

The Life and Loves of my Great Great Grandfather

George's death certificate

368	Twenty first January 1912 88 Winsor Road Spalding W.P.	George Wallis	Male	59 Years	Buckley's Kilmer	Bronchitis Certified by J. N. Power M.R.C.S.	J. Wallis Widow of deceased present at death 88 Winsor Road Spalding	21 January 1912	Registrar.
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This is my great great grandfather's death certificate, he died in Spalding in January 1912 of bronchitis. There are three problems with this certificate:

- That's not his name
- That's not his age
- And that's not his wife

George was born in Barholm in 1844 as George Bunning Peake, the son of John and Susannah. John was an agricultural labourer and George followed in his footsteps.

George's marriage certificate

1868. Marriage solemnized at <u>the Parish Church</u> in the <u>Parish of Uffington</u> in the County of <u>Lincoln</u>								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
91.	January 11 th	George Peake Margaret Hyde	24 28	Bachelor Spinster	Labourer —	Uffington Uffington	John Peake John Hyde	Labourer Mason
Married in the <u>Parish Church</u> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by <u>Reverend</u> or after <u>Canon</u> by me.								
This Marriage was solemnized between us:		<u>George Peake</u> <u>Margaret Hyde - her Mother</u>			In the Presence of us:		<u>John Hyde</u> <u>Maria Elizabeth Peake</u>	

George married Margaret Hyde in January 1868 in Uffington Church, when he was 24 and she was 28.

Margaret was born in Stamford in 1840 and had a tough childhood. Her father, John, was a stonemason, a skilled occupation, but they lived in Protection Place, just off Scotgate, known as a notorious slum. There were five children and Margaret's mother, also Margaret, died aged 32 of tuberculosis when Margaret was four. John's mother, another Margaret, moved in with them but she died in 1851, and John died in 1861.

In 1861, Margaret was in service with an ironmonger in St. John's Street, and in 1865, she had a son, called William.

George's trial late February 1870

Stamford Mercury - Friday 04 March 1870

costs 1s.6d.—*Geo. Bunning Peake*, labourer, living at Stamford, was charged with stealing a five-tined fork, value 1s. 6d., the property of David Cade, publican. Complainant has a garden-house near the cemetery, and the fork had been taken from it and pawned with another for 1s.3d. at Mr. Bullimore's, Broad-street. The prisoner pleaded guilty, and elected to be tried under the Criminal Justice Act. Mr. Law, in mitigation of punishment, stated that Peake had been in a fearful state of poverty, having been out of work all the winter, and he had been hopelessly attempting to struggle on. Peake's wife, who is near her confinement, said they had had an offer to go into the Union-house, but had declined it, thinking if they did not then keep their home together it would be lost for ever. The Bench sentenced prisoner to only 7 days' imprisonment; and the wife was told if she applied to the Guardians on Wednesday she would probably obtain out-relief for a week.—This being

George pleaded guilty to stealing a manure fork, value 1s 6d, and pawning it in Stamford. I don't think the pawn broker was too fussy.

His solicitor stated that George hadn't been able to find work all winter and the family was in a fearful state of poverty. Margaret was described as being near her confinement, but didn't want to enter the workhouse in case they lost their current home. George was sentenced to seven days in prison and Margaret was advised she could seek out-relief for a week.

The sad postscript to this story is that there's no record of a live birth to Margaret, perhaps those months of deprivation took their toll and the baby was stillborn. Margaret was pregnant again in the summer of 1870.

George's court appearance November 1870

Stamford Mercury - Friday 18 November 1870

BOURN PETTY SESSIONS, Nov. 10, before Major Parker (in the chair), Hy. Smith, Wm. Holland, and Wm. and Henry Peacock, Esqs., and the Rev. J.S. Warren.—*Geo. Bunning Peake*, of Stamford, was charged by *Geo. Shillaker*, of Market Deeping, with fraud, at Deeping, on the 31st ult. Committed for trial at the sessions.—*Mary Ann Boyall*, of Castle Bytham, was

George was charged with fraud in Market Deeping and committed to trial at the sessions. His crime was obtaining an pair of trousers and boots by deception, it would probably only merit a fine today, but in 1870 it meant he spent the next two months in prison awaiting trial.

