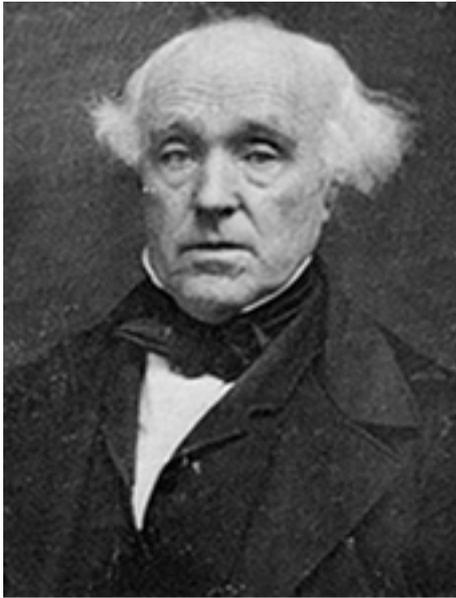


# Foster Fyans – Commandant at Moreton Bay

*Compiled by V.Blomer.*



**Foster Fyans**

Commandants Miller, Bishop, Logan and Clunie have previously been featured. The next to take control of the settlement was Foster Fyans whose term was from November 1835 to July 1837. Although some sources say he was born in England, the Australian Dictionary of Biography tells us that he was baptised as an Irish Anglican at Clontarf in Dublin on 5 September 1790, the son of **John and Margaret Fyans**.

That source also tells us that, at the age of 20 years, he joined the 67th regiment in Portsmouth and fought in the Peninsula Wars. He was involved in the siege of Cadiz and the capture of Cartagena. Later he served in Gibraltar, and, in 1818, he joined the 1st battalion in India and survived a ghastly cholera outbreak. He returned to Britain briefly before going back to India with the 20th regiment when he found he was unable to rise to the rank of officer without having British roots. He fought in the 1825 Burmese War, and, the following year, he was promoted to Captain of the King's Own Regiment (the 4th). He arrived in Sydney in 1833 from Mauritius.

On arrival, he and his regiment were immediately sent to Norfolk Island. **Commandant Major Morisset** was ill, so Fyans took over as the acting Commandant from 1st January to 14th April 1834. At that very time

Morisset had been aware of rumours of a convict up-rising. Fyans soon had suspicions of his own - especially when an anonymous note appeared in the soldiers' barracks warning them to "beware of poison". A mutiny was attempted on 5th January, but the soldiers were prepared. An elaborate plan had been hatched by the mutineers and the details can be found in the depositions which were taken during an ensuing enquiry. There was a short combat before the mutineering convicts were caught and secured.

Although Fyans recalled later that there were '*nearly one thousand ruffians*', the actual number was closer to 200. Five convicts died and about 50 were wounded. No soldiers died. The words of Fyans in his later recollections were that "*it was really game and sport to these soldiers...with the prick of a bayonet through both thighs, or a little above*". Fyans and his men took revenge in the coming months by concocting new punishments. He earned the title of Flogger Fyans and even devised a new cat of nine tails saying that "*prisoners of this description cannot be treated as a Gentleman's Servant in Sydney*". The men refused to be broken and suffered the brutal punishments in silence. Encouraged by Fyans, his soldiers would choose a prisoner at random and thrust a stick into the cord binding the prisoner's arms. The stick was twisted until blood burst from the fingertips. The mutineers were kept naked and were crowded into the gaol yard so that only a third could sit down at a time. Fyans ordered heavier irons to be made and jagged edges, deliberately made, were designed to cut the flesh.

When a Judge arrived from Sydney he could not help but compare the idyllic natural beauty of Norfolk Island to the hell it was for the convicted men sent there. One of the mutineers said to the Judge, "*Let a man's heart be what it will when he comes here, his man's heart is taken from him, and he is given the heart of a beast.*" Fyans presided over the resultant proceedings and thirteen of the convicts were hanged after they were made to dig their own graves. Foster Fyans was commended by Governor Bourke for his handling of the uprising.

In 1835, he returned to his Regiment's Headquarters at Parramatta. He wanted to retire from the Army, so he applied for a suitable position in the Civil Service. No position was available at the time, so he was sent to Moreton Bay as Commandant until a suitable position could be found. This did not eventuate until 1837.

As Commandant at Moreton Bay, it has been recorded that Foster Fyans tried to find a balance between discipline and humanity – despite how he had earlier treated the Norfolk Island mutineers. You have to

remember that those mutineers were notorious convicts with an overriding desire to escape the harsh conditions. The depositions show that the ringleaders had hatched a well devised and elaborate plan to seize the first ship to arrive. Had the plan worked it would have had dire repercussions for the acting Commandant and the soldiers, so a little revenge in the meted out discipline would not have been unexpected. Records indicate that Fyans was more humane but still strict at Moreton Bay.

In 1857 he wrote the following about his time there - *'Five hundred convicts on this establishment were well and usefully employed; there was none of that lurking feeling in the men, and I may add that the settlement appeared to me not unlike a free overgrown establishment ... I was always of opinion that mitigation to the deserving tended to good, and feel not sorry to acknowledge that I was instrumental to mitigating to a great extent seventy convicts, and well pleased often I have been in meeting some of these men doing well in the world as respectable citizens, and only in one solitary instance I failed in my hope'*.

As early as 1832, Governor Bourke had advocated free settlement at Moreton Bay, so, during Fyan's term, thoughts had already turned to the winding down of the penal settlement. The numbers of convicts were decreasing and only short term prisoners were being sent. Escapes were no longer as prevalent as they had been when the earlier Commandants were in charge. Author Dr John Steele has written comprehensively about the settlement under Fyan's guidance and his works should be consulted for more detail.

In March 1836, two Quaker missionaries, **Backhouse** and **Walker** visited the settlement and Fyans found them quaintly amusing. They reported on the conditions in which the convicts and the military lived. They listed all the fruits and vegetables growing in the Government Garden, and they reported on the lack of bibles. They showed concern for the female convicts in the town. Those at Eagle Farm were more secure, but the close proximity of the military men to the women at the town's Female Factory caused them to report that the Commandant had greater difficulty in *"preserving discipline among the military than among the prisoners"*. One commented, *"To our regret we heard an officer swearing at the men, and using other improper and exasperating language."* They said they could find no fault with Fyan's administration, but they criticized the amount of time the prisoners were kept on the treadmill.

