

George Henry WHEAT – NORWOOD II Convict # 9610

By Carol Wheat

George WHEAT was born on 20 July 1846 to Mary (nee BOND) and Thomas WHEAT. George was baptised on 23 August at St Lawrence's, Bramshall, just west of Uttoxeter. His brother William WHEAT, also a convict was born on 4 December 1848 in Uttoxeter, Staffordshire. William was baptised 25 February 1849 at St Mary's Uttoxeter.

On the March 1851 English Census, the family were residing in Longton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire. Thomas WHEATE Head of the house recorded as a Potter, Slip Maker, Mary his wife at home with children Emma 6, George 4, and infant William 2. Their daughter Emma died shortly after this and was buried at St James, Longton on 4 May 1851.

The Potteries were a nightmare of smoke and pollution and were wretched places in which to work. Children worked from about the age of seven. They started the day's work, as did their elders, at about 6.30am. The day would end at about 8.00pm, or later. On Saturday, the industry had a half-day, when work finished at 4.00pm. Although many children worked from the age of seven, education was seen as the way to possible riches, and therefore something desirable. Children who were at work during the day went to Sunday schools, where they learnt the rudiments of reading and writing.

An article in the *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 6 March 1858, Police Intelligence at Hanley, a Highway Robbery by children is reported. George WHEAT, aged nine, William WHEAT, and Peter Bolderstone were charged with stealing a loaf of bread. The miserable little wretches, who had been in custody three times within two months, met a child in one of the streets in Longton and forcibly took from him a loaf of bread which he was carrying. The youngest boy was ordered to be kept in the police station two days; the other two were sent to Stafford Prison for two weeks, and to be privately whipped.

They appeared again on 17 April 1858 – two miserable little creatures, named George and William WHEAT, respectively aged eleven and nine

years were charged with attempting to break into a house occupied by a widow named Bloor, in Trentham Road, Longton. They appeared to be incorrigible. The bench followed the same course on this occasion, also directing that George WHEAT, while in gaol, was to be whipped. They had tried to obtain admission for the elder boy into a reformatory institution, but they were full. It was drawn to public attention that the County was in need of a reformatory, it was said that one could be filled from Longton alone, and certainly could from the potteries generally.

On 14 August 1858, five little boys were brought up for breaking into the garden of Mr Wood of Edensor Road, Longton and stealing there from a quantity of show gooseberries, valued at 12s. The two WHEATES, who have been before convicted of a similar offence, were sent to prison for a month; the other boys were fined 2s 6d each and costs.

Longton, 26 May 1860, Juvenile Offenders – William WHEAT, aged 12 years, Richard Abberley, 12 years and Enoch Mansell, aged 11 years were charged with having stolen a bottle of whisky, the property of Walter Sweattenham, of the Canning Inn, Fenton. WHEAT was a most incorrigible boy, having since he was seven years old been constantly before the magistrates on different charges. They were found guilty and sentenced to 21 days imprisonment. WHEAT, who had been before the magistrates at least eight times for his pilfering practices, told the police that Abberley was the biggest thief, and had taught him to steal. After their sentences they were to be transferred to a reformatory for four years each. Though on the 1861 English Census Thomas WHEAT, carter, Mary, Housekeeper, George age 12, Potter Squeezer and William age 10 Potter Mould maker, are recorded at 37 Wellington Court, Longton, George is also shown to be residing in Stafford Prison. In the 1864 Staffordshire Advertiser on 10 September a felony reported on states that George WHEAT, William WHEAT, Thomas SPADEMAN and Joseph LOVATT, four youths were remanded last week on a charge of stealing a pair of boots at Longton, the property of Messrs Britton, were again remanded for a week. It was stated that Wm. WHEAT had only just come out of a reformatory.

On 17 September there is reported a theft from a shop door - The four prisoners remanded last week on a charge of Stealing a pair of boots from the shop door of William Britton, shoe manufacturer, Longton. It appeared that the boots were missing on 30 August from inside the shop door, and that on that day Spademan sent William WHEAT into the shop to get change for sixpence, which was refused. On WHEAT returning, Spademan went into the shop, took down a pair of boots and joined his companions; after which all four went to a field in the direction of Dresden. They were followed and on coming up to them George WHEAT had a boot in each pocket. Spademan offered to sell the boots for three shillings to Frederick WRIGHT, who under the pretext of going to fetch the money, went and informed the police. On an officer making his appearance in the field, the prisoners ran leaving the boots behind them, but Thomas SPADEMAN and William WHEAT were at once captured. The prisoners were subsequently committed for trial at the Sessions. Joseph LOVATT and Thomas SPADEMAN were involved in a further case on the same day with stealing a pair of trousers at Burslem.

