

Robert Poskett (Postgate) Trotter, 155, Hashemy

Researched by Marcia Watson

Baptism	14 August 1818, Saint Andrew, Bishop Auckland, Durham
Parents	Christopher Richardson Trotter and Honor Postgate
Parent's marriage	8 September 1817 at St Peter, Monkwearmouth, Durham.
Siblings	Christopher (1820), Ann (1822), Jane (1824), Margaret (1828), Michael (1832), William (1834), John (1836), Richardson (1840)
Wife	Sarah Lynas
Married	
Children	Edward (~1846)

Robert later used a second given name of Postgate.

In 1841, living at Newgate Street, Bishop Auckland, Durham: ¹

Christopher Trotter, 40, Glover & Publican

Honor, 35

Robert 20, Ag Lab

Christopher, 20 Mason J

Ann 15, Jane 15, Margaret 13, Michael 9, William 7, John 5 and Richardson 1.

Around 1845, Robert Trotter 'married' Sarah Lynas. They had one child, Edward, born about 1846 and lived in North Shields, Northumberland, where they had an Eating House.

The family were not squeaky clean, as in 1847 Christopher Trotter, 50, and his wife, Honor, 44, were tried at the Durham Winter Assizes in January for receiving stolen goods, poultry. Christopher was acquitted, but Honor was found guilty and sentenced to a total of 10 months imprisonment.

Then in March 1848 at the Northumberland and Newcastle Spring Assizes"

Robert Trotter (31) was charged with having feloniously received a gold watch, chain, and seals, with a piece of silk, knowing the same to have been stolen.

Mr James and Mr Heath appeared for the prosecution; Mr Matthews for the defence.

The prisoner, it seemed, kept a cook's shop in the Low-street, North Shields, and the felony with which he was charged was committed in November last. On the 22nd of that month, a boy named Young, a tramp, was lurking about a row of new houses fronting the sea, at Whitley; and he managed to obtain access to a house occupied by Mr Alexander Steel, from a bedroom in which he stole the articles named in the indictment. Young offered them for sale to a lodging-house keeper at Shields named Spuck, but being refused took them to the prisoner Trotter, who said he had no money to pay for them. They went, however, into a back room where Trotter's wife gave him half-a-crown for the silk and five shillings in part payment for the watch, for which the prosecutor's wife had recently paid £14. Young remained in Trotter's house three days and eventually received other five shillings and a silver watch in exchange for the stolen articles. This was the statement of the thief Young, who confessed that he had no home, no regular employment, and had already been banished for theft in Durham.

To confirm Young's testimony, several witnesses were called. Spuck spoke to that portion which related to himself; Trotter's servant gave evidence as to the possession of the silk by Mrs Trotter; and it was also shown in evidence that a silver watch which Young pawned at Mr Wilson's, Newcastle, was previously the property of Trotter. When the prisoner's wife was apprehended, the silk was found upon her, and she afterwards pointed out the place where the prosecutor's watch had been secreted by the prisoner. A silver cream jug found in the prisoner's house, and produced by a policeman, was sworn to by Young as having been sold by one of his companions to the prisoner. Mr Matthews, in his address, remarked on the suspicious quarters from which the evidence had been derived and maintained that it was not plain that the prisoner had purchased the property with guilty knowledge.

The jury, without hesitation, returned a verdict of guilty against the prisoner, who was sentenced to fourteen years transportation. An indictment against Mrs Trotter, the prisoner's wife, charging her with

¹ HO107/307/9, p11

being an accomplice, was ignored by the grand jury. When the sentence against the prisoner was pronounced, his wife, who was in the lower part of the dock, shrieked violently, exclaiming that she alone was the guilty party. She was forthwith discharged. The charge against Young was not proceeded with.²

Another newspaper reported:

Northumberland Assizes, Wednesday 1 March 1848. Felony at Whitby.

Robert Poskett Trotter (31) was charged with having, at the parish of Tynemouth, on the 22nd Nov., feloniously received one gold watch and other articles, well knowing the same to have been stolen from Alexander Steel.

Mr Steel resides at Whitley, and on the afternoon of the day named in the indictment, his wife missed the several articles therein mentioned. The case against the prisoner depended on the evidence of a man who stole the articles and whose testimony the learned counsel said would be corroborated material particulars by other witnesses.

Mr Matthews appeared for the prisoner.