In May 1836, the **Stirling Castle** was wrecked north of Gladstone. Fyans sent convict **John Graham** with the rescue party as he had been living with the blacks in the area for some time after he had absconded. Graham was credited with saving **Mrs Eliza Fraser**, and when she was brought down to Moreton Bay, Fyans showed great concern for her ordeal. In his memoirs he told of her appearance, her distressed mental state and her need for medical attention. Admittedly his memoirs were written for publication, but it seems he had an old-fashioned gentlemanly caring nature. Perhaps he has been portrayed unfairly by his actions during his short time on Norfolk Island. At Moreton Bay he seems to have been reluctant to resort to brutality. He did offer the convicts remissions for good behaviour and showed respect towards competent officers.

**Reverend Atkins** visited Moreton Bay for 8 days in January 1837. His report is not entirely accurate as he wrote that the settlement was exclusively occupied by female prisoners and that there were two establishments about six miles apart. He also noted that the Commandant had trouble keeping the soldiers away from the female convicts. He described Captain Fyans as a bachelor, about 45 years of age, who was rather eccentric in his habits, and used the *'tedium of a rather solitary life by the innocent and useful employment of making chairs, tastefully wrought, for his Sydney friends and patrons'*.

In 1837, the 4th Regiment was ordered to go to India. Fortunately for Fyans, the residents of the new town of Geelong in Victoria were in dire need of a magistrate, so his Civil Service position finally eventuated. He arrived there on 20th September. Fyans brought fresh water to the new town by ordering the construction of a break-water across the Barwon River using 20 convict labourers from Sydney.



In 1840, he took charge of the border police between Geelong and Portland Bay. The police force was made up of former soldiers transported for desertion in America and ticket-of-leave men from Van Diemen's Land and, as a result, Fyans had trouble maintaining discipline.

In 1843, at the age of 54, Fyans married **Elizabeth Cane** and in that year was also appointed as the Commissioner for Crown Lands in the Portland area. In 1846, he was appointed as Commissioner for Crown Lands in the Port Phillip District. In 1849, he returned to his position as Geelong's Police Magistrate. In 1853 he retired and wanted to return to Europe. He offered his property for sale but, surprisingly, instead of selling, he took up the position of Deputy Sheriff of Geelong. He finally retired from public life to concentrate on the running of his grazing property on the Barwon River (now a suburb of Geelong called Fyansford). He wrote his recollections which are now held in the State Library of Victoria. They were donated to the library by his New Zealand descendants.

It seems Fyans was always considered to be an eccentric. A female visitor to his home in 1854 commented on his property as a pretty place, but odd people. There were turbaned servants and extravagant balls at the homestead. Fyans hid gems in his home-made furniture. How lucky was the buyer of a desk in the 1940s when he parted with £7 and found hidden diamonds worth £4,000.

In the "History of Geelong and Corio Bay" by Brownhill we learn that Fyans made the furniture for the original Geelong Court House, and that

his home contained many fine exhibits of his skill in fashioning furniture.

**Elizabeth Fyans** died in 1858 at the age of 42 years. **Foster Fyans** died on 23rd May 1870.

## A Treasure in our National Library



The National Library of Australia was gifted this original 1796 playbill by the Canadian government after it was found in the Library and Archives Canada! How extraordinary! What a treasure!

The playbill advertises a theatrical performance titled Jane Shore. It was to be performed at the Theatre in Sydney on Saturday, 30 July. On the reverse side is the signature of **Philip Gidley King**! Of further historic significance is the fact that it was printed in the colony by **George Hughes**.

The printing press used by Hughes was brought out with the First Fleet.

King had been the commandant at Norfolk Island where he surprisingly found that some of the well-educated convicts had theatrical leanings. When he returned to London in October 1796, he must have taken the playbill with him. When it was found in Library and Archives Canada it was with other advertisements for plays being performed in England. King returned to New South Wales and became the colony's third Governor from 1800 to 1806.

I like the quote by Royal Naval Surgeon, Peter Cunningham. He wrote

in his Two Years in New South Wales in 1827:-

*Sometimes they [convicts] act plays with a screen of blankets for the drop-scene, getting together remnants of stolen toggery to deck out their persons with; soot, chalk, red paint, and flake white, being employed to polish off their complexions. A friend of mine (surgeon of a convict-ship), in passing across the stage as the performance was about to commence, happened to inquire the name of it. "Oh, sir, the "Forty Thieves" was the response of the facetious rogue next him. "It is well chosen then," replied my friend, "as you cannot be at a loss for actors."*

[NLA reference for playbill: RBRS N 686.2099441 F 692]

For further information see the NLA web-site.

## The Fate of the Brig Venus seized in 1806

*Compiled by V. Blomer.*

The following report in 1806 by Governor King alerted authorities on land and sea to be on the look-out for a stolen vessel –

*'Whereas the persons undermentioned and described did ... by force of arms, violently take away from His Majesty's settlement at Dalrymple a colonial brig or vessel called the Venus, the property of Mr Robert Campbell, a merchant of this territory, and the said vessel then containing stores, the property of His Majesty, and a quantity of necessary stores, the property of the officers of that settlement, and sundry other property, belonging to private individuals.'*

In the early years of our colonial history, the loss of any vessel, either through ship-wreck or mutiny, had dire consequences. If lives were lost, it was tragic. If urgently needed supplies intended for isolated settlements did not reach their destinations it could also be tragic.

The taking of the brig **Venus** is a captivating tale. It was not until the 1950s – nearly 150 years after the vessel was seized - that information came to light which caused her fate to be reconsidered. There have been various articles written about the Venus and all offer an insight into what may have happened to her and those on board. A Sydney Morning

Herald story about the ship and Australia's "*infamous female pirate*" appeared in 1937, but the article appears not to have been very well researched.

So what is the story of the capture of the Venus? Let us look first at those who took her and sailed her away.

A newspaper report from Sydney on 12th July 1806 tells of the "Piratical Capture of the Colonial Brig Venus" –

*Yesterday, arrived from Port Dalrymple, the schooner 'Governor Hunter', Mr. Rushworth, master with the above melancholy information, having on board Mr Chace, late master of the brig 'Venus' and several of his crew passengers. We append the following descriptions in order that whatsoever port or ports the Venus may be taken into, or met with at sea, it will ensure against any frauds or deceptions that may be put in practice by the pirates; and that they will be taken into custody and delivered to some British authority that they may be brought to condign punishment.*

#### **Description of the Venus**

Venus, Colonial Brig, of 45 tons burthen, built and registered in Calcutta. Owners:- Campbell & Co., Calcutta. The vessel is unarmed, and mounts no guns.

#### **Description of the Pirates**

*Benjamin Barnet Kelly*, first mate; about 5 feet 7 inches high, pock-marked, thin visage, brown hair, auburn whiskers, and says he is an American; he came to this Colony as mate of the 'Albion' south sea whaler, Captain Bunker.