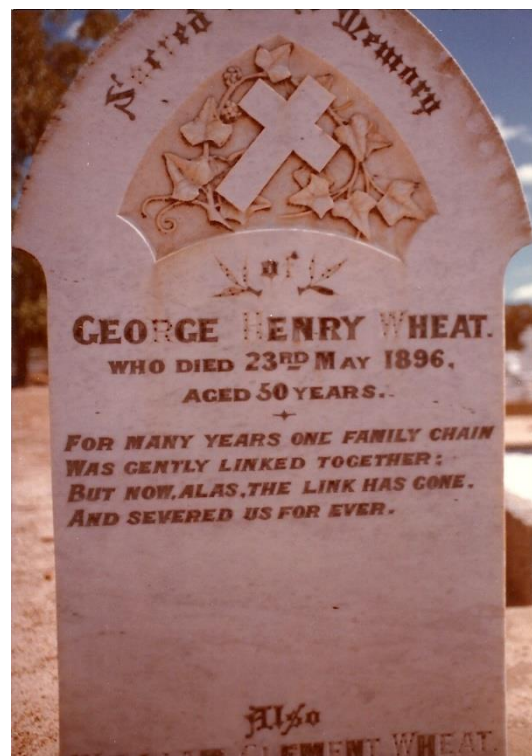
As a result of the trial at Staffordshire Quarter Sessions on 17 October 1864, George and William WHEAT, Thomas SPADEMAN and Joseph LOVATT were all tried for larceny, having previous convictions for felony were each sentenced to seven years penal servitude. Spademan pleaded guilty; the others were found guilty. In sentencing them to a long term of penal servitude, the Court did not do it so much for the purpose of keeping them from committing depredations, as for the purpose of preventing them from leading other boys into the same habits which they had themselves pursued.

On 24 July 1865 George WHEAT age 18, Thomas SPADEMAN convict # 9580, and Joseph LOVATT were removed to Chatham Prison. Joseph was transported aboard the *Corona* to Western Australia arriving 6 September 1866. George and Thomas SPADEMAN were both on board *Norwood*, arriving at Fremantle on 14 July 1867. George's next of kin's residence recorded as Edensor Road, Longton, Staffordshire. His father Thomas and other children at the time of the

1871 English Census were living at 34 Edensor Road, and his mother Mary had also died in Longton of enteritis in June 1866.

George received an extra 28 days on his sentence for misconduct prior to arrival. On probation he was released to York Convict Depot on 15 September 1867. He also had one month added for allowing convict 9617, Henry WILLIAMS to abscond from a working party. He eventually received his ticket of leave on 20 September 1868 and worked in Beverley as a labourer. He got his certificate of freedom when he was working on road maintenance in York on 19 September 1877. He married Isabella Eliza LITTLE daughter of James LITTLE expiree, on Christmas day 1877 in York. He became a Railway employee, resided at Main Camp, Beverley and died there on 23 May 1896 aged 50, leaving his wife with the six youngest of their nine children still at home. (The youngest, William Clement, had died four months before George and they are buried in the same gravesite.)

Figure 1 George Wheat and wife Isabella with their two eldest daughters Charlotte Mary and Eleanor Beatrice Figure 2 Headstone for George Henry and William Clement Wheat's grave located in the Beverley Cemetery



Isabella Eliza WHEAT (nee LITTLE) widow of convict George Henry WHEAT, in 1897 had her unregistered dog shot when it was worrying sheep. On 18 February 1900 she applied for Government relief and was

almost destitute. She was a domestic, residing at Main Camp, Beverley. In September she re-married Joseph BOYER, a fettler for the railways. Joseph was the youngest son of convict Griffith BOYER.

Carol Wheat has written a series of related convict stories called 'Convicts in the Family' based on her husband, Jeffrey George Wheat's family history.

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