

[The Pracy Family History](#)

The Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies

Biography of an Ancestor Competition

**Rosetta Terry
née Rosey Pracey
(1770-1858)**

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Introduction

In a recent study, the economic historian William D Rubinstein calculated that the richest Australian ever was, by some distance, Samuel Terry¹. Rubinstein’s method was to use the value found in probate documents to assess the individual’s fortune as a proportion of Gross National Product, and Samuel’s at 3.3 per cent was well ahead of such luminaries as Kerry Packer and Rupert Murdoch. When Samuel married in 1810, his wife Rosetta Marsh was already wealthy in her own right, and she contributed considerably to his prosperity. She was a woman of great achievements with an independent spirit quite exceptional in her time.

Rosetta was born Rosey Pracey on 29 July 1770, and was my 4 x great-aunt. She was brought up a stone’s throw from the church of St Luke’s Old Street in Finsbury, and spent the last two-thirds of her long life in Sydney. I have not discovered when or why she changed her forename, so I have referred to her as Rosey in England and Rosetta in Australia.

The *Australian Dictionary of Biography* includes an article by Gwyneth Dow née Terry, great-granddaughter of Rosetta’s son John Terry. She summarised Samuel and Rosetta as ‘two able, single-minded early colonists who resolved to reverse their unfavourable, brutalizing early fortunes – and succeeded’. She also wrote a well-researched biography of Samuel², in which she suggested that perhaps ‘in this great-grandmother of mine we

¹ The All-Time Australian 200 Rich List, by William D Rubinstein and Business Review Weekly, Allen & Unwin, 2004.

² *Samuel Terry: the Botany Bay Rothschild*. Sydney UP, 1974.

have an unwritten story to show that the female of the species is more deadly than the male'. This brief biography is an attempt to write that story.

The first part is based on my own work, but the second and third parts owe much to painstaking efforts of my distant Australian cousins, who found my research on the website of an English cousin, Martin Hagger. Without our contact through the wonders of the internet I would not have known that Rosey Pracey emigrated to Australia, and they would not have uncovered the previously mysterious origins of Rosetta Terry. They have kindly given permission for me to use the relevant parts of their original research in this narrative. They are: Janice Eastment, great-great-granddaughter of Rosetta's nephew Thomas Richard, and her partner Kevin Shaw; Marilyn Mason, widow of Rosetta's 4 x great-grandson; Graham Smith, Rosetta's 3 x great-grandson (see family trees 2 and 3).

Part I: Rosey Pracey

1. Family origins

Rosey Pracey was descended from an influential family of West Country landholders and yeomen that had fallen on hard times. Her surname is a variant of the name PRESSEY, which means dweller by the priest's enclosure. From 1500 to 1750 the family lived in Bishopstone near Swindon, the more northerly of two Wiltshire villages with that name. In the 16th century they were, under the bishops of Salisbury, the principal landholders in the village. In 1626 a family member sold away the lease but Rosey's forebears continued as farmers for another century (see family tree 1, p24).

Rosey's great-grandfather William (1665-1746) had 13 children, and his small farm could not possibly support the whole family, particularly in a time when agricultural prices were low. He therefore sent three of his younger sons off to London as apprentices - Thomas as a wheelwright in about 1717, Edmund as a baker in 1722 and Charles as a dyer in 1726. William must have been sufficiently prosperous to pay the apprenticeship fees, but over the next 20 years something went badly wrong. He or his eldest son had to give up the farm, and soon the family disappeared from Bishopstone completely.

Meanwhile the three young men completed their apprenticeships, married and had children. They settled in St Giles Cripplegate, from which in 1733 the new parish of St Luke's Old Street was created - an indication of the rapid development that was making London a dangerous place to live. In a time when national population was static, only the capital grew to any extent, doubling in size to become the biggest city in Europe. The increase was almost entirely due to migration from the countryside rather than natural population growth. The forces which pushed Edmund and his brothers away from Bishopstone drew them to a capital described as '...a magnet for great numbers of people hoping to better themselves; too often it killed them. Yet thousands of these optimistic immigrants survived and created a city whose prosperity and vitality astonished all who came there.'³

³ UNDERDOWN, David. *Start of play: cricket and culture in 18th century England*. Allen Lane the Penguin Press, 2000, p74.

By about 1740 all the London Pracys save Edmund and his second wife Alice had apparently died⁴. If they were the only survivors, Edmund would perhaps have thought back to the year 1729, when the family must have had high hopes of being among those who made good lives for themselves in London. Edmund completed his apprenticeship and married Elizabeth EAMES, who was soon expecting their first child. His elder brother was established in his trade with a wife and young son, and his younger brother was well into his apprenticeship. Instead, within ten years or so Edmund probably lost his wife and three daughters, and two brothers and their families. The family's very existence was hanging by a thread when, on 19 July 1744, Alice gave birth to a boy, also named Edmund, who was to become Rosey's father.

Evidence is scanty, but it appears that little of the Bishopstone family's former prosperity passed to Edmund senior. Though serving his apprenticeship with a master of the Baker's Company, he did not become a master himself. When his son was born he gave his trade as baker, but his business is not listed in the few trade directories of the time. Edmund does not appear in the St Luke's rate books, suggesting that he was a sub-tenant.

I have not traced Edmund's burial, so nothing is known of the family between Edmund junior's birth in 1744 and his marriage in 1767. Alice died in 1784 when Rosey was 14, so the young girl may well have learnt something of her origins from her grandmother. It may even have been tales of the family's agricultural roots that inspired the mature Rosetta, when she got the chance, to go into cattle and horse breeding.

2. Rosey's parents and family

On 9 June 1767 at St Leonard's Shoreditch 'Edman Preacy' married Lucy CARLTON. Both marked the register with a cross so were presumably illiterate. His name was also spelt 'Edman' on the baptismal entries for most of their children. That must have been how he pronounced it, and presumably standardisation of spelling was not quite sufficiently advanced for the clergyman to 'correct' it. Five of their seven children could at least sign their names and, if the marriage certificates of the other two had survived the Blitz, we would probably know that they could too. This suggests that Edmund and Lucy did their best to give them a good start in life.

All that is known of Lucy is that one of the witnesses was William Carlton, presumably a relation. Carlton is mostly a North Country name but William Henry Carleton, son of William and 'Rebeckah', was baptised at St Andrew by the Wardrobe church on 6 May 1744. If William Henry was then a baby he would have been just a few months older than Edmund, although there can be no certainty that he or his father was the William who witnessed the wedding.

Edmund and Lucy both described themselves as being 'of this parish'. They weren't necessarily living in Shoreditch, because St Leonard's was a popular church for weddings, often used by outsiders. I am still searching for a record of Edmund's death or burial, but the St Luke's register on 1 July 1787 noted the burial of his wife: 'Lucy Pracy a woman fever'.