*Richard Edwards*, second mate; about 5 feet 5 inches high, fair hair, a very remarkable scar or cut in one cheek; landed here by the Bridgewater.

*Joseph Redmonds*, seaman; Mulatto, about 5 feet 6 or 7 inches high, stout made, broad nose, thick lips, wears his hair tied in pigtails, and with holes in his ears, being accustomed to wear large earrings; came in the 'Venus' whaler.

*A Malay cook.*

*Thomas Ford and William Evans*, boys; the latter a native of this Colony.

*Richard Thompson*, soldier; 5 feet 8 inches high; about 27 years of age, fair complexion, and light brown hair.

*R. T. (David) Evans*, convict, pilot; about 5 feet 7 or 8 inches high, stout made, brown hair, broad visage; came out as a gunner's mate on board His Majesty's ship 'Calcutta', and having deserted, was afterwards transported here for fourteen years.

*John William Lancashire*, a convict; about 5 feet 4 inches high, sallow complexion, brown hair, a little marked with the small-pox, of an emaciated appearance, and by trade a painter and draughtsman.

*Catharine Hagarty*, a convict; middle size, light hair, fresh complexion, much inclined to smile, and hoarse voice.

*Charlotte Badger*, a convict; very corpulent, with full face, thick lips, and light hair; has an infant child.

Further information about the mutineers gives the cook's name as Darra, 'a Malay, both ears missing'.

**Joseph Redmonds** was described as a mulatto or mestizo of South America, but came out from England on the *Venus* as a seaman.

The two boys on board were **Thomas Ford and William Porter Evan**, aged 14 and 16 years. Evans was from Rose Hill. Thomas Richard Evans, a convict, had been sentenced to fourteen years for desertion and striking an officer.

**John Lancaster or Lancashire**, a convict, was described as being a very dangerous person.

**Kitty Hegarty**, a convict, was said to be a very handsome woman, with white teeth and fresh complexion, much inclined to smile, a great talker.

So these were the pirates who sailed the brig away from Port Dalrymple. How did they gain control of the vessel and where did they sail her to? Was the *Venus* ever recovered?

The Sydney Morning Herald article which appeared on 26th October 1937 used the heading "**Australia's Only Woman Pirate.**" Sub-headings were "**Charlotte Badger's Colourful Career**" and "**Eventful Tasman Voyage**".

Although the article contains mistakes, the focus of the story obviously was to sensationalise Charlotte as an infamous female pirate.

I first read about the fate of the *Venus* in an article written by Anthony Brown. It was published in the Summer 2008 edition of the *Australian Heritage* magazine. As well as disclosing the facts about the seizure of the ship, Brown includes documentation which was uncovered in the 1950s which casts doubt on the original belief that the *Venus* had been abandoned and destroyed in New Zealand. The documents suggest that the *Venus* had crossed the Pacific Ocean via Tonga and arrived in Chile, South America!

So how did the story unfold? Let us go back to Sydney Cove in 1806. The *Venus* was owned by Sydney merchant **Robert Campbell**, and the Captain he employed was **Samuel Rodman Chace**, an American. Campbell was sending supplies to Twofold Bay and to Hobart, but Chace was having trouble finding a suitable crew. The government wanted supplies to be taken down to Hobart – along with several convicts – so they were paced on board the *Venus*, and so, with enough hands on board, the brig sailed out of Sydney's harbour with the schooner, *Governor Hunter*.

There were a lot of vessels coming and going out of Sydney by this time. Apart from the convict ships, there were sealing and whaling vessels and all sorts of trading vessels. The French and the Spanish also had ships in the southern ocean and there was grave concern that those countries may pose a threat to British supremacy. Exploration of our coastline soon resulted in military out-posts being established for both defence and occupancy. After Bass and Flinders had circumnavigated Van Diemen's Land, such outposts had been set up in both the north and the south of the island.

Port Dalrymple had been established under the command of **Lieutenant Colonel William Paterson** in late 1804 with a fleet of four vessels and 181 soldiers, convicts, men, women and children. They established a settlement on the outer cove of the Tamar estuary at George Town before relocating further up the river at York Town. In March 1806, they moved to the more fertile Patersonia (later Launceston). By then, depleted rations had resulted in the need to supplement the diet with fish, emu and kangaroo meat. The soldiers' discontent had made them unruly and undisciplined, and Paterson was in poor health. The settlement eagerly awaited government supplies.

The *Venus* had left Sydney and had safely arrived at Twofold Bay - but

was detained there for five weeks due to bad weather. During that time, trouble brewed on board while the Captain was on shore transacting shipping business. The first mate, **Benjamin Kelly**, was left in charge. Although it seems Kelly had been enamoured with **Kitty Hegarty**, the article in the Sydney Morning Herald in 1937 indicates that it was **Charlotte Badger** with whom Kelly had formed a liaison. The article suggests that Charlotte persuaded Kelly to have rum brought out to the Venus. **Captain Chace** returned later to find a 'party in progress' and had to restore order by placing all in irons. He made the mistake of telling Kelly that he would be discharging him at the first port they landed at, but then had to release Kelly from his irons so that he could help navigate the ship.

According to author Louis Becke in his book "An Old Colonial Mutiny", *"Captain Chace had been ashore, and about dusk was returning in his boat to the ship, when he heard sounds of great hilarity proceeding from those on board. On coming alongside and gaining the deck, he found that the two convict ladies were entertaining Mr Benjamin Burnet Kelly, the mate, with a dancing exhibition, the musical accompaniment to which was given by Darra, the earless Malayan cook, who was seated on a tub on the main-hatch playing a battered violin. Lying around the deck, in various stages of drunkenness, were the male convicts and some of the crew, and the genial Mr Kelly presided over a bucket of rum, pannikins of which were offered to the ladies at frequent intervals by the two faithful cup-bearers, Ford and Evans. Chace at once put an end to the harmony by seizing the bucket of rum and throwing it overboard, and the drunken people about him being incapable of offering much resistance, he put them in irons and tumbled them below. Kelly, who was a big, truculent-looking man, then produced a bowie knife of alarming dimensions and challenged Chace to combat, but was quickly awed by a pistol being placed at his breast by his superior officer. He then promised to return to his duty, provided - here he began to weep, that - the captain did not harm Kitty Hegarty, for whom he professed an ardent attachment."*

Captain Chace was eager to get to Hobart Town to unload his cargo, the convicts, and his first mate Kelly. With despatches for **Lieutenant Colonel Paterson** at Port Dalrymple, the Venus arrived in the Tamar River estuary on 16th June, 1806. The brig was met by the Superintendent of Shipping, **William House**; a military escort, **Corporal Thompson**; and a pilot (a convict named **Evans**) who would guide them to moorings at York Town, ten miles up the river.

