

## Rebecca Hooper

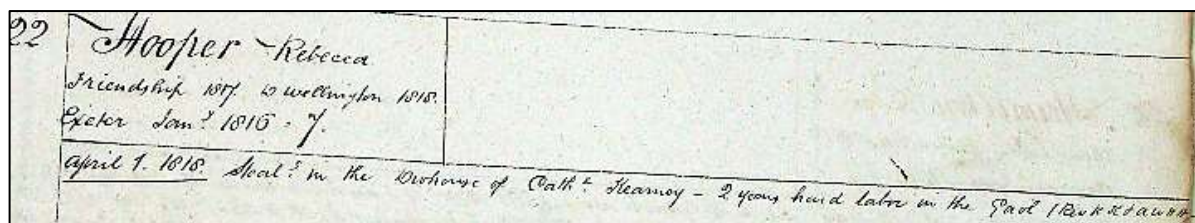
Date of Trial:	14 January 1817
Where Tried:	Devon Quarter Session
Crime:	Larceny
Sentence:	7 years
Est YOB:	1791
Stated Age on Arrival:	27
Native Place:	Devon
Occupation:	Tailoress
Alias/AKA:	Rebecca Terrett (m), Rebecca Wheeler (m)
Marital Status (UK):	
Children on Board:	1 – daughter (died on voyage)
Surgeon's Remarks:	Mutinous and insolent to a degree, but industrious
Assigned NSW or VDL	VDL

Rebecca Hooper was tried at the 1817 January Quarter Session of the Devon County Court for the crime of stealing 1 sheet and 9 cotton handkerchiefs. She was sentenced to seven years transportation, half the sentence meted out to the woman to whom she passed on the goods.<sup>1</sup> This was the third time in seven years that Rebecca had appeared before the bench. In 1810 she had been brought up before the March Assizes on a charge of stealing a blanket, but was acquitted. Not so lucky in 1814, she was convicted for larceny at the October Assizes and sent to prison for six months.<sup>2</sup>

Rebecca was one of four convicts from Devon who boarded the *Friendship* in preparation for the voyage to New South Wales. Also accompanying her was a daughter, name and age unknown. All four women arrived safely at their destination, and three of them – Rebecca Hooper, Sarah Plummer and Mary Stockham - then travelled on to Van Diemen's Land, arriving there on 20 February 1818 on the *Duke of Wellington*. Sadly, however, the daughter died during the voyage. During the passage Rebecca had proved to be an industrious woman, but 'mutinous and insolent to a degree'.

At the age of 27, presumably appearing to have a degree of maturity, but most especially skilled as a Tailoress, Rebecca presented as a very marketable commodity. On arrival at Hobart she was assigned to Mrs. Catherine Kearney, of Argyle Street who, *inter alia*, was a supplier of dairy goods.<sup>3</sup> However, almost immediately Rebecca was up to her old tricks.

On 1 April 1818 she was charged with stealing in the dwelling house of Catherine Kearney and sentenced to two years hard labor in the Hobart Gaol. This was hardly an auspicious start to her life in the colony, but this offence was the only one recorded in her conduct record.<sup>4</sup>



Three years later, under the name Hopper, on 16 April 1821 Rebecca became Mrs Thomas Terrett. The marriage was registered at Hobart, and the respective ages of the bride and groom were 31 and 33. The groom was a free man but the bride was still under sentence. Neither party could sign their name. The ceremony was witnessed by William Anderson and George Northam.<sup>5</sup> It was as the wife of T. Tarrot [sic] that Rebecca was included in an 1822 convict listing.<sup>6</sup>

Thomas <sup>his</sup> Terrett ✓ <small>mark</small>	Free.		33 years.	16 April.	Barrab.
✓ Rebecca <sup>her</sup> Hooper ✓ <small>mark</small>	Convict:	Friendship	31 years		
Witnesses: William Gorde	Auderson Northam.				

