

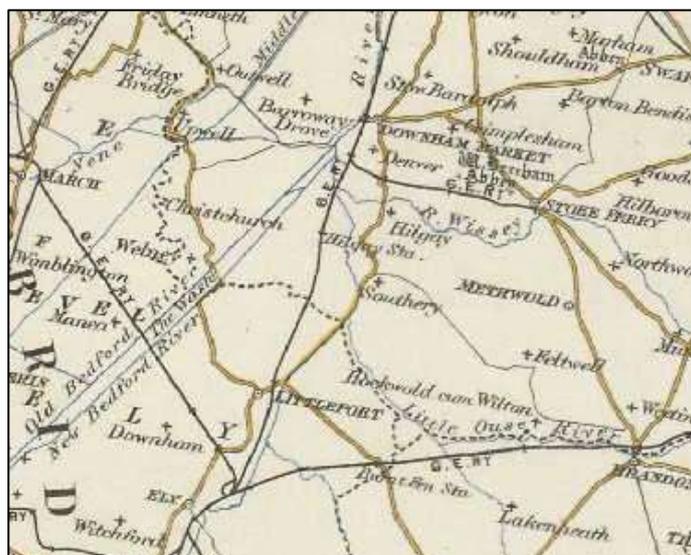


Amelia Lightharness

Date of Trial:	13 August 1816
Where Tried:	Norfolk Assizes
Crime:	Robbery in a dwelling house
Sentence:	Life
Est YOB:	1792
Stated Age on Arrival:	26
Native Place:	
Occupation:	Country Servant
Alias/AKA:	Emmelia Lightharess, Amelia Cash(m), Mary Cash
Marital Status (UK):	
Children on Board:	
Surgeon's Remarks:	Prostitute, extremely insolent and mutinous
Assigned NSW or VDL	VDL

On 24 August 1816 the *Norfolk Chronicle* devoted many column inches to the 'Trials of the Rioters at Downham and Feltwell'. Indeed, so intense was the public interest in this case that the *Chronicle* had printed a separate report, copies of which could be had 'of the Printers of this Paper, and of all their agents'.¹ But the trial proceedings must be read in the context of contemporary circumstances.

By May 1816, the civil unrest that had already gripped other agricultural areas of the country, had reached the Fenlands. The unrest was rooted in multiple and compounding causes – low wages, high prices, poor harvests, shortage of work with the increasing use of machinery, post-war surplus of labour caused by returning ex-servicemen. Added to this litany was a sudden increase in the price of flour and thus an increase in the price of bread, the 'staff of life in every home'.² Grievance translated into rioting – with machine breaking and food riots being the favoured tactics.



By 20 May 1820 the agitators had reached the small village Southery, from where they marched six miles north, through Denver and into Downham Market. Amelia Lightharness played a starring role in the May food riot at Downham Market, which resulted three months later in her appearance, together with others, before Lord Chief Justice Gibbs, indicted as follows.

Wm. Bell, Amelia Lightharness, and Hannah Jarvis were indicted for having, on the 20th of last May, together with various other persons, riotously into and tumultuously assembled at the parish of Southery, in Norfolk, from whence they proceeded to acts of theft and violence in the town of Downham Market, which were specified by the evidence.⁴



Once in the town the rioters had split into groups. The nine women concentrated their attention on the town's bakeries and butchers. The following extracts from the *Chronicle's* report relate specifically to the events at Downham and to Amelia Lightharness' contribution on that day. Francis Wiseman, one of the witnesses, described her unpleasant experience.

Francis Wiseman stated that she kept a pork and sausage shop in Downham Market; that in the afternoon of the 20th of May, a mob was assembled in the front of her house; that she observed the prisoner, Amelia Lightharness, looking in at the shop window, and that immediately afterwards the same prisoner opened the latch of the door, and brought in several of the mob, telling them, "*this was the shop for good pork.*" The witness further stated, that her shop formed a part of her dwelling-house; that the prisoner Lightharness was the first that entered, and that at her instigation the mob ransacked the shop of the witness, taking away forcibly a quantity of pork sausages. The shop window was broken by the violence of the people.

Maria Palmer, Wm. Buxton, and Zachariah Stebbing severally corroborated the first witness, and the latter proved that all the above named prisoners entered the shop of Mrs. Wiseman, and concurred in the acts of violence there committed. - Bell and Jarvis severally produced evidence of good character. Verdict - *all Guilty.*

Butcher Samuel Bolton, was the next target on Amelia's list.