⁴ I have searched St Giles and St Luke's but no other parishes, since London burials are notoriously difficult to trace. Edmund's first marriage is listed in Boyd's index, but not his second.

The St Luke's ratebooks record that, from 1771 to 1794 at least, 'Edward Prasey' lived on the eastern side of New Street, later Caslon Street, off Old Street east of Ironmonger Row. This was a long time to be at one address, and suggests that Edmund was a respectable citizen who was able to give Rosey and her siblings a fairly secure start in life. The relevant volume for 1795 is missing, but in 1796 he was not listed. Unfortunately the Land Tax records for New Street in this period state only that the surname of the landlord was Berry - probably Thomas Berry, a Kent farmer who built nearby Berry Street.

Horwood's London map of 1792-9 shows that, by contrast with many of the squalid courtyards and alleyways in the area, the house was in a pleasant terrace which apparently had access to a communal courtyard or garden at the rear. It is amazing to think that the family could have found themselves in open fields by walking up Ironmonger Row to City Road, opened in 1761 when Edmund was a youth of 17.

London was gradually becoming a rather less hazardous place to live. By contrast with Edmund senior and his tragic generation in the 1730s, seven of Edmund and Lucy's nine children survived to adulthood. Their relatively healthy housing and nearness to the countryside may have contributed to this good fortune. The births were spaced out at fairly regular intervals of two years or slightly more, suggesting that Lucy like most mothers breastfed her babies, the nearest most people could get to a form of birth control.

Rosey (29 July 1770 – 5 September 1858) was the second of Edmund and Lucy's children. She continued to be close to her sisters even when she lived half a world away, and this is a good point to introduce them and their brothers (see family tree 2, p25).

Ann was born on 26 March 1768. At St Luke's on 13 April 1789 she married 'William Hardcastle of this parish'. She would not have had to travel very far, because New Street was just round the corner from the church. William evidently died, for later she had four daughters with a coachman called Isaac FOX, although no marriage has been traced.

The two eldest sisters seem to have been particularly close. In his will of 1834 Samuel Terry provided for Ann to have an annuity of £20. After his death her youngest daughter, Rebecca, joined her aunt Rosetta in Sydney.

Ann was still alive at the time of the 1851 census, and probably died in Lambeth in 1856. She would have been 88, the same age as Rosetta when she died. At least four of the Bishopstone family were eighty or more when they died, so evidently the longevity gene survived transplantation out of the village.

Edmund was born on 25 Aug 1772, but the St Luke's register for 27 July 1774 noted the burial of 'Edward Pricy a child smallpox'. Edmund was often replaced by the commoner name Edward, as in the ratebooks, but the Pricy spelling was only used on that one occasion. Although I don't have a strong Cockney accent, I occasionally find my surname spelt 'Pricy'. This may indicate that, not surprisingly, Edmund spoke with a London accent.

'**Edman** Pracy son of Edman carman & Lucy' was born on 28 Aug 1774, a month after his namesake brother was buried. Sadly he too died aged five of another notorious scourge of infancy – measles. Parents often recycled the name of a dead child, but when another son was born a year later Edmund and Lucy called him Thomas. It is a modern

misconception that high mortality rates hardened 18th-century parents to the loss of their children, and it may be that the memories associated with their two boys made it too painful for them to use the name again. Rosey was nine when her brother died but it was far from being the last tragedy in her life: her three sons all died before her and she lost several of her grandchildren, including three in 1841 to a scarlet fever epidemic.

Elizabeth was born on 11 January 1777. On 1 November 1799 she stole goods worth about £6 10s from her employer Mrs Mary CAMROUX, milliner of 9 Brinsley Place Islington⁵. On 4 December at the Old Bailey quarter sessions Elizabeth was convicted of simple grand larceny. Her sister Rosey had only just travelled out to Australia as a free person and Elizabeth must have come close to joining her involuntarily as a convict transportee. She could even have been hanged but by then capital punishment for thefts not involving violence was unusual. On the day of her conviction, four people were sentenced to hanging and 16 transported. Elizabeth was one of five people who escaped with the next most serious punishment - two years in the Middlesex House of Correction and, rather inconsequential by comparison, a fine of one shilling. Perhaps Elizabeth owed her relatively light punishment to a Mrs Newbank who was called as a witness and 'gave her a good character'. She would have done hard labour such as beating hemp, and been put into solitary confinement so that she might reflect on the error of her ways. In 1805 Elizabeth married James KERSHAW and they had a daughter called Elizabeth, but nothing more is known of them.

Only two of Edmund and Lucy's nine children were boys who lived to have children of their own. To the best of my knowledge, anybody called Pracy or Pracey is descended from, or related by marriage to, them.

John William (2 March 1779 - January 1831) was a watchmaker. In 1806 he married Elizabeth Jane PALMER, a schoolteacher, and eight of their nine children survived to adulthood. Their son Thomas Richard (1818-1879) ran away to sea and eventually settled near his aunt Rosetta in Sydney. In 1853 he married Jane Jackson GLOVER (1833-1910), whose father had been convicted of horse-stealing in England.

Thomas (6 October 1781 - 4 November 1846) married Mary MORGAN in 1809. She was a Welsh cowgirl and they ran a dairy business together. Only one of their eight children died in infancy, and they are my 4 x great-grandparents.

Lucy (8 September 1783 - 7 January 1849) never married, and in 1848 became the first of the London family known to have made a will, in which she left a variety of possessions and £170 in cash. Evidently she was closest to her Fox relatives: she left £10 to her younger sister Rebecca Fox and 19 guineas each to her sister Ann Fox, and her nieces Rebecca and Susan. Her niece Rebecca was described as 'of Box Hill Sydney now residing with her aunt Mrs Terry in the same place'.

Rebecca was born on 27 October 1785, and was still alive at the time of the 1861 census. On 29 August 1822 she married John FOX, a widower, who was perhaps the brother of Isaac Fox. A rather curious provision of Samuel Terry's will was that she was to have nothing in her own right but only her sister Ann's £20 annuity if Ann died, so it is clear

⁵ From the award-winning www.oldbaileyonline.org website.

that both sisters were still in touch with Rosetta and her husband. However, Rosetta in her own will twenty years later left nothing to Rebecca.

* * * * *

In 1794, the last year that Edmund was listed at New Street, the Pracys had lived in the Finsbury area for over 60 years. Edmund, like his father, followed a respectable trade and was probably self-employed, apparently fairly well off and occupying a middling place in society. He was renting a pleasant end-of-terrace house close to the church and the countryside. All in all, it seems that they were a respectable, comfortably-off lower-middle-class family.

