

The search for Robert's last resting place.

It all started when I had a letter from Daphne Holgate asking if there were any further details available about her Robert Holgate's suicide, which I had published in the April 2002 newsletter, in the column "More Odds and Ends", from Sue Baddeley in the UK. Sue had shared this information from her database. Daphne H. was hoping there were further details available as to if and where this tragedy occurred, and if she could obtain a death certificate.

She was able to tell me that Robert arrived in 1856 on the 'Runnymede' with his wife and two daughters, as a member of the Enrolled Pensioner Force. The daughters were baptised in the Roman Catholic Church in Fremantle in 1860, but there is no mention of his son John Alexander's arrival in Western Australia. Daphne believed her Robert may have been a boot maker in Busselton at some time.

According to Frank Broomhall's "The Veterans", Robert had enlisted in 1826 aged 19 years and had served almost 23 years including 3 years 1 month in Mauritius, and 5 years 4 months in the West Indies. He was of exemplary character and had been awarded five good conduct medals. He was discharged in 1848 with chronic Rheumatism. The opportunities for a better life for his family brought them to Western Australia

When I spoke to Sue about the date of the tragedy, she said that she had two dates on her database, one being the 7th January 1865 and the other 7th January 1868.

Daphne Byrne (the EPG members' researcher), and I decided we would work together on this, and Daphne commenced searching the Registrar Generals Records for the 'Registration of the death' unsuccessfully. She then began searching from 1865, the Police Occurrence Books for the Vasse region where Robert had lived, once again without success.

I again wrote to Robert's Daphne to say we were assuming that he had died in Busselton and urging her to give us any information that she had, which may give a clue. In the meantime, Daphne Byrne would continue to search the Police Occurrence Books and the newspapers, as likely sites for the reporting of the tragedy.

A reply from Robert's Daphne. Amongst the information she provided which confirmed the account in "The Veterans", she said that Robert had been a witness at the marriage of his son John Alexander Holgate on the 5th April 1865 at Fremantle.

That meant we could eliminate the date 1.7.1865 from Sue's database and we decided to concentrate on 1.7.1868. I thought I would look at the Fremantle Cemetery records for 1.7.1868, and found that there was an entry on that date for a Robert Aldgate. The report said "Robert Aldgate, died 7.01.1868, Fremantle, aged 59 years, hung himself in a tree, Pensioner Guard", and the name of the Rev. George James Bostock officiating. This was the extent of my involvement as Daphne Byrne continued the search.

Further accounts of the tragedy that our Daphne found verified that this is Daphne Holgate's Robert.

The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians volume 1 A-C

Page 22 ALDGATE Robert, b: 1809, d: 7.1.1868 (suicide) Frem, Pensioner Guard.

Western Australian Pioneer Index 1841 -1905

ALDGATE Robert, D A59, Father:Unknown, Mother:Unknown, BirthPlace:Unknown 1868/3786

Death Index 1841 -1896

ALDGATE Robert Registry district: Fremantle Number: 3786/68 (for death certificate)

The Colonial Secretary's Office (CSO) Inward Correspondence.

Accession 36, Folio 597 volume 4185 09.01.1868

Widow Holgate Letter written for relief.

419/2 Fremantle Occurrences (Police) 1st Feb 1867 -29th April 1868

Jan 7th Report that a boy identified a man named Robert Aldgate, a Pensioner was found deceased. *It is likely that the policeman reporting the incident 'spelled' the name as it 'sounded'.*

Jan 8th Inquest held on Robert Aldgate who committed suicide on the 7th inst.

The Herald Jan 11th 1868

Report on the death of Robert Holgate, a Pensioner. His wife reported that he had been very depressed and had been on medication.

The death of Robert Holgate was one of many tragedies which occurred in those early years of the Colony, and many concerned Pensioner Guards and their families who had held such hopes for their families' futures. This has been written with the permission of Robert Holgate's descendants in the hope that it will help others with their research. We thank them for allowing us to tell their story.

Daphne Byrne

Phillippa Ward