The same Thomas Thody, the same Daniel Harwood, Lucy Rumbelow, the said Amelia Lightharness, Wm. Youngs, Edward Mellon, and William Galley were indicted as parties to the same unlawful and riotous assembly at Southery aforesaid, and having proceeded to Downham, for breaking open the dwelling-house and shop of Samuel Bolton, a butcher there, and stealing therein and carrying away a certain quantity of pork, the property of the said Samuel Bolton, the said Samuel Bolton and another being in the house and being put in fear.

Samuel Bolton stated, that he had on the said 20th of May given to the mob some meat, in the hope of pacifying them; that about five o'clock in the afternoon of the same day, they came in a large body to his house and demanded more, which he said he was unable to give them. Upon this occasion, the prisoners, Thody, Harwood, and a man named Fendyke, who is still at large, appeared to be the ringleaders. Harwood said, if witness did not give them more they would have all there was in the shop.-The shop was shut and witness was standing at the door of his house. To this menace, uttered by Harwood, the witness replied, "*he would be damned if they should,*" and immediately closed and bolted the door, and went towards the kitchen, for the purpose of loading two guns, with which he meant to defend his property. Before he had reached his guns, however, the mob forced open the door, and stripped the shop of meat to the value of 5*l.* or 6*l.*

These prisoners were all identified as taking an active part on this occasion, by the concurrent testimony of the last-named witness, and Thomas Bolton, Zachariah Stebbing, and Ann Springfield. Verdict - *All Guilty.*

In all there were seven indictments, only two of which involved Amelia. But, as the Chief Justice explained to the Jury,

... in tumultuous assemblies of this nature, not only the parties which commit any acts of violence are answerable to the law, but likewise all persons who, by joining a mob, give a sanction to their unlawful proceedings, were in the eye of the law equally guilty of any outrage which was committed by any of such mob, with the party by whose hand the fact is actually done.

In their defence, most of the prisoners had provided some form of character reference, and these were referred to by the Chief Justice, who asserted:

... with respect to the honesty and peaceable habits of their former lives, the Judge emphatically observed, that nothing could more clearly shew the necessity of suppressing such disorderly and mischievous proceedings as were subjects of these trials. Persons who had heretofore acted honestly, and had been good members of society, had now, by deluding one another in the vain hope of addressing those grievances which their proceedings only tended to aggravate, evinced their peaceable dispositions by unlawfully assembling to the terror of well-disposed persons, and their honesty by forcibly seizing the property of others.

However, in directing (leading?) the Jury, His Lordship further stated:

... that where facts were so clearly proved as they had been in most of the above cases, the character of the parties ought to have no weight in the verdict of a Jury, although in measuring the punishment of the offenders, their respective characters would not be forgotten. It was in cases of doubt only in which the former characters



of prisoners should weigh in the minds of Juries.

Sixteen of the Downham offenders, including Amelia Lightharness and Hannah Jarvis, were capitally convicted for rioting and they were all sentenced to death. However, in passing the sentence the Chief Justice, without wishing to raise any hopes, stated that, in some cases, he was prepared to consider a recommendation for 'relaxation of their punishment', but not for those who 'had excelled their fellows, and stood foremost in the execution of their misguided and wicked actions'. In the end all but two of the men were reprieved. Amelia Lighthouse therefore could look forward to transportation for life.

Amelia Lightharness spent almost a year incarcerated in Norwich Castle – the County Gaol. Readers of the *Norfolk Chronicle* were informed that on Sunday 31 May 1817 she and Hannah Jarvis had been removed and were 'now on board the Friendship, at Deptford, now waiting for orders to sail to the Bay, both to be transported for life'.⁵ Having seemingly made a nuisance of herself during the voyage, the now twenty-six year old Amelia was mustered and, on 20 January 1818, smartly packed off to Van Diemen's Land per the *Duke of Wellington*. It was not long before she found a husband – she and Samuel Cash were married by banns in Hobart on 22 May 1820.⁶

Names	Sex	Ship		When Arrived.	Transit	ARRIVED FROM	
		Ship	Age			Hobart	Town District
Samuel Cash ✓	Convict	Hulk-Bunsley	34 years	22 May	Banns.	382	
Amelia Lightharness	Convict	Friendship	29 years				

