

Robert Carter 3180

Robert Carter was born in Shouldham, Norfolk was baptised on 7 May 1820. His father, Robert Carter aged 33 had married 21 year old Tabitha Trace earlier that year in Shouldham. They struggled and the 1841 census has them and 6 children, with Tabitha's mother Mary, and 5 other families on Lot 240 in Shouldham. Robert snr died in 1844, the same year the year 24 year old Robert married Phoebe Oxbury from Gooderstone. Phoebe's father was Charles and was the only grandfather the children knew and possibly explains how the name Charles appears on Robert's burial papers in 1898.

Robert and Phoebe's first child Susannah was baptised in Shouldham on the first September 1844. The next two children Robert and Sarah Ann were baptised in Shouldham Thorpe in 1846 and 1848. This suggests Robert's financial circumstances had changed and suggests he had taken up poaching from this time. A brace of pheasant sold for £3 in the London markets. An inquiry into the trade in 1828 revealed agents would place their orders with known poachers and the game would be sent to London on Friday night coaches and be available in London markets Saturday morning.

Before the enclosure Acts game from the Commons was a source of food, but after all the land was privatised by the Acts, gamekeepers were under great pressure to protect their master's game and thus the increasing hostility between keepers and poachers. On Friday 13 December 1850 Robert and 4 companions, poaching near Marham Hall, were confronted by a number of gamekeepers and when Robert threatened the keepers, the head keeper responded with "Not this time" and shot the poachers' dog. In the affray that followed one poacher was shot and two keepers sustained limb wounds. Four of the five poachers were detained.

They were taken before the Downham Market magistrate, Rev. Edward Howman, the following morning who decided they should be tried at the next assizes in Norwich of poaching and assault with intent to cause bodily harm, avoid arrest and attempted murder. They were detained at the Swaffham lock up until March when they were moved to Norwich Castle for trial at the Spring assizes in late March. Justice Erle was very unhappy when they pleaded guilty to poaching and the jury found them not guilty of the more serious assault charges. Nevertheless he gave each of them a life sentence for assault with intent to harm. They appealed the severity of their sentences and Erle's response to the Home Office turning down the appeal happened to be in Robert's petition papers. He indicated the jury had made a poor decision and he would not recommend the sentence being changed.

In the following month Phoebe gave birth to their fourth child Charles, baby Sarah Ann is with grandfather Charles in Gooderstone and poacher Robert Mason dies in Swaffham lock-up. Robert ends up in Dartmoor from Millbank and William Goddard and George Hobbs are shipped to Bermuda. Robert sails from Plymouth on the Ramillies in 1854 and reaches Fremantle in August. He spends two stints of six months in Fremantle prison and two stays at Rottneest of the same length before he is granted his ticket in August 1856.

He had to find his own way to the York hiring depot and correspondence from the resident magistrate indicates he did not arrive. Word of his disappearance somehow reached George Hobbs in Bermuda who assumed he was dead and wrote in his fifth petition to the Home Office that he was the only one alive after Goddard, with him in Bermuda, had died from Yellow fever. And since Carter

had been given his ticket, Hobbs argued that he, who had been starving at the time and it was his first poaching event and had no gun, should be licensed.

Robert turned up in Northam and the Establishment was notified.

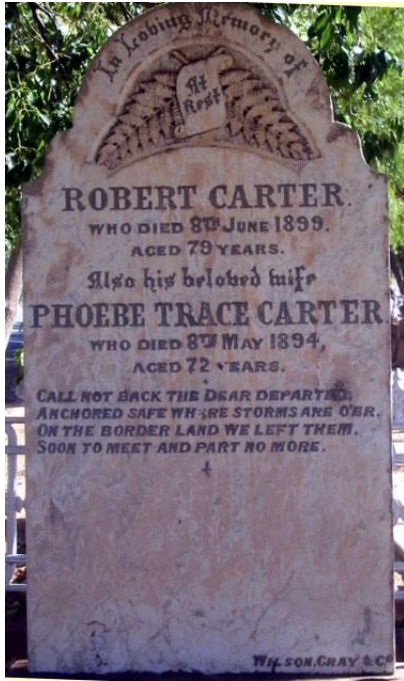
When Phoebe's father and sister died in late fifties and with another child at foot she was easily persuaded by an Emigration Commission agent to join her husband in Fremantle and she and the five children sailed in 1859 for WA. Robert seems to have been unaware of her fifth child Wesley's existence for the application register for families to join their husbands only has four children named. How she travelled from Fremantle to Northam is a mystery. Some of the single women on the ship ended up in York and it is probable she travelled with them to York and from there to West Northam where he seems to have been living. Certainly he buys 4 town lots at that end of town towards Carters pool, which the family like to believe it was named after him.

After the family joined him and he is granted his conditional pardon in August 1861 and after the massive flood in 1862 he starts purchasing Town lots 5, 6, 7 and 8 on the river, each over 1 acre in size and each purchased two years apart. His daughter Susannah, still a teenager and half his age, marries William White (Lyon) in 1861. While everyone in Northam knows him as Lyon he still signs official documents using his convict alias White. White and Carter form a partnership and manage a 100 acre lease White has purchased towards Katrine. When this is dissolved five years later, Lyon manages Throssell's store in town and Carter starts up the Northam pound certainly on one of his 4 adjacent lots on the river in 1868. With local Road Board contracts and the pound Robert makes a living. Putting 'Robert Carter' and 'Northam' as search words on TROVE provides over 500 hits. One of the more alarming hits is his day at the Northam races in 1881 when he was knocked unconscious by a bolting horse who jumped the barrier.

He also features in Lyon's *Advertiser* articles on his 55 years in Northam.

Phoebe passed away in 1894 and Robert four years later and they are both buried in the cemetery adjacent to Katrine Road. The headstone appears to have been erected sometime after the event and there are a number of serious errors in the information. He did not die in 1899. Phoebe was not Phoebe Trace; Trace was Robert's mother's name. It is obvious their genealogical information, presumably among the grandchildren, was pretty garbled

The grave adjacent to Katrine Road



In Loving Memory of



**ROBERT CARTER.**

WHO DIED 8<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 1899.  
AGED 79 YEARS.

Also his beloved wife

**PHOEBE TRACE CARTER**

WHO DIED 8<sup>TH</sup> MAY 1894,  
AGED 72 YEARS.

CALL NOT BACK THE DEAR DEPARTED,  
ANCHORED SAFE WHERE STORMS ARE O'ER.  
ON THE BORDER LAND WE LEFT THEM,  
SOON TO MEET AND PART NO MORE.

W. L. SON, CRAY & CO.