George's trial January 1871

Grantham Journal - Saturday 14 January 1871

LANGHAM Gift.—As a kind and gratuitous gift, the lion. Mr. Coventry, of gave five pounds to be distributed amongst the pour of the village. KESTIVEN SESSIONS, . Bourn, January 2nd. (Before Lord Kesteven (in the chair), Major Parker, Henry Smith, Esq., and the llevs. George Carter and J. S. Warren.) George Tilley (on bail) was charged with obtaining by false pretences 1s. from Mary Ann Hammond, at Baston, on the 2nd October last. Mr. Andrews prosecuted, and the defendant pleaded his own cause. The jury acquitted the prisoner. George Burning Peake, aged 26, labourer, pleaded guilty to obtaining by false pretences a pair of trousers and a pair of bouts from George Shillaker, at Market Deeping, on the 31st October last, and was sentenced to one month's imprisonment with hard labor. Mr. Sharpe appeared for the prosecution.

George pleaded guilty at his trial, and was sentenced to a further month in prison with hard labour

Folkingham House of Correction



A 19th-century photograph of the House of Correction.

George served his time in prison here. The gatehouse is still standing and can be rented as a holiday home for around £2,000 a week in peak season.

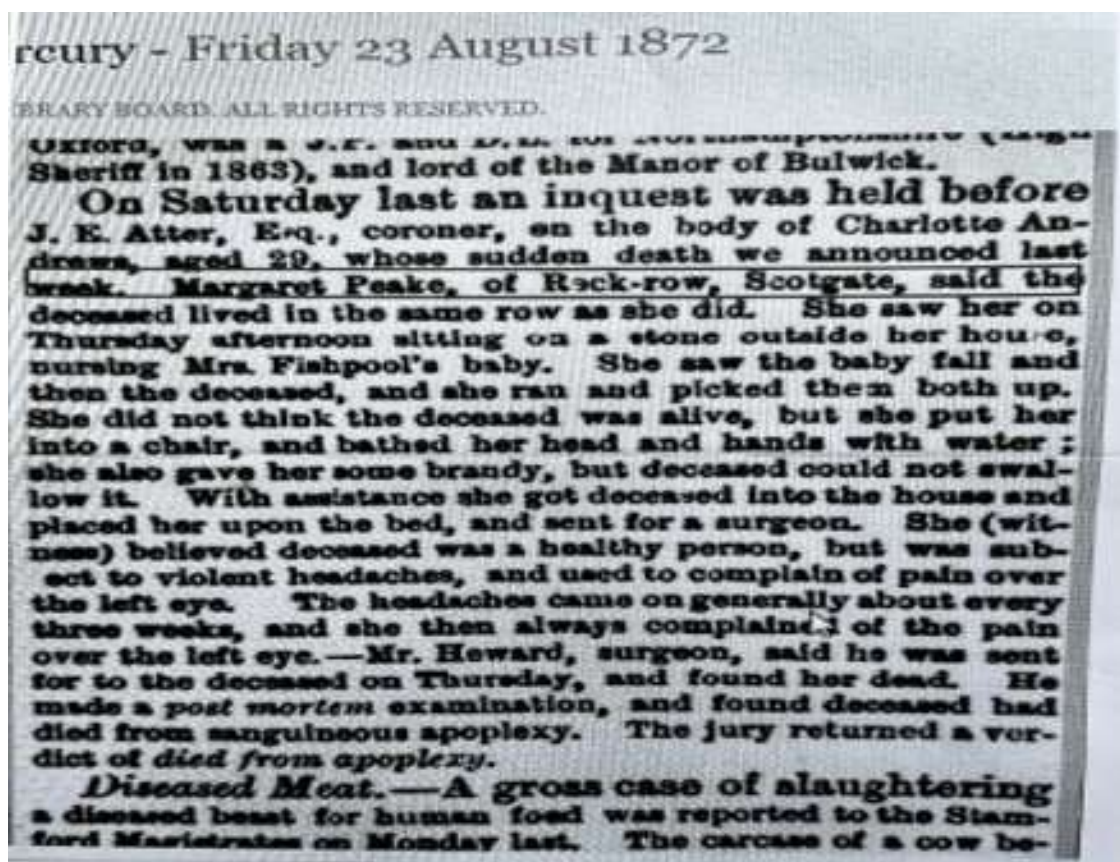
If Margaret hadn't wanted to enter the workhouse earlier in 1870, it was inevitable when George went to prison.