Between 1795 and 1805 all this began to change, and so it was one of the most crucial periods in our family's history. That decade certainly saw an upheaval for the family, not all of which fitted in with the respectable image. This may suggest that Edmund died or encountered financial difficulties, so Rosey and her two eldest sisters were affected or took the opportunity to kick over the traces. In 1798 or earlier Rosey was probably involved with one or more convicts, and in 1799 Elizabeth became one. In 1804 Ann had the first of her children with Isaac Fox, to whom she may not have been married.

I have not traced the family between 1795, when Edmund disappeared from New Street, and 1805-9 when his children married and/or set up separate households of their own. Even though three of Edmund's daughters moved to south London and Rosetta to Australia, the family made the effort to stay in touch. The sisters in particular seem to have been close and affectionate, and I think those links must have been forged or strengthened in this crucial, difficult decade.

After 1805 the family seem to have overcome their problems and settled down again. The brothers John William and Thomas, like their father, had their own well-established small businesses and produced large families. Ann, Rosetta and Elizabeth all had children. According to the 1841 census Ann, Lucy and Rebecca were all of independent means, although this income may not have come from their own efforts but from Rosetta, who was by then very wealthy. Elizabeth probably died fairly young but Lucy lived to the age of 65, Rebecca to at least 75, Rosetta and Ann to 88.

3. Rosey in England

Rosey was born in 1770 and left for Australia in 1798. Unfortunately, sources for those 28 years are very sparse, and also Rosetta seems at times deliberately to have obscured details of her past. The following suggestions are therefore largely speculative, although the guesswork is as educated as I can make it.

The first mystery is her name. Whereas all her siblings had solid old-fashioned names, Rosey by contrast seems rather flighty and fanciful. It certainly isn't known among the Pracys, so perhaps it came from her mother's side of the family. We also don't know when she came to be known as Rosetta rather than Rosey, although it may just be that she adopted it as a more adult form of her name.

The second puzzle is that, when Rosetta died in 1858, her mother's name was recorded as Lucy NEWBORK. The informant was Rosetta's niece Rebecca Fox and it was over 90

years after the marriage of 'Edman Preacy' and Lucy Carlton so it is hardly surprising that Rebecca was misinformed, but it seems more than coincidence that this was similar to Newbank, the surname of Elizabeth Pracey's character witness at her Old Bailey trial in 1799. I can find no record anywhere of the surname Newbork, so a misreading of Newbank could have crept in somewhere. Perhaps a Mrs Newbank became almost a surrogate mother who helped bring up the young family, and Rosetta told Rebecca about her. The IGI has several men called Newbank married in London around the right time but none of the brides is recorded as Lucy, so the exact nature of the Newbank/Newbork connection is unlikely to be established. Rebecca in any case was not the most reliable of informants: she gave her grandfather Pracy's trade as merchant rather than carman, although that may have been what her aunt told her. She also seems to have been almost as good as her aunt at sleight of hand: on her own marriage certificate her father's name was changed from Isaac to Richard, his status elevated from coachman to gentleman, and her age given as 34 when she was actually 47.

Third is the rather curious fact, discussed in more detail in the next chapter, that Rosetta has links to three Lancashire criminals sent to New South Wales as convicts. Edward MADDEN and Samuel TERRY were convicted at Salford, Henry MARSH alias MARTIN at Liverpool. This could be sheer coincidence, particularly as Rosey is not known to have met Samuel in England. If however there was a family disaster, she may well have left London and gone to Lancashire. Rosey Pracey may have married Edward Madden and/or Henry Marsh/Martin in England, but no marriage record has been traced.

Finally, I can suggest four influences that could have helped young Rosey Pracey of St Luke's develop into the formidable Rosetta Terry of Sydney.

- She was nearly 17 when her mother died. Even allowing for the influence of her older sister Ann and perhaps Mrs Newbank, Rosey must have contributed much to the upbringing of her younger siblings - then aged 10, 8, 5, 3 and 18 months. In caring for them, she would have learned mothering skills.
- In 1794, the 24-year-old Rosey was probably the eldest child still in the household and the next eldest, Elizabeth, was only 17. If some misfortune did overtake our family around that time, she may well have influenced events and been influenced by them. They probably helped form her strong character.
- Rosey could, like Elizabeth, have had a job in trade, which would have given her the experience to develop her formidable business abilities.
- Mary Wollstoncraft's influential *Vindication of the Rights of Women* was published in 1792. Rosey could read and clearly had strong feminist views, which were perhaps influenced by this book.

Part II: Rosetta Marsh

4. Rosetta's journey to Australia, and the men in her life

Rosetta first emerged into the light of history in December 1798, when she went to Australia as a free passenger on a convict ship called the *Hillsborough*. Among the convicts were Henry Marsh or Martin, and Edward Madden, both later to be associated with Rosetta. She was presumably one of a small group of convict wives permitted to travel on that ship, but whose wife she was is not clear. No official record for her permission has been located, and other sources, such as the account of the voyage by the convict William Noah, do not help in identifying her.

The convicts were picked up from various prison hulks, one of which was infected with jail fever (typhus). Soon after the *Hillsborough* left Langstone Harbour near Portsmouth, disease broke out and one third of the 300 convicts died on the voyage. Their plight was not helped by the brutal master of the ship, William Hingston, who starved prisoners and shackled them so heavily that they could barely move. The resultant scandal led to the *Hillsborough* being called 'the Death Ship'. Governor John Hunter of New South Wales described the survivors as 'the most Miserable and Wretched ... I ever beheld'.

One of those who died was Edward Madden, who had been convicted on 3 May 1797 and was buried at sea off Cape Town on 1 April 1799. When in 1810 Rosetta married Samuel Terry she described herself as 'Rosater Madden Widow', but this was the only time she ever used that surname. People were often economical with the truth in ways that were unlikely to be detected half a world away, and Rosetta's track record suggests that she was no exception.

In July 1799 Rosetta disembarked in Sydney, where she found herself in a new and precarious world. There was little in the way of infrastructure, food sources or farms, and support was several months away. At first administration was fully in the Governor's hands and the settlement was a combination of military outpost and open prison, but once free persons began to settle and acquire land or goods, there was a different and constantly evolving situation. The government granted land with the intention of creating a colony, but this raised questions about the application of British laws and on the form of government, particularly as they related to the rights of freed (emancipated) convicts.

Accompanying Rosetta on the voyage had been a son called Henry Marsh, although when and where he was born is not known. Another child, Esther Marsh, must have been conceived as soon as Rosetta arrived, for she was born in Sydney on 28 April 1800. Their father was probably Henry Marsh, also known as Martin or Jones, a labourer or bricklayer who had travelled as a convict on the *Hillsborough*. Henry junior worked on ships sailing out of Sydney and rose to the rank of captain. At the time of his death in 1825 he was employed by the East India Company. He died unmarried in Rangoon, aged about 28.