Samuel Cash, born about 1782, a nailer by trade and a native of Leicester, had been tried at the Leicester (Borough) Quarter Assizes on 11 January 1816 on a charge of larceny – stealing a bag of worsted out of a carriers cart in Millstone Lane.⁷ Found guilty, he was sentenced to seven years transportation and, having spent time on the hulk *Justitia*, was one of the two hundred convicts transported on the *Sir William Bensley*, which sailed on 9 October 1816 and arrived at New South Wales on 10 March 1817.⁸ Ten months later he was one of the twenty-nine male convicts who were sent to the Derwent on the *Duke of Wellington*, on board which were the 53 *Friendship* women convicts including, of course, his future wife.⁹ The 1820 muster found him in Government Employment at Hobart.¹⁰

Amelia, who was described in the indents as a country servant, was also in the Government employ, as a cleaner. She was listed in the Statements of the Police Fund for the quarters ending 30 September 1820, 21 December 1820, and 31 March 1821.¹¹

Amelia Cash, for cleaning government house and offices for 16 weeks, ending 7 October at 3s per week - £2 8 0.

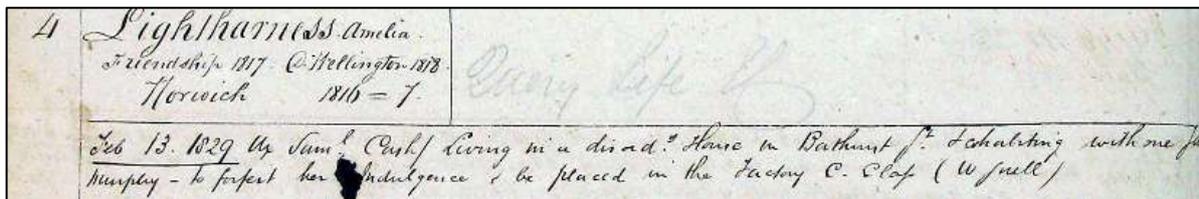
The 1823 muster listed her as living in Hobart with her husband Samuel Cash.¹² However, all was not well with the marriage. The following notice was placed in the Hobart Gazette in November 1823.¹³

CAUTION.—The Public are hereby cautioned against giving Credit to my Wife, MARY CASH, on my account, she having eloped from her home. SAMUEL CASH.

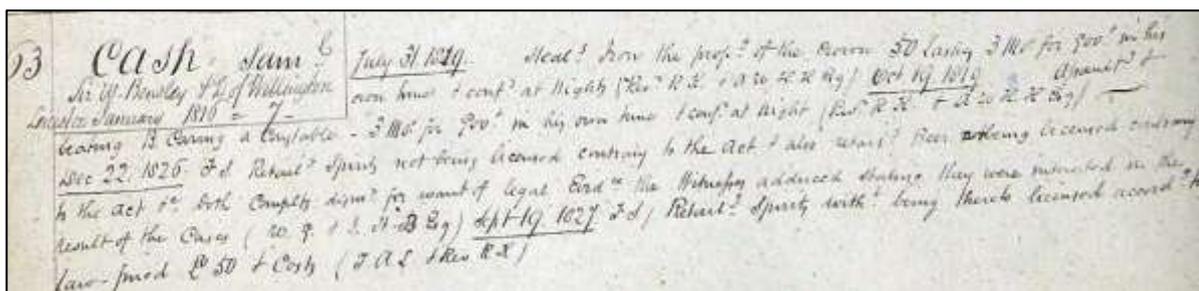
Where she went, or whether she returned to her husband, has not been established, but we know where she was in early 1829 and that she was living up to her reputation - 'Prostitute, extremely insolent and mutinous'. On 13 February she had been charged with living in a disorderly house in Bathurst Street and cohabiting with one James Murphy. Assuming James Murphy was a convict, of the numerous men of that name serving time, with which one had Amelia had chosen to live? One possible candidate is the James Murphy, a tailor, who arrived per *Castle Forbes* in 1819. So frequently did he offend that his conduct record covers two pages In June 1828 he was 'strongly suspected of living by dishonest practices' and was committed to gaol, for the next Quarter Sessions, as a rogue and a vagabond¹⁴. By 1830 he had been transported to Macquarie Harbour.¹⁵

Wayward Amelia's punishment was to be deprived of her ticket of leave and to be placed in the Female Factory,

established on the site of a failed rum distillery at Cascades, South Hobart, and only opened for business in December 1828. She was ranked as a Crime or 3rd Class inmate, reserved for the worst of the convict re-offenders. In accordance with the Rules and Regulations, on arrival she would have been undergone a medical examination, and then been bathed and dressed in the Factory uniform – that for the 3rd class being ‘adorned’ with a large yellow C on the back and on the right sleeve of the jacket, and another on the back part of the petticoat.¹⁶ She most likely also had her hair cut short. The worst jobs were reserved for the Crime Class inmates including such tedious (and backbreaking) work as all the laundering for the Factory and for the Orphan Schools. Discharge was subject to the official authorisation.