Stamford Workhouse on Barnack Road



In the 1871 census, Margaret is in Stamford workhouse, with William, Betsey, and her son George junior, aged just 3 weeks. In the same census, George is working on a farm at Deeping St. Nicholas and claiming to be single.

Inquest 1872



In August 1872, Margaret was a witness at an inquest into the sudden death of her neighbour from apoplexy. They were living on Rock Road, so it's safe to assume George has returned to the family and indeed he started working for Hayes Coachbuilders around this time.

William's death

No.	When Died	Name and Surname	Sex	Age	Rank or Profession	Cause of Death	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant	When Registered	Signature of Registrar
43	21st Decr 1874 Rock Road Stamford Leicestershire	William Peate	Male	9 years	Son of George Peate agricultural Laborer	Tubercular Peritonitis 12 Months Certified	+ The maid of Susan Wright Present at the Death Whitewan Yard Stamford	21st Decr 1874	Thomas Booth Registrar

Margaret's son William died in 1874 aged 9, after being ill for a year with tubercular peritonitis.

Rock Road



In 1881, the family was still in Rock Road, somewhere on the left of this photo but long since demolished. The family now consisted of George and Margaret, Betsey, George junior, my future great grandmother, Mary Ann, born in 1875, and twin girls, Margaret and Martha Jane, born in 1879. They also had a lodger, Thomas Dexter, who worked at Hayes.

So, had life settled down? After all, George had been in stable employment for nearly 10 years, they had been living in the same house for around the same time, a lodger provided extra income – unfortunately not.

George's trial August 1883

Lincolnshire Chronicle - Friday 03 August 1883

STAMFORD PETTY SESSIONS, SATURDAY.—Before the Mayor, and Messrs. J. Paradise, W. Langley, F. J. Morgan, T. G. Mason, H. Knott, and M. G. Browne.—Henry Russell, higgler, and George Bunning Peake, labourer, were charged with stealing five trusses of clover, the property of Messrs. Hayes and Son, coach-builders, and were each sentenced to three months' imprisonment with hard labour. Peake had for ten years past been in the employ of the prosecutors as a yard labourer.

In August 1883, George and another man were found guilty of stealing five trusses of clover, the property of Hayes and Son, his employers for the past ten years. If a truss of clover is the same size as hay, they weighed at least 60 pounds each, not something you could easily hide. Folkingham had closed by now, George may have served his three month sentence in Sleaford. Why did he do it? Was he still struggling to support a growing family, or was it just stupidity?

Corporation Buildings 1891



George left his family, and Stamford, sometime between his 1883 prison term and the 1891 census. In 1891, Margaret was living in Corporation Buildings, on Scotgate. She is sharing three rooms with Betsey, George junior, the twins, her widowed brother John, their lodger from Rock Road Thomas, and another lodger Elizabeth Andrews aged one.

Elizabeth's mother was unmarried and left Stamford soon after her daughter's birth, leaving her with Margaret to look after.

Margaret's brother John remarried in 1892, but the sleeping arrangements would still have been interesting as Betsey and Thomas married in 1893.

In 1891, my great grandmother was in service at 4 Barn Hill, where I like to think she had her own bedroom.

22 Scotgate 1901



Margaret's situation has improved by 1901, she's now living at 22 Scotgate, the left hand half of the building in the picture. Although I imagine Thomas was paying most of the bills, Margaret was described as head of the house, also living there are Betsey and Thomas, the twins, and Elizabeth, now described as a foster daughter.

My great grandmother, Mary Ann, had married in 1895, after she had their son in 1894. George junior married in 1899.

With life improving for Margaret, let's look at what George has been doing.

48 Westgate Peterborough



George was living in Peterborough in 1891, in the left hand corner section of this building. He is described as a bricklayer's labourer. With him and described as his wife, is Susannah W. Peake, a laundress aged 39, and her son Alfred W. W. Peake, also a bricklayer's labourer aged 17. This property looks more spacious than the three rooms Margaret is sharing with seven people in Stamford.

Susannah was born in Stamford in 1851 as Susannah Harrison. In 1871, she was living and working in a pub, and later that year, she married Harry Wallis, a carpenter originally from Empingham, and had their son, Alfred William, a year later.

