabeth Chipperfield at Great Leighs.

Chelmsford Chronicle - Friday 05 July 1844, p3

Millbank Register: Before convicted of felony, not deficient in intelligence, parents and connections bad. Sent to Tasmania per *Stratheden*

HO24/1

**** Porter received a Conditional Pardon in 1847. Said he had previously been convicted for pigeons and sentenced to 4 months. His father was Richard and George's native place was Braintree near Halstead.**

Probably the George Porter born in Bocking near Braintree, son of Richard and Susanna, in 1826.

1845. A George Porter was found not guilty at the County Assizes on 15 July 1844. No age or place named.³

1846. Commitments and Convictions from the 9th to the 16th inst.

Convictions: George Porter, by R. Hills, Esq., one month's hard labour' or pay 15s. for malicious injury to a duck, at Halstead.⁴

1847. Halstead Petty Session Tuesday, November 9.

George Porter, a well-known character at Halstead, was convicted of poaching on the lands of J. N Brewster, Esq of Halstead Lodge, in the daytime. Fined 10s. and costs and in default of payment, committed to gaol for one month.⁵

1848. Gang of Burglars

At the Essex Quarter Sessions on Friday, much interest was excited by the trial of several members of a gang of burglars that had long infested the lower parts of the county and carried on its plunder to an enormous extent. The first indictment was against George Porter and John Bragg for breaking into the

³ HO 27/72, p270

⁴ Essex Standard, 17 April 1846, p2

⁵ Essex Standard, 12 November 1847, p2

house of Mr Tuck, a farmer near Halstead. It was proved that the prisoners had been seen near the premises, and they had admitted to an accomplice that they committed the robbery and that having been met by a policeman, they proceeded at once to the headquarters of the gang and changed their clothes for suits of a different colour, so as to baffle the officers in case they should be suspected and pursued. They were found guilty on this indictment.

The next charge was against **John** (*sic*) **Porter** for breaking into the store-houses of Mrs Lee, a wholesale dealer at Halstead, and stealing 14 pounds of tobacco, 50 pounds of butter, and large quantities of soap, candles, currants, and other articles, and James Jackson, a respectable-looking man, carrying on the business of a grocer in the town was indicted for receiving the plunder.

The principal witness against the prisoners was a man named Bryant, the leader of the gang, who had been sentenced to transportation for another offence, and was brought up in the convict dress to give evidence. He stated that the robbery was suggested to them by Jackson, who offered to receive the plunder and dispose of it in his shop. They broke the store-house open, got in, and lighted a candle, and collected the sort of articles they wanted. They then carried them to Jackson's who weighed the different articles, and paid them next day about one quarter of their value.

In cross-examination, Bryant admitted that he had been the chide of the gang, that he began house-breaking when he was only 11 years old, and that he had been concerned in at least 30 burglaries in the neighbourhood of Halstead, although he was now only 23 years old. He had been three times convicted and was once sentenced to transportation, but then escaped with a few years imprisonment. In many of these burglaries Porter was concerned with him, and they were in the habit of taking the goods stolen to Jackson's. A number of other witnesses were called to confirm Bryant's evidence, and the prisoners were found guilty. As Bragg appeared to have been only just initiated into the gang, the Court awarded him 12 months hard labour; but **Porter was sentenced to fifteen years**, and Jackson to ten years transportation.⁶

Examination Of Three More Members Of The Halsted Gang.

Second Case—Fowl-Stealing.

William Smith, labourer, was next charged, upon Bryant's evidence, with stealing two geese and a gander, from Mr Wm. May, of Stisted.

Wm. Bryant said, about this time twelve months I was at the King's Head, with George Porter; there was some gleaning corn the room, and he told me there were some geese in there; I said, was there— where did they come from and he said, yes,—he and Smith stole them from Mr Wm. May's, at Stisted; said they got into the hen-house by taking off the at top; he went to feel for the geese to show me, but were gone; a fortnight before Christmas I saw Smith at the Woodman, when he told me he had been with Porter after the geese, and they had searched his house, but could not find them; if they had gone to the King's Head they would have found them, they were there, and George Porter had sold them, and only gave him 2s. for his share.

Mary Rayner examined: I live at an off-hand farm of Mr May's, at Stisted, and was employed to take care the fowls; in October 1847, I locked the fowls up safe in the hen-house, about six o'clock on the of the 28th, and on the following morning I found they had been stolen; I know the prisoner by sight, as was often backwards and forwards at his grandfather's house, which is directly opposite Mr May's farm, and within a few rods of it. The henhouse was broken open, but slate was taken off the roof, which enabled the thief to get in.

Mary Taylor: I live off-hand farm, at Stisted, belonging to Mr May, and I heard of the robbery the day after it was committed; on the afternoon of the day the fowls were stolen, I saw the prisoner and two other persons pass my house which is about a quarter of a mile from the place where the fowls were stolen; they were going in the direction of Halstead; distinctly recognized the prisoner, but I did not know his companions—one was shorter than the others, and had curly hair; I have frequently seen the prisoner about the parish, and near Mr May's farm.