As an aside, Samuel Cash also fell afoul of the law.¹⁷ He was charged twice in 1819 – in July for stealing government property and in October for assaulting and beating a constable. He received 50 lashes, and ordered to work in his own time for the government and to be confined at nights for the first offence. For the second he again was required to spend his own time in the service of the government and confined at nights. His subsequent transgressions were repeatedly flouting the liquor licence laws. Not listed on his ‘rap sheet’, in April 1824 he was fined £30 for retailing beer without a licence.¹⁸ In December 1826 he was had up on two charges – retailing spirits and retailing beer at his grog shop in Liverpool-street. However, as the only witnesses were also customers of the illicit beverages, and who thereby were equally culpable, their evidence could not be received and so, luckily for Samuel, both cases were dropped, but not before a severe rebuke from the magistrates. They hoped that the narrow escape would be a warning to Samuel and all others like him who ‘with such unblushing effrontery would dare to infringe the wholesome laws of the Colony, for the sake of pandering to the lowest vices of the community. Further, the magistrates warned Samuel that not only the law, but also the licenced innkeepers, whose interests were ‘so materially infringed upon, and dissolved by these illicit and ruinous practices’, would be on the lookout to discover ‘such perpetrations’.¹⁹ But Samuel did not heed the warning and again chanced his arm. In September 1827 he was convicted of selling spirits without a licence and, this time, was fined £50 and costs.²⁰



Amelia Lightharness regained her ticket of leave in October 1832, but did not live long thereafter to enjoy her relative ‘freedom’.²¹ She was forty years old when she died in December 1833. As the place of death is ‘Hobart Town’, rather than ‘Hobart Town from Factory’, she had presumably completed her time at Cascades and had found work as a ‘Labouring Woman’. She was buried on 23 December.²²

Amelia Cash.	Hobart Town	23 rd December.	40 years	Labouring Woman.
1830	3141			

As an ‘epitaph’, there is a rather delightful reference to Amelia Lightharness in Bethell’s history of Port Dalrymple and which also indicates that she spent some time ‘up north’.

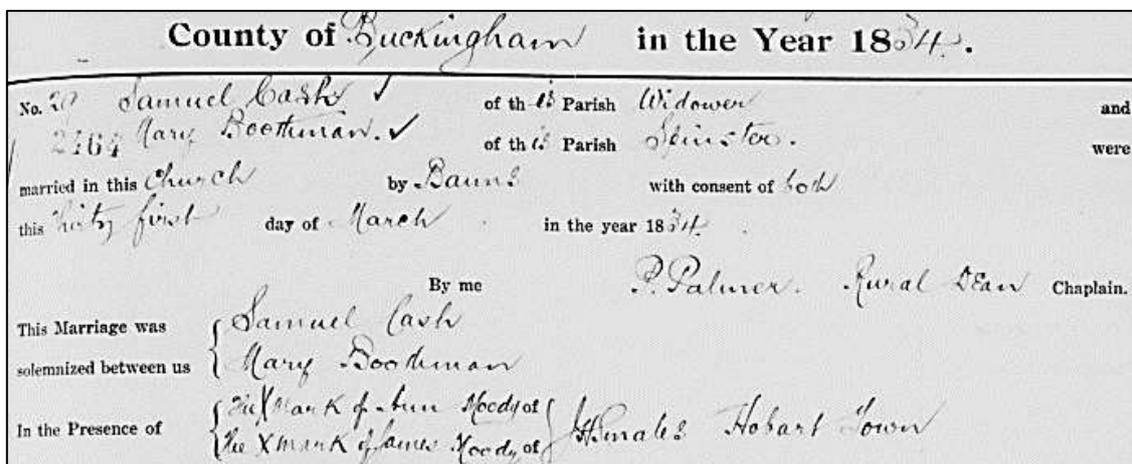
The old signboards with their gay heraldic colours have gone whistling down the wind. No longer can be heard



the voice of the whaler's chanty-man and the thud of the feet of the sealers as, with Amelia Lightharness and her fair Cyprians, they danced a double shuffle in the sawdust-sprinkled floor of the Help me Through the World.²³