James Young, the principal in the felony, deponed:— I remember going from North Shields to Blyth about three months ago; it would be about three weeks before Christmas. I went by Whitley and entered one of the houses, having with me some books to sell. I saw some silk lying cupboard, rolled it up, and put it in my pocket. There was a watch, with a guard and seal, lying on the table; I took them up and put them in my pocket. I went to North Shields and showed Jacob Spuck the gold watch which I had stolen, offering it to him for sale. He refused to have anything to do with it. I next went to Mr Trotter's house; Trotter kept a cook shop. I asked him if he would buy such a thing as a gold watch; he said he had not the money. I remained half an hour in the house and then pulled out the silk and showed it to the prisoner's wife, whom I asked to buy it. She inquired the price of it, and both of them told me to bring the watch down from my lodging-house, as they wanted to look at it. I did so, and she then took me into the back room; she looked at the watch for a little while, and then the prisoner came in. They asked me the price of it, and I offered it and the silk for 30s. She gave me 2s 6d for the silk, and afterwards 5s toward the price of the watch. I stopped at the house that night and two following days. I then said I should like to buy a little silver watch which he had, and he bargained to give me 5s and the silver watch for the gold watch, which I accepted. The next day I took it to a pawn shop in Newcastle and obtained 5s for it. I told Trotter that I had stolen the watch.

Cross-examined. —This was not the first time I have stolen articles. I was once before committed a felony, and was convicted at Durham. I have no home. I used to follow the hatting business and worked with John Barlow at Carlisle. I belong to Manchester. When I left Carlisle, I came down here. I once worked with Mr Wright, iron-founder at Sunderland. About a fortnight after I stole the watch, I was apprehended; Mr Robb said I was to tell the truth and all about it—it would be better for it if did so. I escaped from prison and returned to Carlisle. I was afterwards taken at Sunderland.

Re-examined.—Mr Robb first asked me to tell the tenth, and I did so.

Other witnesses were called for the purpose of confirming some parts of the boy Young's statement.

Mr Matthews then addressed the jury, contending there was not sufficient evidence of guilty knowledge to warrant them in returning a verdict of conviction.

The learned Judge briefly summed up, and the jury returned a verdict guilty. His Lordship, in strong terms, censured persons who, like the prisoner, kept open shops and houses for the purpose of receiving valuable property stolen by boys and other guilty parties. He should certainly visit the prisoner with the utmost severity, which the law allows by sentencing him to be transported for 14 years.

Trotter's wife was indicted for the same offence, and the Grand Jury ignored the bill; she was, however, seated beside her husband the dock, and hearing his sentence uttered loud shriek and became frantic, exclaiming "It's I who am the guilty party," "it's not him," "hear me speak, gentlemen—allow me to tell the truth," "my dear husband innocent." She was removed by the gaoler, but it was impossible for some time to keep her quiet.³

Robert Prostatt Trotter, 31, married, read & write imperfectly, labourer, was convicted 29 February 1848 at Newcastle of receiving stolen goods. He was sentenced to 14 years transportation. Robert was received at Millbank Prison on 17 March 1848 from Morpeth Gaol. Another register says his middle name

² Newcastle Courant, 3 March 1848, p7

³ Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury, 04 March 1848, p3

was Poskett, his wife Sarah, 26, and son Edward, 3, were at Mr R.P. Trotter, Black Bull, Bishop Auckland. This is the residence of Robert's father. After eight months in Millbank, Robert was transferred to Wakefield Prison on 30 November 1848. He stayed here almost a year before being removed to Portland Prison on 30 October 1849. He arrived at Portland the following day.⁴

Governor's Journal at Portland.⁵

14 February 1850: Prisoner No 1058 R.P. Trotter placed in the Separate Cells in consequence of his parents having sent a letter with his name affixed to it requesting them to send money for him to a person named "Henry Jones". The letter professing to have Trotter's signature does not appear to be in his handwriting, and he denies any knowledge of it, but to keep him from communicating with others on the subject, I consider it necessary to keep him in the Separate Cells for further Enquiry.

19 February: Having obtained information that the Night Watchman of the prison, James Hill, had signed his name as "Henry Jones" to a Post Office order which had been sent to him by the friends of Reg No 1058 R.P. Trotter, in consequence of his writing to them under that assumed name, I communicated with Mr the Clerk of the Magistrates in consequence in the subject, who recommended my reporting the particulars to the Home Office and applying for instructions

21 February: Agreeably to instructions from Colonel Jebb, Reg No 1058 R.P. Trotter was taken off the list of men selected to embark in the *Scindian* as his evidence wanted probably be required in the case of the night watchman J. Hill – for particulars of which agreeably to instructions imparted to the Solicitor to the Post Office.