Philip Pallant, policeman: On the 29th of Oct. 1847, I went to the farm and examined the place from which the fowls were stolen; I traced the footsteps of two persons from the fowl-house, in a direction towards Halsted, one impression being smaller than the other, but these foot-marks were too imperfect to compare with any shoes. On the same day, from information received, I went to the prisoner's house at

⁶ Jackson's Oxford Journal, 28 October 1848

Halsted, suspecting he had been concerned in committing the robbery; with his consent, I searched it, but did not find the fowls.

Mr Hunt, the superintendent, proved that he had frequently seen the prisoner in the company of Bryant and Porter before and after the robbery; **Porter shorter stature, and has a curly head of hair.** The prisoner reply to the charge declared he knew nothing of the robbery—he was at home and in bed at the time. He offered to produce his mother-in-law as a witness on his behalf, to prove he was at home that night, but the magistrate told him he had better reserve the evidence for the trial. He was committed for trial.⁷

George Porter, 18, cannot read or write, convicted of curtilage breaking and larceny on 17 October 1848, and sentenced to 15 years.⁸

George Porter, 18, single, cannot read or write, labourer, convicted of housebreaking &c at Chelmsford and sentenced to 15 years transportation. Received at Millbank Prison on 9 January 1849 from Springfield Gaol. He had been five times imprisoned for poaching. George was transferred to Pentonville Prison on 3 May 1849. The Pentonville register says George was a gardener. He was sent to Portland Prison on 4 March 1850. From there, he boarded the *Hashemy* on 19 July 1850 for the voyage to Western Australia. His age is stated as 20.⁹

On arrival in Western Australia in October 1850, his description was:

135. George Porter, 21, 5'3", brown curly hair, blue eyes, long face, fair complexion, fresh (*sic*) build, no marks, single and a labourer.¹⁰

General Register:

135. George Porter, 22 years old in March 1852, single, labourer, Church of England, never at school, can read a little, indifferent writing and will not learn accounts. Convicted at Chelmsford Quarter Sessions on 17 October 1848. His father George Porter, labourer, lives in Halstead, Essex

Attended Divine Service? Not much in his former life

Received Sacrament? Never

Habits? Not much given to drinking; not inclined much to work for some time previous to committal

Intellect? Sound

State of Mind? Hopeful

Knowledge, Secular? Very limited

Knowledge, Religious? Knows very little

Alleged Cause of Crime? Bad company

Name of Person referred to for Character, &c. Mr Andrew Wood, farmer, Halstead, Essex

Did not receive any books while in prison.¹¹

George received a Ticket of leave on 26 December 1852. And a Conditional Pardon in January 1857.¹²

A few months later, Thomas Hague and fellow convict

from the *Hashemy*, George Porter, went to South

Australia per *Swallow*. The ship sailed from Fremantle

on 30 April 1857 for Adelaide.¹³

Arrived at Adelaide on 27 May: The brigantine *Swallow*,

124 tons, T. Allen, master, from Swan River April 30,

Encounter Bay, May 25. Passengers— Mr Andrew

Shields, and Mrs Allen and child, in the cabin; Thos.

Smithers, Chas. Freeman, Wm. Ayres, James Hill,

The Schooner SWALLOW.
The only Vessel in the Anchorage
for King George's Sound and
Adelaide.
THIS schooner will leave for
the above-named Ports in
about three weeks, and will carry Passen-
gers and freight. Terms of Passage—Ca-
bin, £15; Steerage, £10.
For particulars apply to
LIONEL SAMSON, Agent.
Fremantle, April 13, 1857.

⁷ Chelmsford Chronicle, 10 November 1848, p3

⁸ HO27/84/p309

⁹ HO24/4; HO4/16, HO8/105

¹⁰ SROWA Acc 128/1 – 32

¹¹ SROWA Acc 1156 R21A

¹² SROWA Acc 1156 R21B

¹³ The Inquirer and Commercial News (Perth, WA : 1855 - 1901), 25 March 1857, p1

Margaret Tierman, Wm. Marsh, **George Porter**, George Brain, **Charlotte Horn**, James Bowman, John Jones, Robt. Graham, Samuel James, Thos. Hague, Ann Archer, John Gaunt, Wm. Beecroft, Sarah Matthews, Edward Ellis, Harriet, Mary, and Elizabeth Ellis and child, John, Priscilla, and Emma Pawley, Catherine, Honora, and George Fisher, Wm., Mary Ann, Wm., John, Charles, and Mary Ann Butler, Charles Frith, George Harker, wife, and 2 children, Ellen O'Grady, Bridget Staunton, Timothy Hogan, John Mackie, Thomas Harrison, Margaret, John, Mary Ann, and Michael Halliday, and Simon Sheehan, in the steerage.¹⁴

George Porter and Charlotte Horn were mentioned in a court case in **1858**.

Supreme Court, Stealing from a Dwelling-House.

Levi Walker was indicted for stealing from the dwelling house of Charlotte Horn an opossum rug, the property of George Porter, at Port Adelaide, on the 29th July last.

Mr Bagot defended the prisoner.