Superintendent House was most concerned about the Captain's report

about the trouble at Twofold Bay and felt the matter should immediately be discussed with Lieutenant Colonel Paterson. Corporal Thompson and the pilot were left to guard the vessel and her cargo. Ironically, troublesome Kelly was left in command of the brig!

Paterson immediately sent the Superintendent and the Captain back to the brig. But, instead of returning immediately, they opted to spend the night on board the Governor Hunter which had arrived two days earlier. Next morning, as they rowed back to the brig, they were met with the vision of Venus heading out to the sea! Five of the crew members were soon found, and they informed Chace that Kelly had forced them off the ship and had joined the mutineers. According to **Louis Becke**, they said they had been set upon by the pilot, Thompson, the soldier, Darra, the earless cook and the two women, all of whom were armed with pistols and swords.

The ship and its mutineers had sailed off with 5,674 lb of meal and flour, and 11,184 lb of salt pork, and various public and private stores for the Settlements at Port Dalrymple and Hobart Town. Both House and Chace were held responsible. Chace and his crew were sent back to Port Jackson on the Governor Hunter to give authorities a description of the mutineers. They arrived back in Sydney just as Governor King was being replaced by Governor Bligh. So, one of Governor King's last duties was to circulate the descriptions of the pirates.

It was nine months before any news was heard of the Venus. The captain of a sealing ship reported that Kelly and one of the convicts, Lancashire, were living in huts they had built in the Bay of Islands in New Zealand. Two women and two children from the Venus had gone with them, but one of the women had died. The men were supposedly captured. The Venus was reported to have still been in the area - but there was nobody on board who understood navigation, and a black man named Redmonds was in charge of the vessel.

According to Maori accounts, the ship stayed close to the shore. Three Maori girls were subsequently abducted and were traded as slaves. Later reports indicated that the men remaining on board had been killed by Maoris at Kennedy's Bay, Coromandel Peninsula, and the ship had been burnt. According to Becke, the Venus was probably burnt by the Maoris.

*“Kelly, Kitty Hegarty, Charlotte Badger and her child, Thompson, and two others, lived among the natives for some time. Then the woman Kitty Hegarty died suddenly while Kelly was away on a warlike*

*excursion with his Maori friends, and was hastily buried... Kelly was captured by a king's ship in 1808, and sent to England, where he was hanged for piracy. Lancaster was also captured by the master of an American whale-ship, 'The Brothers' of Nantucket, and taken to Sydney and hanged. The rest of the mutineers either met with violent deaths at the hands of the Maoris, or succeeded in living their lives out as pakeha-Maoris.....in 1826, an American whale-ship, the 'Lafayette' of Salem, reported an incident of her cruise that showed some light on the end of Charlotte Badger... 'Lafayette' was off an unknown island in the South Seas inhabited by a small number of natives....Only some forty or fifty natives of a light brown colour were on the island, and these, meeting the white men as they landed, conducted them to their houses with every demonstration of friendliness. Among the number was a native of Oahu (Hawaii), named Hula, who had formed one of the crew of the London privateer 'Port-au-prince'... He spoke English well, and informed Captain Barthing of the 'Lafayette' that the island formed one of the Tonga Group and that his was the second ship that had ever visited the place. Another ship, he said, had called at the island about ten years before (this would be about 1816); that he had gone off on board, and had seen a very big, stout woman, with a little girl about eight years of age with her. At first he thought, from her dark skin, that she was a native, but the crew of the ship (which was a Nantucket whaler) told him that she was an Englishwoman, who had escaped from captivity with the Maoris.*

The 1937 newspaper account tells us that Charlotte Badger was sentenced to 'transportation for life' and arrived in NSW in 1806. That is incorrect. She was sentenced at Worcester in 1796 and sentenced to 7 years for house breaking. She arrived in 1801 on the Earl Cornwallis and was sent to the Parramatta Female Factory where her daughter was born. She and Hegarty were assigned as house servants to a settler in Van Diemen's Land, and that was why they had been placed on board the Venus.

After the brig was seized, the article alleges that Kelly was navigating, and it was Charlotte 'who was in command, the two women taking their turn at watch on deck with the four men as the undermanned brig tossed across to New Zealand. Both women donned men's clothing and worked with the men, setting sail and steering the brig during this nightmare voyage across the Tasman Sea'.

They supposedly landed at the Bay of Islands, landed their stores, scuttled the brig, and lived with a Maori tribe until eight years later a British ship sailed into the bay and the natives were bribed to hand over

Kelly and his white companion. Charlotte fled, but Kelly and his fellow-mutineer were supposedly taken to England and hanged. The article also included Charlotte's time spent with the Tongans. She was described as being an enormously fat woman with a young child.

Is that really what happened? Were Kelly and Lancashire taken into custody? Had the vessel been destroyed? Had Charlotte been living in Tonga?

Peter Cooper, who has been researching the fate of the Venus, has found no evidence of John William Lancashire ever arriving in Sydney, let alone being hanged. He also believes it was Kelly who arrived in South America on the Venus.

The Sydney Morning Herald story in 1937 offers the following on Charlotte –

*The last news of the Indomitable Badger.*

*It appeared that, in 1818, an American whaler had called at Vavau on her homeward voyage, and on board was a woman who must have been our own pirate lady. Speaking a Polynesian dialect fluently - as well she might after living with Maoris for twelve years - Charlotte had related her experiences in New Zealand to the Tongans. They described her as being an enormously fat woman with a young child....When an American ship had finally called near her settlement Charlotte had either wished to die among her own race, or else had formed a middle-aged attachment with the American whaling skipper. In either case nothing more was heard of Charlotte Badger.*

Now to the 1950s! Professor Eugenio Pereira Salas of the University of Chile, while researching early interactions between Chile and Australia, discovered that on 4th January 1807 the Venus, a 45 ton 'fragata', was detained near Carampangue, southern Chile. In command was Captain Kelly who was subsequently interrogated by Governor Don Luis de Guzman at Concepcion. The Governor was seeking information about two Spanish war ships which had been taken earlier by the British. Kelly stated that the ships were being held by Governor King in Port Jackson, waiting for the owners to claim them. He was obviously not aware that King had been replaced as the Governor.

Kelly's story was that he had entered the Pacific Ocean via Cape Horn as a navigator on board the Pelican. The Venus had been "acquired" in Australia with the intention of returning to San Juan, South America to pick up seal hunters the Pelican had left behind. Six native women on

board were described as female crew, replacements for men lost during a pirate attack. After an eventful voyage the storm battered Venus had reached the island of Juan Fernandez.