Marilyn Mason suggests convincingly that Rosetta was less likely to have been married to Edward Madden than to Henry Marsh, who certainly gave his name to her two eldest children and was probably their father. If Marsh was alive and his whereabouts were

unknown it would have been impossible for Rosetta to marry Terry, because she would still have been legally married to Marsh. Although Marsh and Madden arrived on the *Hillsborough* from different hulks, they both originated from Lancashire and appeared next to one another on the list of 300 convicts boarding the ship. They may well have been acquainted and Rosetta would have known that Madden died off Cape Town, so she could have claimed that she had married him. She could after Madden's death have taken Marsh as her protector in a perilous situation without marrying him. It is also possible that Madden is a red herring, and that she was already married to Marsh and travelled on the *Hillsborough* to be with him. Certainly all known references to her before she married Terry give her name as Rosetta Marsh, and one as Martin.

The New South Wales *Settlers' Muster Book 1800*⁶, as published in 1988, includes a list of 'Expired or Emancipated Convicts and Free People Off the Stores in 1801'. In it appears Prisilla [sic] Martin, resident in Sydney, who came on the *Hillsborough* as a free person. She is otherwise unknown and, as the original handwriting of the document was very difficult, 'Prisilla' may well be a transcription error for 'Rosetta'. If so, it would strengthen the case for believing that Rosetta travelled with Henry Marsh/Martin.

Rosetta's third child, John Terry, was probably born in 1806. The use of Terry as his surname would indicate that his father was not Marsh. Rosetta's daughter Esther kept her surname Marsh after her mother married Terry, even though she was treated by Terry as his own daughter and was only ten years old. The use of Terry as John's surname would indicate that his father was not Marsh and that Rosetta's relationship with Marsh had already broken down. Family legend suggested that John's father was John HARRIS (1754-1838), who was officially appointed surgeon of New South Wales in 1791 and later to other public positions such as justice of the peace, superintendent of police and naval officer of the Port of Sydney. Harris became a major landowner around Sydney and at his death his estate was valued at £16,000, enough to place him at no. 125 on the All-Time Rich List. The claim may, however, have been an attempt to bring a gloss of respectability to the family at a time when nobody wanted to be descended from convict stock. We may never know whether Samuel was in fact John's biological father, but certainly in his will he mentions 'my son John Terry', whereas he refers to both Esther and Henry Marsh as 'the daughter/son of my said wife by a former husband'.

A significant recorder of the mystery of John's paternity was the Reverend Samuel MARSDEN, who in 1806 created a list of women in the colony, probably from the official muster. He then classified them as married or 'concubine' (he was not always correct), and noted whether they had legitimate or 'natural' children. Marsden accepted Rosetta as having been legally married but recognized an ex-nuptial child when he recorded her as having come on the *Hillsborough*: 'Marsh, Rosetta M[arried], E[ngland]) Legitimate children 1 male, 1 female, Natural children 1 male'. Marsden, in his role as Assistant Chaplain and then Senior Chaplain of New South Wales, took a high moral line. He earned the nickname of the 'flogging parson' in his other role of magistrate and delighted in condemning the morals of the females in the colony. None of his official roles prevented his accumulating significant wealth as a land owner and sheep breeder, sufficient to make him 52nd on Rubinstein's 200 Rich List.

⁶ Several musters were taken between 1788-1837. Details are at <http://www.jaunay.com/auscensus.html>.

Some of the convict and former convict population were married but their spouses were in England and, although they were never going to be re-united, no divorce was available. Other common law liaisons took place because of class disparities between the partners. Despite an oft-repeated myth, it was not possible to declare a marriage over because of seven years separation or to presume the spouse dead, so married persons could not legally remarry. The nature of society was such that even a woman as resourceful as Rosetta would often have sought the protection of a man. Henry Marsh may have returned to England in September 1806, but Marilyn Mason is investigating the possibility that in 1810 he was still in the colony or only just left, which would make it all the more imperative for Rosetta to claim to be Madden's widow. Whatever the precise truth, she was free to marry a man who was to become the richest in Australia.

5. Rosetta's business interests

After arriving in Sydney, Rosetta gradually began to build her fortune. She was listed in the 1800 *Settlers' Muster Book* as 'off stores' (not provisioned by the government), showing that she was supporting herself straight away – an extraordinary achievement, particularly as she immediately fell pregnant and then had a baby to nurse. Many women in the colony came from backgrounds where they had learnt to fend for themselves and Rosetta probably used methods similar to those of Sarah Bird, who in 1798 became the colony's first licensee of a public house⁷:

I did a little trade in the passage here in a number of small articles, such as sugar, tea, tobacco, thread, snuff, needles, and everything that I could get anything by ... I have sold my petticoats at two guineas each, and my long black cloak at ten guineas, which shews that black silk sells well here; the edging that I gave 1s 8d per yard for in England, I got 5s for it here. I have sold all the worst of my cloaths, as wearing apparel brings a good price.

On 1 May 1803 Governor Phillip Gidley King granted Rosetta a lease 'at Pitt Row in the township of Sydney 37½ rods term of 14 years Annual Quit Rent 10/-'. Details of farmland worked by Rosetta were listed on the muster of 12 August 1806:

Rosetta Marsh. Came free *Hillsborough* 1799. Lives self. By Lease. Potatoes ½ acre. Orchard ½ acre. Hogs One. In hand, wheat 2 bushels, maize one bushel. Proprietor and three children not victualled. 1 Convict not victualled. 1 free man employed⁸.

In 1806 in Sydney, Rosetta bought a house and premises for £132, and acquired another house for £7 + 2s a week. On 21 May 1807 she purchased a farm at Concord from Edward Edwards for £55 13s 6d.

Rosetta's prosperity made her a target for thieves⁹. In February 1806 someone broke into her outhouse at Pitt's Row, and stole 'a firkin of butter that had been purchased the same evening, together with a box containing the servant's cloathing and sundry other articles'. In September 1807 she accused James McGlade of stealing promissory notes worth upwards of £150, a considerable sum. When he tried to pass one of them off in the shop

⁷ *The coming of strangers: life in Australia 1788-1822* by Baiba Berzins, Collins/State Library of NSW, 1988, p103-4.

⁸ 'Self' indicates that the person was self employed, and in women's entries probably indicated that she was living by herself. 'Not victualled' means drawing not on Government stores, i.e. self sufficient.

⁹ Information in this paragraph taken from *Sydney Gazette*.

of one T Abbott, McGlade admitted picking it up in her house but claimed that he had asked Abbott to return it to her.

In 1808 she was among the traders who bought wine, spirits and dried fruit in a cargo that arrived from Edinburgh. She paid £133 and Surgeon Harris £115, which shows that she was not, as Dow suggested, just a front woman for Harris's business interests. Her future husband Samuel Terry spent just £3.