Thomas Terrett had arrived in the colony as a private in the Marines, one of the military guard on board the *HMS Calcutta* which, in April 1803, together with the transport ship *Ocean*, sailed from England to establish a penal settlement at Port Phillip, arriving at their destination in October 1803. The settlement was abandoned and the two ships, together with their human cargo, sailed to Port Jackson. From there the *Ocean* relocated the settlers, convicts and marines to the Derwent, where the first settlement was established at Risdon Cove which, in turn, was abandoned for a more promising site at Sullivans Cove. It would seem that Thomas Terrett continued to serve with the Marines until 1812 when his Detachment left the island for England on the ship *Isabella*.<sup>7</sup> Having decided to remain in Van Diemen's Land he was entitled to a grant of land.<sup>8</sup>

The privileges granted to the marines consisted of a grant of land according to their rank, viz.:—To every non-commissioned officer, a grant of 130 acres, if single, and 150 acres if married; to every private, 80 acres if single, and 100 acres if married; and an additional 10 acres for every child of a grantee. These grants were to be free of all taxes, quit-rents, and other acknowledgments, for the space of ten years, and thereafter to be liable to an annual quit-rent of one shilling for every fifty acres.  
In addition, the grantees were to be fed and clothed for one year, and receive seed and tools from the public stores for the same period, and to be allowed the service of such convicts as the governor thought fit.

On 20 September 1813, as a single man, Thomas Terrett was granted 80 acres of land in the Kingborough district, on which was due an annual quit rent of 2/-.<sup>9</sup>

80 Acres  
Van Diemen's Land

Unto Thomas Terrett his Heirs and Assigns  
to have and to hold for ever Eighty Acres of Land, lying and  
situate in the District of Kingborough, Van Diemen's Land:—  
bounded on the East side by Whalby's Farm being  
a South line of Eighty-four Chains — on the  
South side by a West line of ten chains — On the West side by  
a North line of Eighty-four chains to the brook — and on the North  
side by the brook — conditioned — And reserving to Government  
the right of making a Public Road through the same, and also  
reserving for the Use of the Crown such timber as may be  
deemed fit for Naval Purposes. — Quit Rent Two Shillings

In Testimony &c. this 20<sup>th</sup> day of September, 1813.  
Signed L. Macquarie. L. S.

Witnessed by  
H. G. Antill  
Ch: Whalby

Before Signing it is here intimated that the  
youngest Clause in this Deed, from which forms  
the Selling, Abutting, Encumbering, Ejecting and  
Cultivating; are not required by the terms of this  
Deed.

Witness  
J. H. Campbell

Frequent in Security Office  
Signed 21 July 1813.

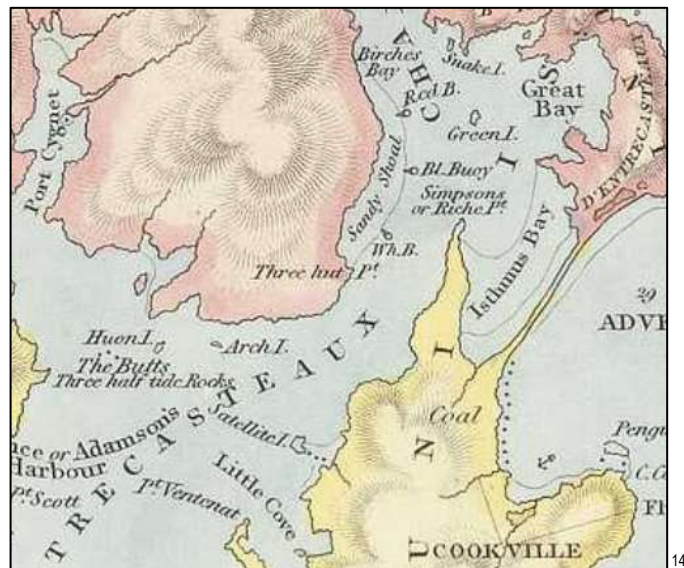
Some further sketchy details about him are found in a history of North West Bay and Margate.

The first settlers at North West Bay were marines from the First Fleet Regiment and the NSW Corps, the so-called Rum Corps .... Three other First Fleet marines who were given grants at North West Bay were John Downs, Thomas Terrett, and John Whaley/Wailie. Little is known about the first two soldiers, who arrived as Marines with Whaley on the *Calcutta*.<sup>10</sup>

Whether Thomas actually held on to his grant is not certain but a notice published in the *Hobart Town Gazette* in July 1817 cautioned 'All Persons' against trespass by cutting down timber on farmland, including the 'Farm in the District of Kingboro known by the Name of "Tarrat's Farm", bounded by the Brook'.<sup>11</sup>

