

## ***William WHEAT, BELGRAVIA CONVICT # 9040 – Carol Wheat***

When convicted William WHEAT was seventeen, single, able to read and write imperfectly and a potter. He was first placed in Millbank Prison, London and then in December 1865 on the Register at Portland, Dorset and in March 1866 is collected for transportation on the *Belgravia* to Australia. This was the thirty fourth shipment to Western Australia. The *Belgravia* arrived in Fremantle on 4 July 1866 after a voyage of eighty-eight days. William was recorded as aged twenty, five foot ten inches tall, with brown hair, hazel eyes, round visage, of fair complexion, middling stout appearance, slightly pock pitted with scars on both knees, and his next of kin was recorded as father Thomas, carter of Lambton (=Longton), Stoke upon Trent.

The final prison records show William's early demise: Drowned, Swan River on 18 October 1866. This is recorded in the 31 October edition of the *Inquirer and Commercial Newspaper*, Perth:

FATAL ACCIDENT – A few days since, when one of the Government boats was passing the island at the Causeway flats, one of the crew, a probation prisoner named WHEAT, who was pushing the boat along with an oar, lost his balance and fell overboard. The helmsman, another probationer, named Carlos, immediately jumped in after him, but owing to his heavy clothing and the muddy state of the water, was unable to recover him. The body has since been recovered, and an inquest held, at which a verdict of accidental death was recorded. The jury having brought the praiseworthy conduct of Carlos to the notice of the Comptroller General, the prisoner has had a portion of his sentence remitted.

William Wheat was buried in East Perth Cemetery in an unmarked grave, location unknown.

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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