1 March: With reference to yesterday's journal, watchman Hill was committed to Dorchester Gaol to be tried at next Assizes for fraud and forging on the Post Office, and I was bound over to give evidence.

14 March: The following convicts having required to attend as evidence at the Dorchester Assizes for the trial of the Night Watchman Jas. Hill, for obtaining money on false pretensions from the friends of convicts, were sent accordingly (agreeably to warrant) to Dorchester Gaol. Reg No 1058 R.P. Trotter and Reg No 683 D. Bullock.

Having to attend as a witness at the same trial, I left the prison in the morning in charge of the Deputy Governor (the time of my return being uncertain)

16 March: I returned to the prison in the forenoon the trial at Dorchester Assizes of the late watchman of the prison Jas Hill having terminated in his acquittal – the convicts R.P. Trotter and D. Bullock were brought back by the prison officers sent in charge of them in the evening – and were again placed in Separate Cells, the decision of the jury such as to throw discredit on their evidence, without a further enquiry.

22 March: With reference to page 252 of this journal, nothing further against Reg No 1058 R.P. Trotter being discernible, I released him from the Separate cells. In the case of Reg No 683 D. Bullock however, a very suspicious paper being found in his cell apparently a rough draft of a letter requesting his friends to assist one of the officers of the prison in making purchases, I detained him in Separate Confinement - he stated that the letter was written by another prisoner (Brassington) in the adjoining Cell to him, this latter prisoner also placed in Separate Confinement. [Edmund Brassington sent to Tasmania per *Rodney* in 1850]

Dorchester Spring Assizes, 15 March 1850, Crown Court.

James Hill was indicted-for having received, at Her Majesty's post-office at Weymouth, the sum of 10s., by means of post-office order issued at Bishop's Auckland, in the county of Durham, purporting to be signed by Henry Jones, there being no such person entitled to receive the same.

Mr Crowder and Mr Hodges were counsel for the prosecution, and Mr Slade defended the prisoner.

This was rather a curious case. It appeared that the prisoner was a night-watcher at the prison at Portland. There was a convict in prison named Trotter, whose father and mother, and wife and child, resided at Bishop's Auckland in the county of Durham. Sometime last month, the father of the convict received a letter, purporting to come from his unhappy son, stating that he was in a state of great misery and begging him to send him £5; that he was sure he would do if he knew the miserable starving state in which his son was. The letter went into a great many minute details of family matters and concluded by stating that his parents would feel assured, from these particulars, that the letter had been sent by their

⁴ HO24/4; PCOM2/28, p147; HO23/14, p80' PCOM2/383. P163

⁵ Portland Prison. Governor's Journal, 24 November 1848 to 9 August 1850. PCOM 2/354, p252, 255, 258, 263, 272, 273, 276.

own son. This letter was written in pencil. It was neither in the handwriting of the convict nor the prisoner. To this letter was added a postscript in ink in the handwriting of the present prisoner, and in that, it was said that the money should be sent by post-office order, payable to Henry Jones, who was said to be more than a father to the convict, and that the letter enclosing it should be addressed to Henry Jones, at a public-house at Weymouth.

The convict, a respectable-looking man, was called. He stated that the letter was not in his handwriting, nor had he authorised anyone to write such a letter for him. He had never seen the prisoner Hill before, that he was aware of, and had not stated to him anything about his domestic affairs, alluded to in the letter. He had never received any money in consequence of that letter. They were well watched at the prison, but still, he knew that some of the prisoners did receive money in the prison some means and that they expended it on luxuries, such as tobacco. He had been found guilty of receiving stolen goods and transported for 14 years, but he most positively swore that he was innocent; the goods (a watch) had been received into his house, but he had never been aware that it was stolen. It then appeared that an answer had been sent by the father of the convict addressed to this supposed man Jones at the public-house at Weymouth. It enclosed an order on the post office for 10s. The prisoner had gone to this public house and asked for the letter, which was given him. He afterwards asked the landlady of the house to allow her daughter to go to the post office and obtain the money on order. This had been done, and the money had been given to the prisoner.

Mr Slade addressed the jury, urging, first, that the letter was not the handwriting of the prisoner, that there had been no communication between the convict and the prisoner, and therefore it would have been impossible for the prisoner to have known all the family matters alluded to the letter, and it must, consequently, clear that there must be someone behind the curtain.