Thomas appears three time in Irene Schaffer's Land Musters, Stock Returns and Lists. The report of those in the General Hospital on 10 November 1804 lists Thomas Terrett, Marine, as an inpatient suffering with ophthalmia. The following year he was included in the 18 December 1805 return of Royal Marines as Thomas Terrott, Pte, (Terratt). And in 1820, as Thomas Territt, Constable, he was listed in the civil list of officials and families claiming government rations. Incidentally, he was not listed in the 1819 Van Diemen's Land and Stock Muster.<sup>12</sup>

According to the 1842 and 1843 census returns, Tho<sup>s</sup> Terrett was the proprietor of, and one of two residents (one male 60 and upwards and one female 45 and under 60) living in a completed wooden dwelling at Great Oyster Cove, in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel (1842) and Three Hut Point (1843).<sup>13</sup> There is nothing to confirm who the resident couple were, but we can perhaps assume that they were Mr. and Mrs. Terrett.



This is the last reference found for Thomas Terrett. Whatever became of him is a mystery but by 1846 Mrs. Terrett had become Mrs. George Wheeler. Rebecca, age 63, and George, age 73, were married by banns on 6 July 1846 at the residence of Mr. Lawrence (possibly William Lawrence, pilot of Bruny Island). Rebecca was recorded as a widow. Surprisingly perhaps, bachelor George had apparently avoided matrimony to this point.<sup>15</sup>

1846		MARRIAGES in the District of <i>Bruny Island</i> <i>HOBART</i> .						
Number.	When married, and where.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Rank.	Signature and Description of Parties.	Name of Clergyman, Officiating Minister, or Deputy Registrar.	When registered.	Signature of Deputy Registrar or Officiating Minister.
1	July 6 <sup>th</sup> 1846	George Wheeler Widow	73	Labourer	George Wheeler Bachelor	J. Andrewartha	July 6 <sup>th</sup> 1846	J. Andrewartha Missionary Chaplan
		Rebecca Terrett Widow	63		Rebecca Terrett Widow			

Married in the dwelling house of Mr. Lawrence, the Pilot according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England by John Andrewartha Minister.

This Marriage was solemnized between us } George Wheeler }  
 { In the Presence of } John Brown }  
 { of us } his Mark }  
 Rebecca Terrett }  
 her Mark }  
 Wm. Lawrence }  
 the Parson of Bruny Island

Coincidentally, George Wheeler was one of the convicts over whom Private Thomas Terrett stood guard. George had been convicted at Abingdon, Berkshire, on 22 October 1802 and sentenced to transportation for seven years



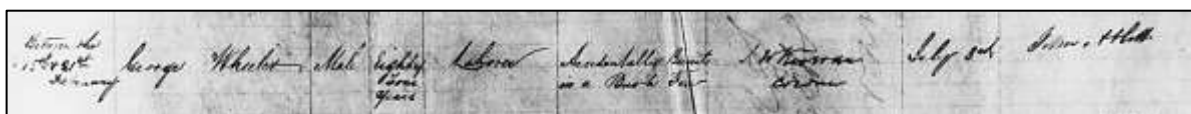
for stealing a piece of sack cloth. On 6 November, aged 21, he was received on the hulk *Captivity* at Portsmouth and was sent on board *HMS Calcutta* on 9 April 1803.<sup>16</sup> He was among the convicts on the *Ocean* who were transferred to Van Diemen's Land, arriving on 19 February 1804. In the 1811 listing of men who had been convicts, he was shown to be resident at Hobart.<sup>17</sup> If not before, he was definitely free by 1815, and living at Clarence Plains, when he was present at a meeting of inhabitants lobbying for the establishment of a Criminal Court.<sup>18</sup> From this point George is a 'blank canvas' until his marriage in 1846 and then the 1851 census for which, as documented on 5 March, he was living at Great Bay, Bruny Island, the sole occupant of a completed wooden dwelling house.<sup>19</sup>



The Tasmanian newspapers of February 1856 were full of reports about the numerous bush fires that had broken out over Tasmania.<sup>21</sup> Bruny Island did not escape; nor did George Wheeler, who was the subject of an inquest held on 28 February 1856 at Great Bay Beach. The jurors found that:

... the said George Wheeler on or about the Twenty Fourth day of February in the year aforesaid and on North Bruni Island in the County aforesaid while employed in a field close to his house, it so happened that the Brush was on Fire by means whereof and from the smoke and flame arising from the said fire, the said George Wheeler was then and there suffocated and burnt and of which suffocation and burning the said George Wheeler then and there died.<sup>22</sup>

Was George trying to extinguish the flames? If so, it would have been an impossible task for anyone, let alone an old man of 84. His death was formally registered at Hobart.<sup>23</sup>



The question arises – if George was living alone on Bruny Island in 1851, where was his wife at that time, and indeed, were they still living together as man and wife? The following newspaper extracts suggest that they were not, and that Rebecca had moved to Hobart, and at least by February 1848.

Wednesday – February 9<sup>th</sup>

Rebecca Wheeler a free lady, who might without a mask play Judy to anybody's Punch was charged with having

been drunk last night, fined 5s.<sup>24</sup>

But it was after George's death that Rebecca really hit skid row. In September 1856 she was charged with being a drunkard, and 'fined £1 or the usual quota of hard labor'.<sup>25</sup> Two months later she was back at the Police Office.

Idle and disorderly – An old woman of 83 years of age named Rebecca Wheeler was charged with being idle and disorderly, with having no visible means of subsistence, and with wandering about houseless and homeless. She was sentenced to one month's imprisonment.<sup>26</sup>

At least she would have had a roof over her head. Having served her sentence, on release Rebecca did find lodgings, as shown when she was a witness to a brutal assault by one William Reader on his wife.

An old woman, about 80 years of age, named Rebecca Wheeler, who resided with Mrs. Reader, deposed to having seen the prisoner throw his wife down and kick her several times in the abdomen, and then put his foot on her.<sup>27</sup>

What may have been the last time Rebecca Wheeler appeared at the Police Office was again for a charge of vagrancy in May 1858.

Vagrancy – Rebecca Wheeler was charged with vagrancy in being an idle and disorderly person, wandering abroad, and having no visible means of support. She was sentenced to two months' imprisonment with hard labor.<sup>28</sup>

Notwithstanding that she was a serial offender, being put at her age to 'hard labor' was a severe punishment. Four years after this offence Rebecca's tribulations were over. She died of senility at the stated age of 82 at the General Hospital, Hobart, on 24 September 1862. The informant was Mr. Charles Seager, House Steward of the hospital. It was noted on the entry that the deceased had been born in Devon.<sup>29</sup>

3210	3167 267	Rebecca Wheeler	James Seager	Senility	Seager's Hotel	House Steward
		born Devon				

Rebecca had boarded the *Friendship* with a daughter but she disembarked without her child who died during the voyage. We do not know if there were any other children left behind, but it is almost certain that she did not give birth to any children in the colony. There was no-one to remember her.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Exeter Flying Post*, 23 Jan 1817, p.4.

<sup>2</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 17 Mar 1810, p.3. FindmyPast (FMP), England & Wales, Crime, Prisons & Punishment 1770-1935, Prison Registers.

<sup>3</sup> Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office (TAHO), Assignment List, CON13/1/1 p.140. Catherine Kearney had been sentenced to seven years transportation and was sent to Norfolk Island. She was among those relocated from Norfolk Island in 1808 and by 1811 was a free person, residing in Hobart – Irene Schaffer (ed), *Land Musters, Stock Returns and Lists 1803-1822*, St David's Park Publishing, Hobart, 1991, List 6:2b, Returns of Women who have been Convicts and are at present at Hobart Town, Norfolk Island and Port Dalrymple, 1811.

<sup>4</sup> TAHO, Conduct Register, CON40/1/5 p.11.

<sup>5</sup> TAHO, Hobart marriages 1821, RGD36/1/1 no 465.

<sup>6</sup> Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Settler and Convict Lists, 1787-1834, New South Wales, Male and Female, 1822.

<sup>7</sup> *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 7 Nov 1812, p.1. British Regiments in Van Diemen's Land 1803-1812, Army Museum of Tasmania Information Sheet No 11, <http://armymuseumtasmania.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/No-11-British-Regiments-in-VDL.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Historical Records of Australia (HRA), The Library Committee of Parliament, 1915, Series I, Vol III, p.800, Commentary, Note 222, page 574, The like privileges and advantages as those granted to the marines.