The Venus was seized by the Spanish authorities and sold at auction. The members of the crew were held as prisoners in barracks built for them by Governor de Guzman in Concepcion. According to researcher Peter Cooper, Kelly was last seen sailing off to Lima in a merchant convoy. There are still questions left unanswered, but what an interesting tale it is!

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## **Parish Clerks Project**

*Information supplied by Carol Bergen.*

Carol informed us at the Convict Connections meeting that she was having great success finding information through the on-line Parish Clerks Project. She placed the following in the book she, Ron and Barbara have been preparing for publication.

*Taken from:*

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**A Mini Dictionary A-ZA succinct guide to Colonial Anecdotes, Incidents and Interesting Information.**

### **Parish Clerks Project**

The on-line parish clerks project provides a focus for the transcription of historical records at parish level. There is no formal structure, other than a person who coordinates the assignments of parishes to individuals. Each volunteer takes on one or more parishes and decides how they would like to proceed. The only requirement is that they share their knowledge with researchers – at no charge. A very successful project is the Cornwall (UK) online parish clerks, which began in 2000 and is still going strong.

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There are a number of counties in England that are involved in this project. Cornwall; Devon; Dorset; Essex; Lancashire; Somerset; Sussex; Warwickshire and Wiltshire are currently offering this service and more counties are likely to follow. Visit [www.onlineparishclerks.org.uk](http://www.onlineparishclerks.org.uk) to find out more.

The on-line Parish Clerks (OPCs) are not to be confused with the salaried Council-appointed clerks. They are volunteers in the various Parishes and they offer a free look-up service. Family history researchers contact the Clerks through the above web-site or the county web-site. Records such as parish registers, land records, tithe records, and census records can be consulted.

One Place Studies (OPS) also exist in some of the counties. This also relies on volunteers to transcribe records. Both schemes complement each other.

## Major Sydney John Cotton - Commandant at Moreton Bay

*Compiled by V.Blomer.*

Commandants Miller, Bishop, Logan, Clunie and Fyans have previously been featured in this series. The next to take command of the Moreton Bay Penal Settlement was **Major Cotton** whose term was from 1837 to 1839. I was unable to find a likeness of Sydney Cotton.

According to the Australian Dictionary of Biography, Sydney **John Cotton** was born in Woodcote, Oxfordshire in 1792. At the age of 18, in 1810, he went to India with the 22nd Light Dragoons as a cornet. This was the lowest rank of commissioned officer after the ranks of Captain and Lieutenant, but he was duly promoted to Lieutenant in 1812.

He married **Marianne Hackett** in 1822. She was the daughter of one of his former officers. By the time they married, the 22nd Light Dragoons had disbanded and Sydney purchased his promotion as Captain of the 3rd Regiment. It was with this regiment that he went to NSW in 1824 and was sent to Hobart Town.

There he was given the role of acting engineer and architect. He was also in charge of all the stores for the penal settlements in Van Diemen's Land, and had to organize the distribution of convict gangs to the various settlers. When he became aware that his regiment might

have to return to New South Wales, he asked if arrangements could be made for him to stay in Hobart. It seems that the **Lieutenant-Governor, George Arthur**, was quite prepared to accommodate his desire to stay, but Cotton was persuaded to remain with his regiment. On departing Hobart with his wife and children for India on the Medina in October 1825, Cotton was presented with a gold snuff box. Leading colonists publically thanked him for his work as acting engineer.

In Burma, Cotton became a Major of the 41st Regiment in 1828 and then was transferred to the 28th Regiment. For his service in the Indian Mutiny, he received a knighthood. In 1835, his regiment was dispatched to New South Wales. When he had previously been in Hobart, Thomas Brisbane had been the Governor. Now, on his return to the colony, it was Bourke who was the Governor.

In July 1837, the Governor sent the 28th Regiment to the Moreton Bay Penal Settlement, and Major Cotton was to replace Foster Fyans as Commandant.

By this time, it was obvious that the settlement was being wound down and would soon be opened up to free settlers. Andrew Petrie could be considered the first free settler of Brisbane. He had been appointed in 1837 as the Foreman for Works and had arrived just prior to the departure of Foster Fyans.

Also in 1837, German Missionaries were given permission to set up residence at Zion's Hill, now known as Nundah. They arrived in March 1838 and were received kindly by Commandant Cotton. They were given the abandoned huts at the original penal settlement at Humpybong, but the local natives proved to be troublesome and they were instead allotted 640 acres of Government land across the Brook from the Eagle Farm female convict station. The land was to be used for mission purposes.

The Sydney newspaper, The Colonist, published the following account on 9th January 1839:- *The Society ... was formed with the sanction and under the auspices of Her Majesty's Government for the Christianization and civilization of the Aboriginal tribes of this territory to the northward of Moreton Bay. With one exception, the Missionaries were all from a Missionary Institution in Berlin, under the superintendence of a truly eminent and devoted man, the Rev. Johann Gossner, minister of the Bohemian Church in that city. They consist of two regularly educated and ordained ministers, originally of the Lutheran Church, but now of the Presbyterian Church of this colony, both married, six married and*

*four unmarried lay Missionaries (one of whom, Mr. Moritz Schneider, surgeon, unfortunately died of typhus fever at the Quarantine station in this colony), or twenty persons in all.*

.... The Government, it was observed, moreover, had granted a free passage to the missionaries to Moreton Bay, and they had also experienced much and unexpected kindness from Major Cotton, the Commandant, and the other civil and military officers at that settlement. During the period that had elapsed up to the date of the last report from the Mission, the Missionaries had been occupied chiefly in building their houses, and in doing whatever else was requisite at the outset, for effecting their settlement in the wild bush. They had had considerable intercourse with the natives, however, and were inclined to think much more favourably of them, in regard to the great object of their Mission, than they had anticipated.

In February 1838 **Governor Bourke** had been replaced by **Governor Gipps**, and the new Governor suggested that the German missionaries should go further afield to minister to the aborigines. He was concerned that they were too close to the town. There had always been the ruling that white settlers were prohibited from coming within a radius of 50 miles of the settlement. Surveyors were soon to be sent to draw up plans for an envisaged Brisbane Town. Preparations would then be underway to advertise land for sale.

It is interesting though that after fourteen years as a penal settlement, much of the surroundings were unexplored. Apparently, **Commandant Cotton, Andrew Petrie and Dr Alexander** went to Ipswich by boat and decided to return by land in 1838. They became lost and ended up in bushland to the south of the settlement before finding their way after several days to the mouth of the river at what is now Lytton. The hill climbed by Petrie during this time was recorded as Mt Petrie and the mountain they could see nearby was to become Mount Cotton.