The jury retired for some time and then returned a verdict of Not Guilty.⁶

Christopher Trotter, one of the witnesses upon the trial of James Hill, during the last Assizes, who reported to the Judge, the fact his having been robbed of £8 6d, while in the Crown Court, discovered his money quite safe upon his return to his lodgings, having deposited it in his room for security.⁷

A Petition was sent requesting a mitigation in Robert's sentence..⁸

Received 12 April 1850. 3767

To the Right Honorable Sir George Grey, Secretary of State for the Home Department.

The Humble Memorial of the Undersigned Inhabitants of Bishop Auckland and neighbourhood in the County of Durham.

Sheweth,

That Robert Trotter formerly of Bishop Auckland in the County of Durham, Labourer, but late of North Shields in the County of Northumberland, Eating House Keeper, was tried along with his wife Sarah Trotter at the Spring Assizes held at Newcastle in the year one thousand eight hundred and forty eight, and he was convicted of having received Stolen Goods, knowing them to have been stolen.

That Your Memorialists most humbly and respectfully pray that your Honor will take the Unfortunate Culprits case into your Humane consideration, so that your Honor may be induced to recommend her Majesty to grant to him a mitigation of his sentence.

And as in duty bound

Your Memorialists will ever pray &c. Signed by 44 people

Cover 276/8

Robert Trotter (31), Northumberland S Assizes, February 1848

Recd Stolen Goods, 14 years

Gaoler's report. Unknown

Appln for a mitigation of sentence. No grounds are stated.

Nil G.G

Answered 1 May 1850

⁶ Evening Mail, 18 March 1850, p7

⁷ Salisbury and Winchester Journal, 30 March 1850, p4

⁸ HO18/276

Robert Trotter boarded the *Hashemy* from Portland Prison on 19 July 1850, arriving at Fremantle on 25 October 1850.

His description was recorded on arrival:

155. Robert P. Trotter, 32, 5' 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", brown hair, light blue eyes, long face, dark complexion, marks – 3 moles on right side of neck, one small wart on back, several small moles – he was a gardener, married with one child.⁹

Robert spent several months on the Casual sick list, Fremantle Prison.¹⁰

Trotter Robert	15 January 1851	Pains head & stomach	
Trotter Robert	19 January 1851		
Trotter Robt	20 January 1851		
Trotter Robt	24 January 1851		
Trotter Robt	25 January 1851		
Trotter Robt	26 January 1851		
Trotter Rob	27 January 1851		Continue medicines
Trotter Robt	28 January 1851		Continue fever mixture
Trotter Robert	29 January 1851		Continue
Trotter Robert	30 January 1851		Continue fever mixture
Trotter Robert	31 January 1851		Continue mixture with
Trotter Robert	1 February 1851		Continue mixture
Trotter Robt	2 February 1851		Continue mixture
Trotter Robt	3 February 1851		Continue mixture
Trotter Robert	4 February 1851	Debility	Nil
Trotter Robert	5 February 1851	Debility	Quinine
Trotter Robert	6 February 1851	Debility	Quin Disulph et acid Sulphur
Trotter Robert	7 February 1851	Debility	Castor oil
Trotter Robert	8 February 1851	Febris	Sol. Quin disulph
Trotter Robert	9 February 1851	Debility	Continue Quin
Trotter Robert	10 February 1851	Debility	Continue Quin, Pil Aper at bedtime
Trotter Robert 155	11 February 1851	Feb. C.C.	Continue Quinine
Trotter Robert 155	12 February 1851	Feb. C.C.	Continue Quinine
Trotter Robert 155	13 February 1851	Feb. C.C.	Pulv. Jalap with
Trotter Robert 155	14 February 1851	Feb. C.C.	Continue Quinine
Trotter Robert 155	15 February 1851	Feb. C.C.	Continue
Trotter Robert 155	16 February 1851	Feb. C.C.	Continue
Trotter Robt	17 February 1851	Feb. C.C.	Continue Quinine, Aper medicine
Trotter Robt	18 February 1851	Feb. C.C.	Continue Quinine
Trotter Robt	19 February 1851	Feb. C.C.	Continue medicines
Trotter Robt	20 February 1851	Debility after fever	Continue Quinine
Trotter	21 February 1851		Continue medicine
Trotter Robt	22 February 1851	Feb. C.C.	Discharged

Feb. C.C.= unknown fever; Aper = Aperient

Robert received a Ticket of Leave on 26 July 1851 and a Conditional Pardon granted 13 January 1855.¹¹ A local prisoner, Robert Trotter, was received at Fremantle Prison on 11 August 1860 and released on 20 October.¹²

Robert Trotter probably died in 1888, aged 75.