The pub in which Amelia is said to have entertained the patrons was located in Brisbane Street. One side of its swinging signboard depicted the world with a man's head and shoulders apparently coming through it, and on the reverse was the world again featuring the heels and nether-parts of a man.²⁴

On 21 March 1834, four months after Amelia's death, Samuel married Mary Boothman.²⁵



The bride's status was recorded as 'Spinster' but she was, in fact, a widow. As Mary Westlake, and at the age of 15, she had previously married John Broadhurst Boothman on 8 October 1810 at Hobart.²⁶ Over a space of eighteen years Mary and John had eight children, seven of whom were living when father and husband John died in November 1829, leaving his widow and children destitute.

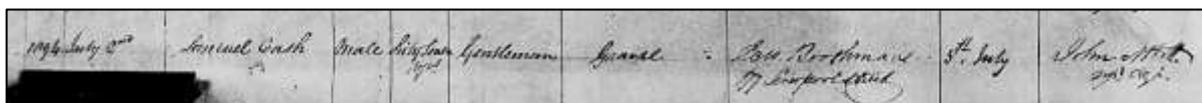
Died – on Wednesday, Mr. J. Boothman, an inhabitant of this Colony for nearly 24 years, having arrived in the first fleet, with the late Lieutenant Governor Collins, at the formation of the Colony. The deceased was for many years the Chief Clerk in the Secretary's Office, previous to the arrival of Lieutenant Governor Sorell. He has left a wife and a large family totally destitute.²⁷

Fortunately for her, two charitably minded men – Thomas Lucas and Barnard Walford - came to the family's assistance by paying the costs of the funeral.

Such an instance of liberal and prompt assistance to the distressed at such a moment, must be duly appreciated; and we have no doubt their case will meet with further attention, by the Authorities placing the children in the Orphan Schools.²⁸

In 1830 some of the Boothman children were taken in by the Queens Orphan School on 20 June 1830. It is understood that they were subsequently released to their mother.²⁹

When Samuel married Mary Boothman he acquired a ready-made family, and it was fortunate for all concerned that he was by then a successful business man. The 1827 *Almanack* had listed him as a General Dealer of Liverpool Street.³⁰ When he died aged 67 on 2 July 1842, Samuel Cash, described as a 'Gentleman', was a man of some means, as revealed in his will by which he made generous bequests not only to his wife but also to his step-children.³¹



Without much to go on it is difficult to determine from where many of the *Friendship* women originated. However, from the records we know that Amelia was born about 1791 at Downham, Norfolk. It is fortunate that she had a distinctive surname, because it is likely that she was the Amelia Lightharness who was baptised at Downham on 21 March 1791, a daughter of Robert Lightharness and his wife Ann.³² There is also a record for an Ann

Lightharness, daughter of Robert and Ann, and also baptised on 21 March 1791. This could either be a sister to Amelia.³³

Another possible sister is Jane, daughter of Robert and Ann, who was buried at Downham on 9 January 1783.³⁴ A Robert Lightharness [sic] was buried at Downham on 21 March 1797.³⁵ An Ann Lightharness [sic], Widow, was buried at St James' Workhouse, Lynn, on 14 April 1808.³⁶

To confuse matters, a Robert Lightharness, widower, married in 1808, at King's Lynn, an Elizabeth Shallow, by whom in about 1809 she had at least one son, John Swallow Lightharness [transcribed as Lighterness].³⁷ Finally, was the Elizabeth Lightharness who married George Bone in 1816 the same person as Elizabeth Swallow?³⁸ Without further research these scenarios can only be regarded as speculative.

NOTES

¹ *Norfolk Chronicle*, 24 Aug 1816, p.3.

² For further reference, see Glenda Goulden, *Foul Deeds & Suspicious Deaths In & Around the Fens, Pen & Sword, Wharmcliffe*, 2008. A History of Downham Market, Downham Riots 1816, <http://www.downhammarkethistory.co.uk/downham-riots-1816>.

³ Historical Maps, A Vision of Britain Through Time, <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/maps/>.

⁴ *Norfolk Chronicle*, 24 Aug 1816, p.3.

⁵ *Norfolk Chronicle*, 7 Jun 1817, p.3.

⁶ TAHO, Hobart marriages 1820, RGD36/1/1 no 382.