In May 1839, Major Sydney Cotton departed Moreton Bay. With him went 57 female convicts and 19 male convicts.

The next Commandant wrote on 1st July 1839 –  
*The whole of the women, fifty-seven in number, have been withdrawn, and the male convicts reduced to ninety-four – a number which will be barely sufficient for the custody and protection of the property of the home Government, particularly of the flocks and herds which cannot be advantageously disposed of, until the country shall be open to settlers.*

In 1842, Cotton once again embarked for India. The following year he

became Lieutenant-colonel of his regiment and engaged in active service. (Meanwhile, in 1842, his brother **Hugh Cotton**, who had also been in service in India, decided to settle with his wife and six children in Van Diemen's Land. He was appointed deputy surveyor general in Hobart, but after some controversy in that capacity, he became an assistant police magistrate and inspector of schools. His Tasmanian experience was not what he hoped for and he returned to India.)

Sydney Cotton published a book called *Remarks on Drill*, with Rough Sketches of Field Days in 1857 while he was in Calcutta. He was considered to be one of the best officers in India and was bestowed with the high British military award - a Knight Commander of the Bath, abbreviated as K.C.B.

The London Gazette on 10 August 1858 reported the following extract from **Major-General Sir Sydney Cotton, K.C.B.** from the Commanding Division, Head Quarters, Camp Yar Hossain:-

*The services of the force under the command of Major-General Sir Sydney Cotton, K.C.B., being no longer required in the district, the troops will return to their quarters under orders which will be communicated to corps respectively. In bidding adieu' to the officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers, European and Native of this highly disciplined column, the Major-General offers to all his unqualified thanks for the ready and cheerful obedience to his wishes in the discharge of duties frequently under difficult and trying circumstances of fatigue and exposure.*

*To the orderly and steady conduct of the soldiers, mainly, must be attributed their efficiency for work and healthiness in a very considerable heat of climate: the absence of crime in this force has been most remarkable; and, when an enemy had to be encountered, the troops displayed their wonted gallantry.*

*The force now returns to its quarters under the assurance of Lieutenant-Colonel Edwardes, C.B., Commissioner, (to whom the Major-General offers his best thanks for his very valuable co-operation at all times,) that the objects of Government in assembling it, have been most fully and satisfactorily accomplished.*



BROMPTON CEMETERY

*Taking ample guarantee for the future from the border tribes, the Eusuffzaidistrict has now been placed in an unprecedented state of security, and it is gratifying to think that whilst this all-important object has been gained by the chastisement of the real enemies of the British Government, the well-disposed and inoffensive have, by a wise discrimination on the part of the civil authorities, been permitted to remain in the undisturbed enjoyment.*

On his return to England, Cotton was appointed Lieutenant-General in 1866. He was appointed as the governor of the Chelsea Hospital, and made a G.C.B in 1872. This was a more honourable Military Order of the Bath - a Knight Grand Cross. The elaborate ceremony of creating a Knight in a rather mediaeval ceremony dating back to 1725 and involving bathing as symbol of purification.

In 1868, he published another book about his nine years on the North-West Frontier of India from 1854 to 1863.

On 20th February 1874, Sydney **John Cotton** died in London. He was buried at the Brompton Cemetery.

## Colonial Sentencing

Newspaper accounts of cases tried in the Courts are always interesting. Now with Trove it is so easy to access them. They make interesting reading and can be helpful when using a process of elimination when you have ancestors with a common name. They are also a good insight into the types of crimes which were being committed in the area where your ancestor lived. Following is an example taken from the Sydney Gazette, Thursday 30th June 1825. [This is the same newspaper from which the above article was taken, so it is a random sample.] These were cases tried before the Sydney Supreme Court on Friday, 24th June.

**Thomas Byrne, John Wright, and James Murphy** were indicted under the statute of the 9th Geo. I. commonly called the *Black Act*, for maliciously shooting at Mr. **William Ikin**, Chief Constable of Liverpool, on the night of the 28th of March last. The prisoners Byrne and Wright, pleaded Guilty; Murphy, Not Guilty.

Mr. **Wm. Ikin** examined; is Chief Constable of Liverpool; witness, together with **James Atwood** and **Henry Bridges**, constables, was in search of some robbers in the neighbourhood of Liverpool, on the night of the 28th of March last; about 11 o'clock they fell in with the prisoners who were all armed; witness called out to them to stand and was immediately fired at by the prisoner Byrne; two of the shots went through the neckcloth of witness, and some through his hat; the prisoner Murphy also discharged a pistol; witness and the other constables fired in amongst the prisoners who immediately fled; on the following morning, a search having been made, Wright was found desperately wounded in the bush, near to the spot where the reconnoiter had taken place; and, a few days after, Murphy surrendered himself in the fear of dying of the wounds he had received, two balls having lodged in his arm; when in hospital he confessed having been one of the party, and apprehending a mortification in his arm, he had been induced to surrender in order to obtain assistance; he frequently begged of witness not to prosecute him, as it was his first offence. **James Atwood** and **Henry Bridges**, constables, corroborated the evidence of the last witness.

The prisoner Murphy denied having ever made any confession, and alleged that he received the wound in his arm by a shot from a bushranger as he was proceeding homeward on the night in question. The Chief Justice summed up the evidence and the Jury returned a verdict of Guilty - Remanded.

**Thomas Harding and Patrick McAlister** were indicted for having stolen, on the 10th day of November last, at Airds, two bullocks, the property of **Dr. Redfern**. The prisoners put in a plea of Former Acquittal, and also a general plea of Not Guilty. After hearing the evidence of **James Murphy**, an accomplice, admitted as an approver by the Crown, it appeared to the Court and Jury, that the subject of the present prosecution was precisely the same as that for which the prisoners were tried and acquitted on the 25th of May last, merely varying the date of the alleged robbery. His Honor the Chief Justice stated, that if the Jury were of opinion that they were the same animals as those laid in the former indictment, the prisoners were entitled to their acquittal under their plea. The Jury being of opinion that they were the same animals,

the prisoners were discharged.

**Edward Hughes** was indicted for stealing a filly, the property of D'Arcy Wentworth Esq. and others, executors to the late **Mr. Broughton**. - Guilty of the fact of taking the filly to defeat the ends of justice; not with a view of converting it to his own use. - Remanded.

**Charles Bogg** was indicted for having stolen, on the 25th day of August last, 30 pigs, the property of **John Kennedy** of Appin. Not Guilty.