Rosetta soon became a person of influence in the colony. In 1808 she was one of the few women among 800 'Free and Principal Proprietors of Landed Property' who signed a petition to Governor William Bligh, asking him to make representations to the King for trade privileges and trial by jury. The petition was also signed by Terry and Harris. Soon afterwards Bligh, not for the first time in his eventful life, was deposed from office - this time in the 'Rum Rebellion', in which officers of the New South Wales Corps led by George Johnston and John Macarthur mutinied against Bligh's attempts to suppress their commercial activities and especially their trade in rum. Rosetta subscribed £20 to a proposed fund to provide expenses to Macarthur and a presentation sword to Johnston. Harris also supported the rebellion, so Rosetta was very clearly aligned with the military.

In 1809 Rosetta received grants of 150 and 50 acres from Col William Paterson, one of three men who administered the colony after the military overthrew Bligh. She called this land Islington, perhaps in recollection of the area close to her childhood home that was a centre of the livestock trade. When in January 1810 Governor Macquarie arrived to replace Bligh, he expressed 'the high displeasure of His Majesty on account of the late tumultuous and mutinous proceedings', and reversed most of the actions taken in the previous year.

Rosetta was therefore one of the settlers who addressed a memorial (petition) to the new Governor appealing for their grants to be continued and legalised. On 12 January 1810 she declared

That your Memorialist purchased a Farm for the accommodation of the stock which she found inadequate to the Pasture Ground required for her increasing stock...She has three children Fatherless and Unprotected which she has hitherto maintained and Educated by the most persevering Industry and by an equal share of Industry is now possessed of a Considerable number of Head Cattle Breeding Mares and Other Stock'...having nothing in mind but the eventual benefit of her children (Three in number) she represented the case to Colonel Paterson, who, in Consideration of her industry and the claim the children had for protection, Granted to her One Hundred and Fifty acres of Pasture Land, with a view, still further to encourage your Excellency's Memorialist in her industry.

Her appeal was successful, for Macquarie granted her request, backdated to 1 January 1810.

It seems clear that Rosetta built up her fortune largely by her own efforts, but precisely how she did it can only be a matter of speculation. I doubt whether the family had much capital to give her when she left England, but she may have accumulated a little of her own. When in 1809 44 wine and spirits licences were granted in Sydney, she was one of only four women to receive one. Dow thought that Surgeon John Harris may have set her up because it was not deemed respectable for a professional man to own and run such an establishment, but Mason points out that Rosetta was already wealthy before that. She

suggests that Rosetta accumulated her wealth as a trader, acting like other women of the time as a sort of banker, which might explain why she had promissory notes of such high value. Money was in very short supply so these notes were a sort of currency used as the principal means of trade, frequently at a discount that gave the trader a handy profit.

6. Rosetta at law

Early in 1810 Rosetta went to law four times, to recover money owed to her for goods and services or as compensation. This was all around the time of her marriage, when she was about eight months pregnant. On 30 March she asked for £9 and £4.1.3 for goods she sold to Thomas Chip and Robert Chapman respectively, and on 4 April £4.17.9 for goods sold and delivered to James Somerville at his request. In each case the defendant was ‘duly called but did not appear and made willful default’, so the Court entered judgment for the plaintiff for the full amount owed plus costs. Whether she ever got her money is not recorded.

In the case of Chip, Sam Terry carried out the litigation on Rosetta’s behalf, and once they were married he did it all for her. It seems strange that this tough, independently minded woman went through her husband but she probably had little choice, for married women then did not receive land grants or carry out legal business on their own behalf. The New South Wales Court of Civil Jurisdiction index shows that Sam brought 29 prosecutions in four years and, when work on it is complete, many more may emerge.

On 20 March 1810, in the most remarkable of her four cases, Rosetta took on one of the leading families in the colony – that of George Johnston. Less than two years earlier he had deposed the unpopular Governor Bligh and granted Rosetta the land which she called Islington. She had subscribed £20 to a fund for Johnston and John Macarthur, who at the time of the case were still in England attempting to vindicate their actions. Johnston left his property at Annandale in the charge of his mistress, the beautiful Jewish woman Esther Julian who later married him. Living on the farm, she received the rents and profits from it and had the management of the servants. Rosetta prosecuted Esther ‘for the negligence of her servant James Hooper, in improperly putting a mare to horse, by which the mare died’. Esther pleaded not guilty¹⁰.

On 12 September 1809 Rosetta had ordered her servant, John Winch, to deliver a dark bay mare to Annandale farm. Hooper the groom was to supervise her mating with one of Mrs Julian’s stallions. The stallion immediately leaped on the mare and Hooper tried to assist him, although the groom appeared confused and Winch thought something was going wrong. Winch took the mare back to her stable and the doctor came but she died at about midnight. The court found that the penis of the horse had burst the rectum of the unfortunate mare and caused her death. A verdict was given for Rosetta of damages of £80 + costs, and Esther was allowed eight days to pay.

¹⁰ This account based on NSW Court of Jurisdiction CGS2659 5/1103 33.

Part III: Rosetta Terry

7. Wife

On 27 March 1810 ‘Samuel Terry, innkeeper, of Sydney in N S Wales a Batchelor [sic] and Rosetta Madden of the same place a widow’ were married at St Philip’s church Sydney. The Reverend Samuel Marsden and Governor Macquarie were among those trying to encourage marriage rather than the somewhat irregular arrangements that were typical of a colony in which men greatly outnumbered women. Rosetta was then heavily pregnant, so formalising the relationship suited all parties. A month later their son Edward – possibly named for Rosetta’s father – was born, and in November 1811 their daughter Martha. The populist historian Frank Clune described Rosetta as ‘a mother in a million, co-founder of a dynasty that has prospered for generations’¹¹. Judging by the number of men in her life, I think that she must also have been a very attractive woman.

Contrasting the later period when women ‘disappeared into domesticity in the age of the bourgeois ascendancy’, the Marxist/feminist writer Sandra Bloodworth cited Rosetta as a woman entrepreneur ‘who had run successful businesses and been prominent in other public ventures in the earlier years of the settlement’¹². Although Rosetta is less conspicuous in the historical record than before she married Samuel and after he died, it is extremely unlikely that she just ‘disappeared into domesticity’. She almost certainly played a vital part in his success, so in my description of his later career it is reasonable to assume her influence, even if there is no firm documentary evidence.

Theirs may well have been a love match, but even so Rosetta ensured that legally binding financial arrangements were made before the marriage: a formal property settlement was made on Mary Shipley, who had been living with Samuel, while Rosetta and Samuel signed an agreement securing to Rosetta ‘all her stock previous to their marriage’. This pattern was repeated later: the women of the family held property separately from the men, with fully legal bindings. There were too many men in Rosetta’s life to suggest that she was a man-hater, but all the evidence indicates that she had a fairly low opinion of them, perhaps the outcome of ten years trading in a tough environment.