Harry's enlistment?

Transcript of Harry's record	
First name(s)	Harry
Last name	Wallis
Birth year	1853
Birth parish	Empingham
Birth town	Stamford
Birth county	Rutlandshire
Birth country	England
Service number	3281
Regiment	Royal Artillery
Year	1876
Attestation date	23 Feb 1876
Attestation age years	23
Attestation age months	6

In 1876, Harry Wallis, born in Empingham, living in Stamford enlisted in the Royal Artillery. His age is four years younger, but surely this must be Susannah's husband. So is this chicken or egg? Did Harry enlist and Susannah say "sod this for a game of soldiers"? or did she leave and Harry went for a less extreme version of the French Foreign Legion?

After Harry's army career, he spent the rest of his life in Leicester with at least two female housekeepers, and died in 1912 aged 63.

What is certain is that Susannah was living in Kensington, London, in 1881, with her son Alfred. She is described as the wife of Thomas Wallis, a bricklayer, born in Kilsby, Northamptonshire. I haven't been able to find Thomas Wallis anywhere else, so I think Susannah was using her name on the census.

I don't know whether Susannah thought Kensington would be smart and exciting, but there were four families totalling twenty five people in the same house.

A plot worthy of EastEnders? So many questions....

- Who was Thomas and how did he get together with Susannah?
- Was it in Stamford or London?
- Why did Susannah leave London, was it with or without Thomas?
- With Thomas being a bricklayer, is there any significance in George and Alfred being bricklayer's labourers? Did they work with Thomas, perhaps locally?
- It's likely that George and Susannah knew each other from her time at the pub, did they meet again through Thomas?
- If Thomas and George did work together locally, did they continue to do so after Susannah got together with George?

Although these events could have been used in EastEnders, unfortunately this is real life and I have no answers to the questions raised.

There's no information on the 1891 census for 48 Westgate so perhaps they didn't complete it that year.

How I know that the George Wallis on the death certificate is George Bunning Peake? It's because of the 1911 census. George and Susannah are living at 88 Winsover Road in Spalding, he is described as George Peak Wallace (Wallace and Wallis seem to have been interchangeable), aged 72, a bricklayer's labourer from Stamford. His age is incorrect but it's also wrong on the death certificate.

The 1911 census asks for number of years married and children born alive. Susannah says she had one child, now dead, I haven't been able to find Alfred to confirm this. She has given her years married as 39, which is factually correct, just not to George.



88 Winsover Road, Spalding

This is where George and Susannah were living in 1911 and where George died in 1912.

Spalding Cemetery



George is buried in Spalding Cemetery, there's no headstone but he's somewhere in this area. Susannah died in 1918 of heart failure and she's buried four graves away from George.

Margaret's death

No.	When and Where Died.	Name and Surname.	Sex.	Age.	Rank or Profession.	Cause of Death.	Residence of Informant.	Registered.	of Registrar.
281	Twentyseath May 1917 22 Scotgate Stamford UD.	Margaret Henrietta Peake	Female	76 years	Widow of George Peake Booth builders labourer	1) Arthritis Deformans (2) Exhaustion verified by E. A. Hutton - Atherborough M.R.C.S.	E. Decker Daughter Present at the Death 22 Scotgate Stamford	Twentyseath May 1917	R. J. Goldcott Registrar.

Margaret died in 1917 aged 76 of arthritis deformans and exhaustion. By the time of her death, she had raised six children, seen two of them die, and had nine grandchildren. Margaret's son George junior had died in 1915 from tuberculosis of the spine. One son-in-law and her eldest grandson served in WW1 and they both survived.

Stamford Cemetery



Margaret is buried in Stamford cemetery, she doesn't have a headstone either, but her grave is shown here with the arrow. The grave with the book headstone is her daughter Martha Jane and her husband Charles, the cross is her grandson Thomas who died in 1926, and the small low marker to the right is Betsey and Thomas. Her other children are all buried in the cemetery.

Conclusion

George seems to have done his best for his family in the early years of his marriage, even if crime didn't pay – not the ones we know about anyway. I've tried not to be too judgemental but it's difficult to forgive George for deserting his family.

I hope Margaret's children were grateful that she was made of sterner stuff.

Trish Auciello

December 2025