**John McCarthy, William Knight, and Matthew Wild** were indicted for an assault on John Roberts, in No. 2 Watch-house, on the 29th of February last. Knight and Wild had been out on bail. The Jury returned a verdict of Guilty against Wild and McCarthy, but recommended the latter to mercy on account of his long confinement. - Wild to be imprisoned for 3 months; McCarthy discharged.

**William Booth** was indicted for stealing a bag of wheat, the property of **George Colles**, from the Market place, on the 19th of May last. Guilty – 7 years transportation.

The following prisoners received sentence:-

**William Wright** for stealing several head of cattle from the pasture of James Dunn, on the Liverpool- road.- 7 years transportation.

**John Fell, William Anson, John Woodgate, and Edward Townsend**, for stealing in the dwelling-house of **Robert Cutler**, and putting him and his family in bodily fear. - Judgment of Death recorded.

**Andrew Kenyon and John Green**, stealing in the house of **James Townsend** and putting him in bodily fear. - Judgment of Death recorded.

**Thomas Byrne, John Wright, and James Murphy**, shooting at Mr. **William Ikin**. - Death.

## **The Hulk Phoenix**

For some time, Lyn and I have been searching in second-hand book stores for a copy of the book by Beverley Earnshaw called “The Larrikins of Lavender Bay”. Having indexed four microfilms on the hulk Phoenix it is a topic we are most interested in.

Finally! We have a copy of the book which was published in 1996 by the North Shore Historical Society.

Although we have come to know quite a bit about the hulk through the indexing project, it was good to read Beverley's research and add to our knowledge. We have found, as we set up our 'help desk' at the various fairs we have attended, that so few know about the hulk used to house prisoners when the old Sydney Gaol was overcrowded and in need of repair. Governor Brisbane took the opportunity to use the Phoenix as a temporary measure until the Darlinghurst Gaol was completed.

The ship had become damaged in August 1824 as she was entering the Harbour and ran aground on the rocks known as the Sow and Pigs Reef. The following day she was re-floated and towed closer to shore at what is now Darling Harbour. It was obvious that the damage was irreparable and the sails, anchors, ironwork and anything of value was removed and sold at auction. The Governor purchased the hull for £1,000 and it was first used as a prison hulk on 20th August 1825. At that time, it was still moored in Sydney Cove. In mid-1826 it was moved close to Goat Island where the inmates could work on constructing a naval arsenal on the island, and where it was still in full view from Sydney. As more prisoners were to be placed on board, extra accommodation had to be fitted out. The numbers of prisoners may have increased, but the number of guards did not.

The first Superintendent of the hulk was **John Sleight** but he proved to be neither a good disciplinarian nor a good administrator. In early 1827, Sleight was replaced by **David Murray** who remained until promoted in 1831 to Principal Gaoler. Thomas Makeig then became Superintendent until the hulk was decommissioned on 31st December 1837.

The book has a lot of detail about conditions on the hulk during its years of service and will be of great interest to those who had ancestors who spent time on the Phoenix during the eleven years it was in use.

**A GSQ Resource - Bakers Atlas [NSW/915/001]**



**Robert Dixon** (mentioned in the article about Commandant Gorman) was out of favour with Governor Gipps because he published a map of Moreton Bay when he had not received Vice-Regal permission to do so. If you are looking for early maps of New South Wales as it was in the 1840s – including one of the Moreton Bay area - then familiarise yourself with the atlas copied onto microfilm held at GSQ. At our last meeting we looked not only at this film, but also learned more about Mr Baker who published Baker's Australian County Atlas.

The 21 maps show parishes, townships, grants, purchases and what are described as 'unlocated lands'. It seems Baker had the Atlas ready to publish in 1844, but was waiting to obtain permission to use the map of the northern county which included the Districts of Darling Downs, New England, Clarence, Moreton Bay and Liverpool Plains. This map was "*compiled expressly for Baker's Australian Atlas from the map purchased by the Government from Mr William Gardner, Armidale, New England.*" It was lithographed by William Baker in July 1846. He dedicated the Atlas 'by permission to **Sir T. L. Mitchell**, Knight, Surveyor General of New South Wales' – and stated it was compiled expressly for the printer and publisher of the Australian Atlas, W. Baker, Hibernian Printing Office, King Street East, Sydney.

The Mitchell Library has an original copy with the maps in colour, but the microfilm contains black and white images. The maps are also available on the NLA (National Library of Australia) web-site, but the clarity in black and white on the microfilm is very good.

Are the maps accurate? There were still unexplored areas in 1843-1846, so the maps must be viewed in that context. Have a good look at the Logan River!!! Whether they are totally accurate or not, you may find places that are relevant to where your ancestors lived. The names of some localities may no longer be in use. Included names of land holders may identify where your ancestor lived or worked. It is also interesting to look at the main roads or routes that were in use.

Appreciate the content! Take note of the little extras on each of the

maps – the names of settlers, the commons, the reserves, the illustrations, etc. Look at the list of subscribers to the Atlas and the areas they lived in. Note that the introductory map of Australia does not include Van Diemen's Land or Norfolk Island. I assume this is the same Australian map that was included in the 1844 Baker's City of Sydney Almanack of Australia – 'a map showing the route to Port Essington'.

**Who was William Kellett Baker?** The most comprehensive information I could find on William Kellett Baker was written by Richard Neville and can be found on the Design & Art Australia Online web-site. Finding out about Baker also introduced me to another interesting colonial identity – **Mr E D Barlow** – and also to engraver **William Nicholas** – names I had not previously heard of. None were convicts, but learning a little about them gives us an insight into another aspect of colonial life in New South Wales.

William Kellett Baker was born in Dublin in 1806 and trained as an engraver. He arrived in Sydney as an assisted immigrant in 1835. Soon after his arrival he announced he was setting up business as an engraver offering both lithographic and copperplate printing. Those of some standing in the community were keen to commission portraits as proof of their success. Baker was keen to tap into this market, but he soon found that business was rather slow. There were other engravers offering the same service, so he accepted the position of clerk to the deputy inspector general of hospitals. When he broke his leg in 1845, and was incapacitated for a year, he resigned from that position. He did however remain as clerk to the medical board. So while officially still working for the hospital, Baker continued to publish on a part-time basis. In October 1840, he purchased lithographic equipment from **Edward David Barlow**, also known as **Billy Barlow**.

**Lithographic and Copperplate Printing** - The word 'lithograph' is derived from lithos (Greek for stone) and graphein (to write). It refers then to an image on stone. A slab of smooth, porous limestone was used as a printing plate. It was an inexpensive way of reproducing art, working on the principle of water and oil repulsion. The image was drawn on the stone plate with oil or fat or wax. The plate was then treated with a solution of etching acid (nitric acid) and gum arabic, and then with water. Ink adhered to the areas free of the oil/fat/wax, and was then transferred to a sheet of paper. Copperplate printing uses a metal plate, usually copper or zinc, on which an image is etched. The ink ends up in the grooves of the etched image and the excess is wiped off. Paper is placed on the plate and a heavy press compresses the paper onto the plate to print the image.