On 7 November 1799 at Lancaster Quarter Sessions Samuel Terry had been tried and found guilty twice on the same day of two thefts, each of the same items but from two separate people. He stole stockings (200 pairs, or two lots of 200 pairs) and their wrappings, said to be worth just five pence - an undervaluation typical of the period. The timing and nature of the crime were similar to those of Rosetta’s sister Elizabeth, but this seems no more than a coincidence. In June 1801 Samuel arrived at the convict settlement and was placed in a gang of stonemasons at Parramatta, where at that time the population was probably larger than Sydney’s. He assisted in the building of the gaol, and once he was flogged for neglect of duty.

Soon, however, Samuel developed a reputation as wealthy and respectable. By 1804 he was living in ‘a commodious house’ and the *Sydney Gazette* for January 15 reported that

¹¹ *Bound for Botany Bay: narrative of a voyage on board the death ship Hillsborough*. Angus & Robertson. 1964, p79.

¹² *Socialist Review* (Australian), Issue 2, Winter 1990, pp. 5-33.

Last Sunday night a depredation was effected at Parramatta in the house of Samuel Terry; from whence a quantity of wearing apparel, some money, and various other property was taken. It had every appearance of a FRIENDLY visit, as an inner bolt was cut away, supposed to have been done in the course of the preceding day with a view of facilitating the evening's progress.

The paper must have thought him a person of interest as there is nothing particularly startling about the theft itself. In 1804-5 he was a private in the Parramatta Militia, a volunteer association led by Major George Johnston and intended for defence if Irish convicts rebelled. By 1806, when he completed his sentence, he had set up his own stonemason's business. In 1809 a neighbour, William Wall, sued him for defamation and described him as 'Vile, Rich and oppulent' [sic]¹³.

From about 1810 Samuel lived in Sydney, where he bought up property including the land now occupied by Martin Place and the old General Post Office, which Rosetta later sold to the government. By the time of his death in 1838 he was receiving more than £10,000 a year from the rentals of his Sydney properties alone.

Samuel was reported to be 'a remarkably sober man' who began to build up his fortune by selling his ration of spirits. It was alleged that he 'amassed his wealth by getting officers and small landholders drunk at his public house and then allowing them to sign away their rights to their possessions as security for their debts'¹⁴, but others disputed this. He was highly regarded by Governor Macquarie, who in 1817 described him as a 'wealthy trader', dealing in the provision of fresh meat and flour to the government. Like other early traders, Sam acted as a kind of banker. He financed growers of grain and took repayment in the form of part of the harvest. He always drove a hard bargain, as is indicated by his readiness to prosecute his debtors, but was regarded as a fair and well-respected employer.

After their marriage, Sam and Rosetta continued to acquire property, by grant and purchase. In 1819 they set themselves up on a country estate outside Sydney called Box Hill Farm and bought Mount Pleasant, a property adjoining Rosetta's Islington estate. There as a windbreak they planted a row of olive trees, said to have been grown by Rosetta from seed given to her by a sailor. Much of the area has now been developed as housing but the olive trees survive and, although showing signs of their age, are bringing forth new green shoots. On the census of November 1828 Samuel and Rosetta declared that they owned 21,580 acres with 189 horses, 3700 horned cattle and 7400 sheep. True to form, she subtracted seven years from her age.

One of the questions on the census asked for status, so Rosetta declared 'came free' but Samuel had to admit 'free by servitude'. Rosetta travelled on a convict ship and married an ex-convict, so was often mistakenly tarred with the same brush. New South Wales society undoubtedly differentiated between former convicts and those who had arrived free, but Marilyn Mason suggests too much has been made of this. Further research might reveal whether Samuel and Rosetta were in any way excluded despite their wealth and philanthropy, and would make a good case study for this important historical debate.

¹³ DOW, p43, 45, 47.

¹⁴ Evidence taken by John Thomas Bigge, an English judge sent in 1819 to investigate the colony.

Rubinstein found that by 1820 Samuel owned more than one-fifth of the total value of all mortgages registered in New South Wales, which then included present-day Victoria and Queensland. His business interests included a bloodstock stud and Terry's building on Pitt Street, one of the largest office blocks in the colony. He was regarded as the most successful of all emancipists, holding half of all the property owned by them.

Samuel was the largest shareholder in the Bank of New South Wales, founded in 1817 as Australia's first bank, and Rosetta was among the 31% of woman shareholders. Female votes could only be exercised as proxies by male shareholders, but the couple apparently had a good relationship and conflict over his exercise of her vote seems unlikely.

Samuel was associated with, and sometimes helped found, many benevolent and religious movements in Sydney including the Benevolent Society, the Philanthropic Society, the Bible Society and Sydney Grammar School. Respected as honest and capable in money matters, he often became treasurer. He was active in his Masonic Lodge, whose members were well regarded. Samuel also became one of the emancipists' chief spokesmen, and one of his greatest achievements was to organise a successful petition to overthrow the contention of Judge Barron Field that 'felon convicts are not capable of suing in the Courts of the Colony'.

Samuel died in 1838 after a stroke, aged about 62. A rumour swept Sydney that he owned a trunk full of gold and money but it was never found. His estate was nevertheless valued at £200,000, which made the scale of his fortune unique in Australian history.

8. Widow

In 1825 Samuel had made an elaborate will which gives an idea of just how extensive the Terry assets were. To 'my dear wife Rosetta' went Box Hill itself, along with 'the household furniture plate linen and china that I shall have in use in the house in which I shall usually reside at the time of my decease'. Initially Samuel set up his son Edward with considerable property of his own, to the extent that he was 53rd on Rubinstein's list of all-time rich Australians. Originally most of Samuel's money was to go to his son but Edward's marriage in 1834 to a well-connected Sydney girl, Elizabeth Mann, was a failure. Edward blamed her, and enemies of the family - who described him as drunken, dissipated and brutal - blamed him. The result was that in several codicils Samuel tied up Edward's property in trust and divided the other properties, money and assets among all the children. Edward died childless and intestate a few months after his father, in an influenza epidemic.

Ironically, therefore, the Terry name was perpetuated by the boy who probably was not Samuel's son. In 1831 John married Eleanor, daughter of Richard Rouse who had been Samuel's supervisor when he worked as a convict in the stonemasons' gang. When John died in 1842, following a fall from his horse, his estate was valued at £30,000, which placed him 58th on the all-time rich list. His three sons, who all built themselves large houses, played significant roles in Australian history and had many descendants.

