

Winders, George (c.1791-after 1866)

Butcher

Prepared by: David Bedwell | Version 1 | April 2026
Part of: George Winders and Elizabeth Hards - Family History Project

George Winders was born about 1791 in Northleigh, Oxfordshire, the sixth child of John Winders (c.1762–1826) and his wife Hanah (c.1760–1794).

He lost his mother when he was approximately three years old, leaving his father with a large family in a small Oxfordshire village. His upbringing and early training are unrecorded, but by the time he married he was a skilled butcher, a trade he would practise for the rest of his working life. A probable brother, Samuel Winders, later operated as a butcher in Lower Mitcham — the same area where George established his own business, suggesting the trade may have been a family one.

On 5 May 1819 Winders married Elizabeth Hards (c.1790–1842) at St Andrews, Holborn, Middlesex. Within a few years the couple had moved to Upper Mitcham, Surrey, then a rural village on the southern outskirts of London, where George set up as a trading butcher. The couple had six children baptised in Mitcham between 1821 and 1836: Ann (c.1821), Ambrose (1822), Hannah (1828), William (1829), Daniel (c.1832), and David (c.1836).

Winders was confirmed in the 1839 Pigot's Trade Directory as “Winders George, Upper Mitcham” — one of approximately a dozen butchers operating across the Mitcham-Merton-Wimbledon area. The trade at this period required a butcher to source livestock locally, slaughter and prepare carcasses on site, and supply households and inns on credit — a financially fragile business model in an era without refrigeration or reliable payment.

The fragility showed. Winders was named as a debtor in the Morning Advertiser in May 1834, and again as insolvent in The Era in November 1841. In 1842 he was declared bankrupt and held at the Marshalsea Prison in Southwark — one of London's most notorious debtors' prisons, which closed that same year. His wife Elizabeth died in 1842, the same year as his imprisonment. The circumstances of her death are not recorded. Winders would have been approximately 51 years old, widowed, bankrupt, and the father of six children ranging from about six to twenty-one. What followed — the next eighteen years of his life — left no trace in the surviving records.

By 1861 Winders had moved to Carshalton in Surrey, where he lived with his sister Anne Leavett (née Winders, 1781–1863) at Leavett's Cottages, The Wrythe. The census of that year records him as a boarder aged 70, occupation still given as Butcher. His father, John Winders, had been buried at Carshalton in 1826 — the family had long-standing connections in the area.

The following year, in March 1862, Winders appeared before the Croydon magistrates in a civil case brought by Ann Farrage, a young servant in his sister's household. The Croydon Times reported that Farrage, who had been in the household for four years, alleged that Winders had assaulted her repeatedly over several months — beginning while she was making his bed — and was the father of twins she had subsequently borne, both of whom had died. Winders was approximately seventy years old; Farrage approximately

sixteen. The magistrates found her account “substantially correct” and ordered Winders to pay the costs of the confinement and the funeral of the children, amounting to £5 18s. No criminal charge was brought.

In 1866, Winders was fined a further 9 shillings and 10 pence for allowing his horse to stray at Carshalton — he was still resident in the village, still keeping a horse, and still describing himself as a butcher at approximately seventy-five years of age.

The date and place of Winders' death are not recorded in the sources currently available. He almost certainly died in Carshalton at some point after 1866. His sister Anne Leavett predeceased him in 1863. Of his six children, only daughter Anne's marriage in 1850 and son William's marriage in 1876 are confirmed in surviving records.

George Winders' life traced a common arc for the small Victorian tradesman: a skilled trade learned in rural England, migration to the London fringe, years of respectable if precarious commerce, financial ruin, imprisonment, and a long, obscure old age dependent on family. His story is remarkable not for its distance from the ordinary but for how precisely it captures the conditions of his class and his era — the credit-dependent butchering trade, the debtors' prison, the vulnerability of domestic servants, the invisibility of men like him once the business failed. The records that survive are court notices and newspaper columns: the marks of a man whose life left its clearest trace when things went wrong.

Selected Sources

Research Basis

Family History Records

- Oxfordshire, England, Church of England Baptism, Marriages and Burials, 1538–1812 — birth of George Winders and siblings
- Marriage register, St Andrews, Holborn, Middlesex, 5 May 1819
- Baptism records, Mitcham, Surrey, 1821–1836 — children of George and Elizabeth
- 1841 UK Census, Upper Mitcham, Surrey
- 1861 UK Census, RG9/418, Carshalton, Surrey
- Surrey, England, Church of England records — burial of John Winders, 3 September 1826, Carshalton
- Ancestry family tree, George Winders (ancestry.com.au/family-tree/person/tree/40081623/person/192646710797)

Newspapers and Trade Records

- Pigot's Trade Directory, 1839 — Mitcham area
- Morning Advertiser , 7 May 1834 — debtor notice, George Winders
- The Era , 21 November 1841 — insolvency notice, George Winders
- Perry's Bankrupt Gazette , 1842 — bankruptcy notice, George Winders
- The Croydon Times , 8 March 1862 — court case, George Winders and Ann Farrage
- Newspaper clipping, 1866 — horse straying fine, George Winders, Carshalton

Secondary and Contextual

- Researcher notes: Bedwell, D. “George Winders — Upper Mitcham 1830s–1840s,” unpublished, 2025
- Merton Historical Society, The Cricket Green — historical context for Mitcham

- Mitcham History Notes (mitchamhistorynotes.com) — 1839 trade directory transcription

Historical Context — Web Sources

- Marshalsea Prison — history, conditions, closure 1842: Marshalsea, Wikipedia — en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marshalsea
- Marshalsea — insolvency law, Insolvent Debtors Act 1842: Britannica — britannica.com/topic/Marshalsea
- John Dickens at the Marshalsea (1824); Dickens, C., Little Dorrit (1855–57): Historic UK, “Dickens and Debt” — historic-uk.com
- Victorian credit economy and the London meat trade: British History Online, “The Metropolitan Meat-Market” — british-history.ac.uk
- Mitcham history — Victorian trade, cricket, lavender: Merton Historical Society — mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk
- Mitcham trade directories (1839, 1851): Mitcham History Notes — mitchamhistorynotes.com
- Victorian debtors' prison and insolvency law: The Gazette — thegazette.co.uk
- Carshalton parish history and Victorian settlement: British History Online — british-history.ac.uk/vch/surrey/vol4/pp178-188

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