<sup>9</sup> Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Colonial Secretary's Papers, 1788-1856. TAHO, LSD354. Copies of land grants issued, <http://stors.tas.gov.au/LSD354-1-2>.

<sup>10</sup> Peter MacFie, *A History of North West Bay and Margate, Tasmania, 1792-2000*, May 2008, Chapter 3 – Hunters & Settlers.

<sup>11</sup> *The Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter*, 19 Jul 1817, p.1.



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- <sup>12</sup> Irene Schaffer (ed), Land Musters, Stock Returns and Lists 1803-1822, List 2:7 Report of the sick and lame, General Hospital, Hobart Town, 10 November 1804; List 3:2 Return of detachment of Marines at Hobart Town, 18 December 1805; List 10:1 Magistrates, Constables & Families, and Government Men Rationed from HM Magazine, Hobart Town, February 1820.
- <sup>13</sup> TAHO, Census 1842, CEN1/1/25. TAHO, Census 1843, CEN/1/1/63.
- <sup>14</sup> Extract, Map of Van Diemen's Land, George Frankland, <https://stors.tas.gov.au/AUTAS001139593859>.
- <sup>15</sup> TAHO, Bruni Island marriages 1846, RGD37/1/5 no 167.
- <sup>16</sup> Ancestry, UK. Prison Hulk Registers and Letter Books, 1802-1849, *Captivity*, Register 1801-1836.
- <sup>17</sup> Irene Schaffer, Land Musters, Stock Returns and Lists 1803-1822, List 6:2a, Returns of Men who have been Convicts and are at present at Hobart Town Norfolk Island and Port Dalrymple, 1811.
- <sup>18</sup> Biographical Database of Australia (BDA), Biographical Report for George Wheeler.
- <sup>19</sup> TAHO, Census 1851, CEN1/1/107.
- <sup>20</sup> Map showing Great Bay, Bruny Island, Listmap, <https://maps.thelist.tas.gov.au/listmap/app/list/map>.
- <sup>21</sup> For example, *The Cornwall Chronicle*, 27 Feb 1856, p.3; *Colonial Times*, 28 Feb 1856, p.2; *The Tasmanian Daily News*, 29 Feb 1856, p.2.
- <sup>22</sup> TAHO, Inquests, SC195/1/38 Inquest 3723.
- <sup>23</sup> TAHO, Hobart deaths 1856, RGD35/1/1 no 836.
- <sup>24</sup> *Hobart Guardian, or, True Friend of Tasmania*, 12 Feb 1848, p.3.
- <sup>25</sup> *The Hobart Mercury*, 19 Sep 1856, p.2.
- <sup>26</sup> *The Hobart Mercury*, 12 Nov 1856, p.3.
- <sup>27</sup> *The Hobart Mercury*, 26 Jan 1857, p.3.
- <sup>28</sup> *The Hobart Town Daily Mercury*, 22 Mar 1858, p.2.
- <sup>29</sup> TAHO, Hobart deaths 1862, RGD35/1/6 no 3230. If this Rebecca Wheeler was the Rebecca Hooper of the *Friendship* she must have looked older than she was, given her estimated year of birth was 1791.



## SOURCES

### Genealogy Websites

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New South Wales, Australia, Settler and Convict Lists, 1787-1834

New South Wales, Australia, Colonial Secretary's Papers, 1788-1856

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British Regiments in Van Diemen's Land 1803-1812, <http://armymuseumtasmania.org.au/>

LINC Tasmania, <https://www.linc.tas.gov.au/>

LISTmap, <https://maps.thelist.tas.gov.au/listmap/>

Stable Tasmanian Online Repository System (STORS) <https://stors.tas.gov.au/>

Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office, <https://www.libraries.tas.gov.au/archive-heritage/>

### Online Newspapers

#### British Newspapers (FindmyPast)

Exeter Flying Post

Royal Cornwall Gazette

#### TROVE

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The Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter

The Cornwall Chronicle

Colonial Times

The Tasmanian Daily News

Hobarton Guardian, or, True Friend of Tasmania

The Hobarton Mercury

The Hobarton Daily Mercury

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Schaffer, Irene, Land Musters, Stock Returns and Lists Van Diemen's Land 1803-1822, St David's Park Publishing, Hobart, 1991.

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