⁷ *Leicester Chronicle*, 20 Jan 1816, p.4. A nailer could be either a metalworker who produced nails or a person who cleaned and maintained the teeth on a weaver's carding machine – Dictionary of Old Occupations, <https://www.familyresearcher.co.uk/glossary/Dictionary-of-Old-Occupations-jobs-beginning-N.html#Nailer>.

⁸ Biographical Database of Australia (BDA), Biographical report for Samuel Cash; Ancestry, UK, Prison Hulk Registers and Letter Books, 1802-1849, Justitia, Register 1803-1836. Convict Records, <https://convictrecords.com.au/ships/sir-william-bensley>.

⁹ Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Colonial Secretary's Papers, 1788-1856, NRS 937, Reels 6004-6016.

¹⁰ Ancestry, New South Wales and Tasmania, Australian Convict Musters, 1806-1849, HO10 Piece: 44.

¹¹ *Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser*, 9 May 1821, p.1.

¹² Female Convict Research Centre (FCRC), Female Convicts in Van Diemen's Land database, Convict ID 3606.

¹³ *Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser*, 15 Nov 1823, p.2.

¹⁴ TAHO, Conduct Register, CON31/1/29 p.69; TAHO, Conduct Register, CON32/1/1 p.78. *The Tasmanian*, 4 Jul 1828, p.2.

¹⁵ Ancestry, New South Wales and Tasmania, Australia Convict Musters, 1806-1849, Tasmania, List of convicts (incomplete), 1830.

¹⁶ *Hobart Town Courier*, 10 Oct 1829, p.4. Promulgated on 1 January 1829 and published in October for public interest.

¹⁷ TAHO, Conduct Register, CON31/1/6 p.21.

¹⁸ *Hobart Town Gazette*, 9 Apr 1824, p.3.

¹⁹ *Hobart Town Gazette*, 30 Dec 1826, p.4.

²⁰ *Hobart Town Gazette*, 22 Sep 1827, p.8.

²¹ *The Independent*, 27 Oct 1832, p.3.

²² TAHO, Hobart deaths 1833, RGD34/1/1 no 3141, Image 138.

²³ Llewelyn S. Bethell, *The Story of Port Dalrymple, Hobart*, 1955, p.114.

²⁴ *Launceston Examiner*, 6 Feb 1897, p.7, Early Launceston History.

²⁵ TAHO, Hobart marriages 1834, RGD36/1/2 no 2464. Mary was the daughter of first fleeter Edward Westlake and Elizabeth Adams. There are a number of Ancestry online family trees for the Westlake/Boothman family.

²⁶ TAHO, Hobart marriages 1810, RGD36/1/1 no 60.

²⁷ TAHO, Hobart deaths 1829, RGD34/1/1 no 2009. *Colonial Times*, 13 Nov 1829, p.3.

²⁸ *Colonial Times*, 4 Dec 1829, p.2.

²⁹ Friends of the Orphan Schools, SWD24p227 – notes by Rae Alexander, http://www.orphan.school.org.au/showorphan.php?orphan_ID=389.

³⁰ *Tasmanian Almanack*, 1827, p.110.



³¹ TAHO, Hobart deaths 1842, RGD35/1/1 no 1094. TAHO, Wills No 236, AD960/1/2. Included in his portfolio of property was his own house and land in Liverpool Street, the Pickwick Inn in Liverpool Street, and land and properties in Harrington Street and Molle/Liverpool Street.

³² Ancestry, England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538-1975, FHL Film No 2262699.

³³ Ancestry, Norfolk, England, Church of England Baptism, Marriages and Burials, 1535-1812, Baptisms 1791.

³⁴ Ancestry, Norfolk, England, Bishop's Transcripts, 1579-1935.

³⁵ Ancestry, Norfolk, England, Transcripts of Church of England Baptism, Marriage and Burial Registers 1600-1935, Archdeacon Transcripts, Downham Market.

³⁶ Ancestry Norfolk, England, Church of England Baptism, Marriages, and Burials, 1535-1812, King's Lynn, St Margaret with St Nicholas & 1600-1935, Archdeacon Transcripts, Kings Lynn St Margaret 2.

³⁷ Ancestry, Norfolk, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754-1940; Ancestry, Norfolk, England, Church of England Baptism, Marriages, and Burials, 1535-1812.

³⁸ Ancestry, Norfolk, England, Bishop's Transcripts, 1579-1935.



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