⁹ SROWA Acc 128/403

¹⁰ SROWA Acc 1156 CS1

¹¹ SROWA Acc 1156 R21B

¹² SROWA Acc 1156 RD3-4

Sarah Lynas, wife of Robert Trotter, convict 155

Baptism	9 January 1820, Middleton Tyas, Yorkshire
Parents	Thomas Lynas (~1780 – 1843) and Sarah Benison (~1779-1821)
Parent's marriage	1 September 1817, Middleton Tyas, Yorkshire
Siblings	John (1818-1832), half-siblings Thomas (1825), Ann (1827), Jane (1829)
Husband	Robert Postgate Trotter (1818-1888?)
Married	
Children	Edward Trotter (~1846)

Sarah was baptised in 1820 at Middleton Tyas, a small village in North Yorkshire near the border with County Durham. Her mother died in 1821, and her father remarried. A newspaper announced: Thomas Lynas, linen-weaver, married Miss Jane Peacock of Middleton Tyas on 29 May 1824 at Stockton. Their three children were born in Stockton. By 1841, Thomas Lynas was a broker.

Sarah Lynas married Robert Trotter around 1845, and they had one child, Edward, born about 1846. Neither of these events was registered or have been found in parish records. The family moved to North Shields, Northumberland, where they had an Eating House in Low-street.

In 1848, Robert Trotter, 31, appeared at the Newcastle Spring Assizes, charged with having received a gold watch, chain, seals, and a piece of silk, knowing them to have been stolen. A boy had stolen the articles from a house and offered them to Robert. They went to a back room in the house where Sarah gave the boy a half-crown for the silk and 5s as part payment for the watch. The owner recently purchased the watch for £14. The boy stayed with the Trotters for three days and received a further 5s and a silver watch in exchange for the articles. Unfortunately, the boy pawned the silver watch, and the 'paper trail' led the police back to the Trotters. When apprehended, the silk was found on Sarah, and she eventually showed the police where the other items were secreted.

The jury, without hesitation, returned a verdict of guilty against Robert, who was sentenced to fourteen years transportation. An indictment against Sarah, charging her with being an accomplice, was ignored by the grand jury. The newspapers reported that when the sentence against Robert was pronounced, Sarah, who was in the lower part of the dock, shrieked and exclaimed she alone was the guilty party. She was discharged, and the charge against the boy was not proceeded with.

After Robert's conviction, Sarah and Edward probably lived with the Trotter family at the Black Bull Inn in Bishop Auckland for a short time. Edward was still living with his grandparents, Christopher and Honor Trotter, in 1851. Living in nearby Darlington, was a Sarah Trotter, 28, a widow, who is probably Edward's mother.

By 1852, Sarah was in Hartlepool in Durham. In October, John Morland, a beer-house keeper, was charged with assaulting and beating widow Sarah Postgate Trotter. He was fined £2 and 9s costs and in default of payment one month's imprisonment. Just over a year later, at the December Petty Sessions, Hartlepool, Sarah Postgate Trotter, beer-house keeper, was charged with having kept her house open during prohibited hours on the 10th and fined £1, with 8s costs.

Sarah remarried on 22 November 1855 in Hartlepool to John Crowther. The marriage was announced in the newspaper.

1881. Marriage solemnized at <u>The Parish Church</u> in the <u>Parish</u> of <u>Hartlepool</u> in the County of <u>Sunderland</u>								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank & Profession of Father.
4410	December 22	John Crowther Sarah Trotter	full full	Bachelor Widow	Mariner —	Hartlepool	George Crowther Thomas Lynass	Cloth Manufacturer Weaver
Married in the <u>Parish Church</u> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by <u>Licence</u> or other <u>Pub. Supt.</u> by me, <u>P. C. Curator</u>								
This Marriage was solemnized between us,		<u>John Crowther</u> <u>Sarah Trotter</u>			In the Presence of us,		<u>George Clark</u> <u>James Douglas</u>	

John Crowther, full age, bachelor, a mariner of Hartlepool, father George Crowther, cloth manufacturer.
 Sarah Trotter, full age, widow or Hartlepool, father Thomas Lynass, weaver. Both signed the register.
 No further trace has been found of Sarah or her son Edward.