Immediately after Samuel's death a pamphlet was published, snappily entitled *The History of Samuel Terry, in Botany Bay, who died lately, leaving a princely fortune of*

nearly one million sterling¹⁵. It was described on the title page as being *By A.L.F.*—LATE OF NEW SOUTH WALES. It is not surprising that the author chose to conceal his identity and wait until after Samuel's death, for otherwise he would surely have been sued for libel. According to A.L.F., who dubbed him 'the Botany Bay Rothschild', Samuel left property that 'amounted to almost a million sterling', and 'bequeathed his wife an annuity of almost ten thousand pounds'. Samuel bought up 'acres...in and near Sydney, hitherto covered with filth and rubbish', and made his fortune when his land became valuable for building. Rosetta was presented as dressing in 'a simple, nay, coarse manner', being too mean to employ a servant and having a 'niggardly, fearful and narrow mind'. Much of the pamphlet was proved to be false, but it illustrates the great passions aroused by the idea that people could in effect benefit from their crimes in England by accumulating great wealth in Australia.

The Terry family was inclined to 'dynastic' marriages, probably as a conscious device for keeping the money in the family. Much of Samuel's money passed to his nephew John Terry Hughes, who arrived in New South Wales in May 1824 and married Rosetta's daughter Esther Marsh eighteen months later. The *Sydney Gazette* reported that 'after the ceremony the happy couple set off in their chariot to Mr Terry's country seat at Box Hill'. They 'took the world easy and lived in fine style', and went on to have six daughters and a son. In the next 15 years, John Terry Hughes was brewer, miller, hotelier, whaler, shipowner, merchant and above all land speculator. Hughes went into partnership with John Hosking, who had married Samuel and Rosetta's daughter Martha. When their Albion Mills burnt down in 1841, it was underinsured and in an attempt to save themselves they borrowed large sums against the assets of the Bank of Australia. Their company finally collapsed in 1843 and they brought the bank and themselves down to spectacular bankruptcy.

The women in the family held many assets in their own right and had in the years before the crash acquired further assets bought from the men. At various times, both Rosetta Terry and Esther Terry Hughes asserted their own independence of the male finances and claimed to have no knowledge of the account books of the men or the company. In 1846, Rosetta assigned all the household goods at the Terry Hughes home, Albion House, to Esther in trust for her benefit and use, specifically excluding her husband. After Esther's death, the estate was sub-divided into numerous blocks and her children and grandchildren were beneficiaries. The years following John Terry Hughes's insolvency in 1843 and his death in 1851 were filled with court case of all sorts. Creditors seeking to assert their claims or alleging fraud went to court, including even Rosetta who claimed money owing to her in one of her business enterprises. His insolvency was ended by a final arrangement to pay 20 pence in the £1 to creditors.

Esther Terry Hughes had inherited a substantial amount from Samuel's estate in her own right and as the heir of her brother, Henry Marsh. Rosetta secured other assets that were transferred to her daughter. Esther continued living at Albion House and died in 1873, when her personal estate was valued at £24,000, excluding the value of any land. Much of her property was held in trusts for the benefit of her children and grandchildren. At least two of these trusts, with assets of land in King and Pitt Streets in the very heart of

¹⁵ London, J Pattie, 1838.

Sydney, were not finally wound up until their sale in the 1940s and 1950s.

John Hosking may have also been related to the Terrys as he was sometimes referred to as Samuel's nephew. As well going into partnership with John Terry Hughes, Hosking acquired extensive lands in his own name, and was a stockholder in the Bank of NSW and a Director of the Sydney Banking Co. He was elected a councillor in the first Sydney municipal elections in November 1842, and then the first Mayor of Sydney.

Martha Terry Hosking had inherited from her father considerable wealth, receiving the same share as her half-siblings Esther Terry Hughes nee Marsh, John Terry and Henry Marsh. She owned various properties in her own right and then, after the crash, Rosetta acquired a large property Hosking had mortgaged to her and gifted it to Martha. Once again, the pattern of the female wealth being secured and separated from the men in the family was repeated, giving the women wealth and power most unusual for the times.

John and Martha married in 1829 but waited 16 years for their first child, Rosetta Emma, only to suffer the tragedy of losing her aged 14½ months. Martha had two more daughters, Ada Australia Pracey in 1849 and Zillah Elizabeth Foxlowe in 1851. Both married and had nine or ten children and it is only through them that the Terry bloodline continued, though not the name.

The Terrys did not entirely forget Rosetta's Pracey sisters. In a codicil of 1834 Sam directed payment of annuities to various people including 'Mrs. [Ann] Fox of London twenty pounds and after the death of the said Mrs Fox the like sum to her sister Rebecca Fox for her life'. On the 1841 English census Ann Fox, Rebecca Fox and Lucy Pracy are all listed as being of independent means and living in comfortable suburban houses, so after Samuel's death Rosetta probably gave each of her sisters a regular allowance. Following the Australian pattern, however, she apparently made no similar provision for her brothers or their children, some of whom lived in considerable poverty.

In 1839, shortly after Samuel died, Ann Fox's daughter Rebecca travelled to Sydney on board the *Duchess of York*, a ship owned by Rosetta's sons-in-law John Hosking and John Terry Hughes. Newspaper reports indicate that it was a pleasant four-month voyage, apart from the ship running ahead of a hurricane and a mutiny in which the crew attempted to murder the chief officer – I wonder what an unpleasant voyage might have been like! Rebecca evidently became a sort of companion to her aunt.

Rosetta died from 'decay of nature' on 5 September 1858, aged 88. Her personal wealth (excluding her land) was valued at £27,000. Two years earlier she had made a will which shows that her shrewd brain was by no means in decay. In the light of half a century's business experience, not least with her bankrupt sons-in-law, she took a decidedly feminist line. She made provision that the men in the family should only have annual income rather than property. The women were to have their estates 'free from the debts or control of any husband'.

In a fairly standard clause Rosetta left all her household goods to her niece Rebecca Fox, as Samuel had to her. Rebecca was also given some 500 acres and a house in Crown Street, Surry Hills. She was appointed an executor and trustee of the will, along with Rosetta's widowed daughter Esther Terry Hughes and William Manners Clark, who was the family lawyer. Under Rosetta's original will of November 1856, Esther's daughter

Priscilla was pointedly excluded from receiving any property, but a codicil of February 1858 was written specifically to readmit her to the fold. Perhaps Priscilla had shown signs of being as feckless as the men in the family, but proved to her grandmother that she was trustworthy after all.