Charlotte Horn, the wife of Thomas Horn, stated that on the 29th July last, she saw the prisoner about the house. He was at the front door, and as soon as he saw her he pretended to be pulling the door too. Previously to seeing the prisoner that morning, she noticed the rug hanging on a line in her back room. After she saw the prisoner, she (witness) went out to visit a neighbour and returned about 6 o'clock, and then missed the rug. It was worth £5 and belonged to George Porter.

Mr Bagot asked the witness who George Porter was? -to which she answered that he lived in her house. Mr Bagot then asked if he did not live with her? The witness was mute at that form of the question, and Mr Bagot pressing her for a reply, she appealed to His Honor to know if she was compelled to answer. His Honor said she was not, and her cross-examination by Mr Bagot was then resumed. She stated that the day the rug was missed, Porter left for town, where he remained that day, and did not return all night. Before he left, he had a few words with her but did not leave in a passion and take the rug with him.

Margaret Ramsden, examined by the Crown Solicitor, stated that she lived near Mrs Horn's, and saw the prisoner standing in the back door-way of Mrs Horn's, and saw him pitch an opossum rug from Mrs Horn's door into his own house, which was only a few feet from Mrs Horn's.

By Mr Bagot - She had no conversation with the prisoner before she gave information to the police, neither did she talk to the young woman he was living with, nor anyone else.

The witness caused a great deal of merriment amongst a large number of Port ladies and gentlemen who were in Court, by the indignant way in which she replied to Mr Bagot's questions, put by the learned gentleman to test her loquacious talents and her reputation for veracity.

The mirth of the Portonians reached its climax when the witness gave a contemptuous glance round the Court and scornfully exclaimed that she never spoke to anybody and always kept at home, and never corresponded with such folk except on such occasions as the present one when she came to town with decent people. The glee of the Portonians at the words "decent people" burst out most audibly.

By His Honor - She saw the rug again at night when the prisoner was removing it from his house.

George Porter stated that while staying at Mrs Horn's, he missed the rug in question. The last time he saw it was on the 12th July, at Mrs Horn's.

By Mr Bagot - He was then living with Mrs Horn, and saw the rug in the afternoon before he went to town.

Corporal Badman stated that when he arrested the prisoner he denied the charge. The rug had not been found, the doors of Mrs Horn's and the prisoners were nearly opposite, and were only separated by a narrow passage.

By Mr Bagot - Examined the place the same evening the rug was missed.

This was the case for the Crown.

Mr Bagot addressed the Jury for the defence and said that the only evidence against the prisoner was that of Mrs Ramsden, and the Jury would see from the way in which she gave her evidence in relation to her account of the affair that no reliance could be placed in her statement. With regard to Mrs Horn, her statement could not be believed, for she had admitted that she quarrelled with the man she had been living with, and the only evidence the Jury had to fall back upon was Mrs Ramsden. They (the Jury) would be able to form an opinion of the value of her testimony, for he (Mr Bagot) had allowed her to run on at her

¹⁴ South Australian Register (Adelaide, SA: 1839 - 1900), 28 May 1857, p2

own rate as the best way to exhibit to the Jury the kind of evidence upon which the indictment was attempted to be supported. One of the most singular reasons she had given for not mentioning the affair before the 14th of August was that she was afraid her husband would scold her. That would be a strange excuse for any woman to make, but in the witness's case it appeared most singular, as her whole demeanour, even in Court, had been a vivid illustration of the old saying, that "the grey mare is the better horse."

After further drawing the attention of the Jury to the evidence, the learned counsel said that no confidence could be placed on the evidence of the woman Ramsden, and that the doubt there was in the case the Jury were bound to give his client the benefit of.

Mr Bagot called Mrs Berry, who stated that in the afternoon of the day in question, she saw Porter leave Mrs Horn's house with the rug in his possession and start off for town. Before he left, he and Mrs Horn quarrelled, and most unseemly epithets passed between them about some lost money. By way of making up the quarrel, she heard Mrs Horn tell Porter that she loved him better than her husband. Porter left the place with the rug in his possession. Mrs Horn's husband was away from the colony. She (witness) also heard some quarrelling between Mrs Ramsden and the prisoner's wife the day before the prisoner was apprehended.

By the Crown Solicitor - The witness never but on one occasion spoke to the prisoner. She (witness) lived opposite Mrs Ramsden's. The houses were all in a cluster there, and what was said in one house could easily be heard in all the others.

His Honor, at this point of the case, told the Jury it would not be at all safe to convict upon such evidence. The only evidence for the Crown was Mrs Ramsden, whose statement was flatly contradicted; besides the fact that she had not given information till a long time had elapsed after the occurrence made her evidence extremely suspicious.

The Jury at once acquitted the prisoner.

His Honor, in discharging him (Levi Walker), advised him to keep better company in future.¹⁵

Levi Walker, 1501, per *Dudbrook* to WA, went to South Australia per *Estrella da Norte* on 9 October 1857.

No further trace found of George Porter.

¹⁵ The South Australian Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1858 - 1889), 27 November 1858, p3