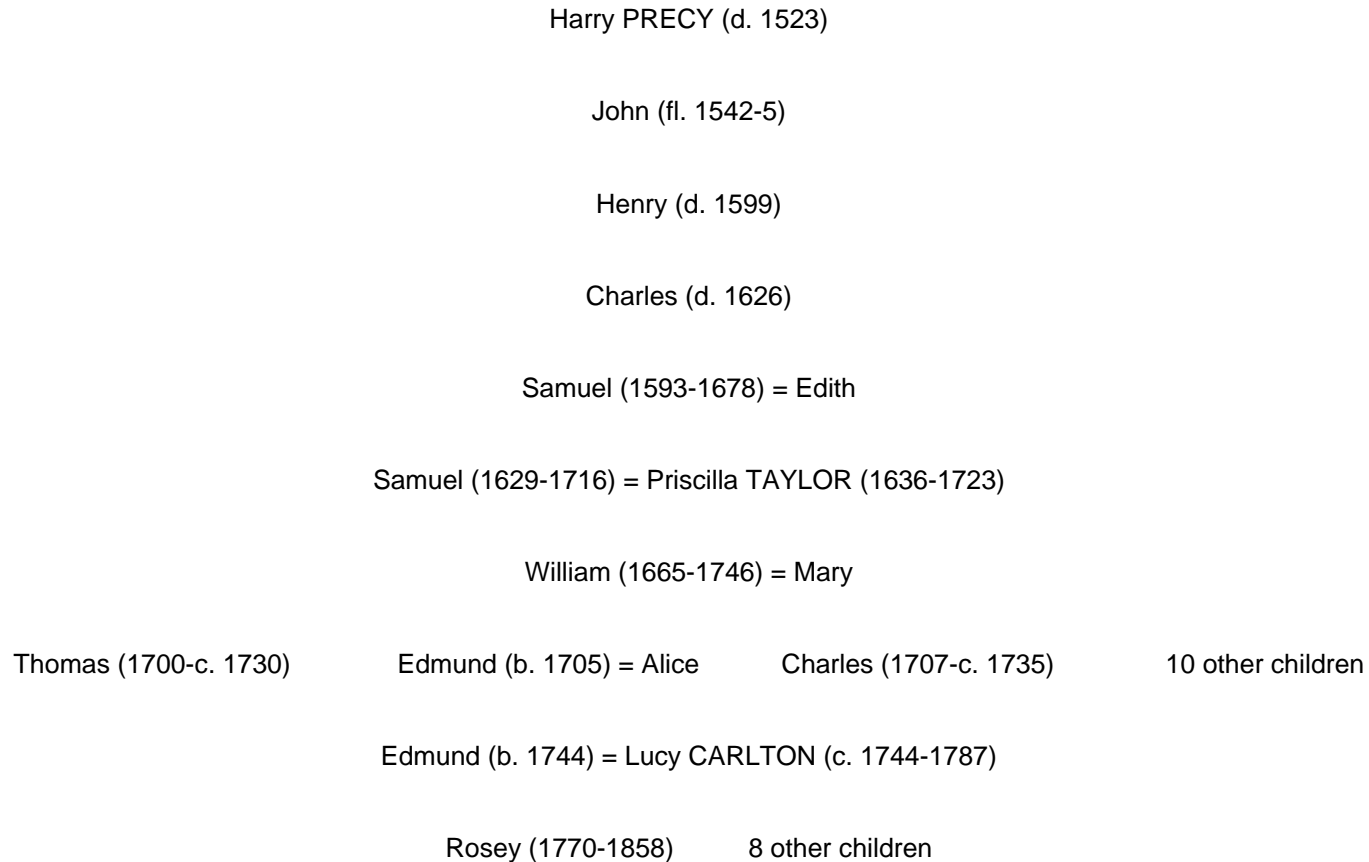
The Hughes and Terry family vault contains the remains of Rosetta and about ten of her family. When the Sydney railway was extended in 1901, the vault and contents were removed to the Necropolis at Rookwood, which was established in 1867 and is one of the largest cemeteries in the world. The plaque commemorating Rosetta has now been lost but was recorded in 1901 and reads:

ROSETTA
THE KIND AND BELOVED RELICT
OF THE ABOVE SAMUEL TERRY
WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE
SEPTEMBER THE 5TH 1858
AGED 89 YEARS

Conclusion

Rosey Pracey was brought up in a rapidly growing part of London, one of a family that apparently overcame hardship to enjoy a degree of comfort, only to slip back into difficult times. There can be little doubt that, as Rosetta Marsh, she deliberately cast a smokescreen over some of the more dubious aspects of her past. With a sister convicted of theft and links to three Lancastrian convicts sent to New South Wales, she may well have had good reason to. Even without such concealments the histories of ordinary people in those times are difficult to recover, so this can be no more than a brief summary of her life. All of us who are researching her would welcome any assistance, however small, in unravelling some of these mysteries. Yet the most important thing about Rosetta Terry is that she overcame all her challenges, to become a truly great pioneering Australian – not only as the wife of the country's richest man, but also as a strong and resourceful woman in her own right.

Rosey Pracey's ancestors (simplified tree)



The 16th-century Precys were, under the bishops of Salisbury, the principal landholders in the Wiltshire village of Bishopstone, near Swindon. It is probable but not certain that they were the forebears of Samuel. After him the direct line to Rosey is definite.

The two Samuels and William were yeomen in Bishopstone. Thomas, Edmund and Charles were born there but apprenticed in the City of London and lived in the parishes of St Giles Cripplegate and St Luke's Old St.

Rosey Pracey's siblings and their descendants (simplified tree)

Edmund PRACEY (b. 1744) = Lucy CARLTON (d. 1787)

Ann = Isaac FOX (1768-1856)	Rosey/Rosetta (1770-1858)	Edmund (1772-4)	Edmund (1774-80)	Elizabeth (b. 1777)	John William (1779-1831)	Thomas (1781-1846)	Lucy (1783-1849)	Rebecca = John FOX (1785-1861 or later)
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Susan (b. 1808)	Rebecca (1813-1879)
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Thomas Richard (1818-1879)	Richard (1817-1852)
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Thomas Richard (1858-1925)	John Gould (1843-1915)
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William Henry BALE = Ivy Elizabeth (1901-1974) (1904-1959)	John (1872-1944)
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Noel James EASTMENT = Norma June BALE (1930-) (1931-)	John Weston (1912-1987)
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Janice Anne EASTMENT (1954-)	David John (1946-)
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Janice EASTMENT in Australia and David PRACY in England are both researching Rosetta.

Rosetta Terry's descendants (simplified tree)

Henry MARSH - - Rosetta PRACEY = Samuel TERRY

Esther MARSH = John Terry HUGHES
(1800-1873) (1802-1851)

John TERRY = Eleanor ROUSE
(c1806-1842) (1813-1898)

Samuel Terry HUGHES (d.1868)

Edward (1840-1907)

Georgina (1852-1885)

Annie Mabel (b. 1865)

Eric (b. 1876)

Charlotte LONG (1874-1957)

Raymond SMITH (b. 1896)

Gwyneth (1920-1996) = Hume DOW

Richard MASON (1905-1944)

Graham SMITH (b. 1930)

John Clive MASON (1935-1986) = Marilyn Juliet LEVER (b. 1942)

Gwyneth DOW née Terry researched and wrote *Samuel Terry: the Botany Bay Rothschild*.

Marilyn MASON and Graham SMITH are both researching Rosetta.