In October 1840, William Baker purchased lithographic equipment from Edward David Barlow who arrived from London in 1836 and set up business as an ornamental decorator in George Street. Just months after his arrival The Sydney Times claimed that Barlow was unrivalled in the colony as an ornamental painter. His expertise included ornamental decorating, graining, gilding, cleaning and varnishing pictures, marbling, and wood-graining. Over the next few years he became well known as a lithographer, a printer, an architect, a surveyor and an entrepreneur. For a time he was also the proprietor of a Theatre of Arts.

Despite his extraordinary ability, he found, like Baker, that there was not a great deal of work for an ornamental painter, so Barlow announced early in 1837 that he was establishing himself as an architect and surveyor as he had completed his apprenticeship in both in Brighton, England. This work however was brief as by June he had moved to Bridge Street and was offering to do black silhouette profile portraits. A full-length portrait would cost 15 shillings, a plain half-length was 5 shillings, and a half-length tinted white was 6 shillings and 6 pence.

Already in Sydney at the time was the 'Original Zincographic Printing Establishment' operated by a **J G Austin** who used a process of drawing on zinc and using a special zincographic printing press. Zinc plates were less expensive than limestone and large sheets were better for map making. Barlow purchased the business from Austin and now offered not only profile portraits, but also architectural drawings and plans of estates. He had found his niche and was soon advertising for lithographers and draughtsmen to assist him.

In November 1838 Barlow published a number of engravings on zinc done by another talented engraver, **William Nicholas**. These included portraits of Queen Victoria, Governor Richard Bourke, the actress Mrs Taylor as Don Giovanni when she performed in 1835, and one titled 'a black of New South Wales'. Barlow became the exclusive publisher and seller of William Nicholas's excellent profiles of Australian Aborigines. So, in a space of four years, Barlow had become quite established. On the home front however, he had marital problems. Barlow decided to return to London leaving his wife and children provided for. It seems it was to be a permanent move. So, in October 1840, in preparation for his departure, he sold his lithographic printing equipment to William Baker. Included were some of the profiles by William Nicholas, a highly regarded artist and portrait painter who had arrived in 1836 and was commissioned by such families as the Kings, the Macarthurs and the Wentworths.

The Australian on 9 March 1841 reported on the workmanship of a presentation plate William Baker engraved for the attorney general, **John Plunkett**, at the end of his term. Baker was described as *'well known to be a first rate engraver and therefore we need hardly say the inscriptions &c. are admirably executed and does the artist great credit'*. The Sydney Gazette on 20 March 1841 stated - *We have had frequent occasion to comment on the beautiful manner in which Mr. Baker, of King-street, executes lithographic sketches; the last we have seen is a splendid lithograph of the Rev. Mr. Steele's Church at Cook's River, which certainly reflects no little share of credit on the artist, as well as the drawer; the resemblance to the reality is striking at the first glance.* Despite being a first rate engraver himself, William Baker also sold lithographic prints of works done by well-known colonial artists such as **William Henry Fernyhough** – and it seems he did not always publish authorised copies! In 1844, William Barlow returned from London to sort out his matrimonial issues. He attended the Mayor of Sydney's Fancy Dress Ball, and promoted it with a sketch drawn by William Nicholas. Barlow had sole rights to the sketch but did not give any recognition to the artist. The sketch showed prominent citizens, and the idea was that each would want a copy of the sketch itself or a portrait from it. When William Baker began making unauthorised copies of the Fancy Dress Ball, litigation followed.

William Baker also engraved scenes for advertisements. An example is his depiction of the Australian Brewery in Low's Directory for 1844. He published a number of annual almanacs. Baker's City of Sydney Almanack for 1844 was advertised as having *a view of the city from the North Shore – map of Australia shewing the route to Port Essington – Tide Table – Rising and setting of the sun, calculated currently from meantime – new and improved Gardener's Calendar – Eclipses – Members of Councils – meetings of Lodges – Hours of attendance and charges at Bonded Warehouses – Code of Signals – Law Courts – and various other useful and necessary intelligence.*

Another work by Baker was the Australian Medical Journal published in 1846. That was followed by an illustrated journal titled Heads of the People (1847-48) with sketches by William Nicholas. Baker also published music sheets.

Baker's Hibernian printing office was at 101 King Street East, Sydney. From these premises he also imported and sold books, operated a stationery warehouse, and established a reading room and library offering access to his collection of local and international periodicals for the annual sum of 10 shillings after an entrance fee of 5 shillings.

In 1851 he moved to Victoria but maintained links with Sydney and retained ownership of his printing office there. He was no doubt following the gold rush. He is remembered from this time as being of a *'good nature, lively and most genial'*. His unusual nick-name was "Go ahead" as a result of his preaching the Gospel of Go-a-headism in Sydney. It seems the nickname appeared at the White Hills gold-fields near Bendigo in October 1853 when it was reported that *'There is a lending library close to the camp with this emblazonment in great letters all along its side – "Baker's gold-diggers' Go-a-head Library and Registration Office for New Chums"*.

Baker was still listed as the proprietor of the Hibernian Printing Office in Sydney when his body was discovered near Mount Vincent near Maitland in January 1857. The cause of death was apoplexy (a stroke). He was 49 years old. The eldest of his seven surviving children was a lad of 19 years. He attended the funeral in East Maitland and Baker was buried in St Peter's Old Burial Ground at East Maitland. In January 1859 an appeal was launched by the newspaper Bell's Life in Sydney to provide funds for his widow, Jane, and her young children. The comment made was that during his 25 years in Australia Baker had been *'a very persevering and industrious man; and a slight tinge of eccentricity, with a love for taking part in the formation of numerous friendly societies, have made him widely known and respected'*.

*The Sydney Morning Herald* (19 January 1857) - SUDDEN DEATH OF A PERSON BELIEVED TO BE MR. WILLIAM BAKER, OF SYDNEY. *Last evening much concern was expressed in Maitland, particularly among his brother Freemasons, at tidings of the sudden death of a person at Mount Vincent, about sixteen miles from East Maitland, believed to be Mr. William Baker, of the Hibernian Printing Office, Sydney. Mr. Baker had been in Maitland the last few days, and on Thursday Mr. Garvin, the chief constable, met him near East Maitland, enquiring the road to the Sugarloaf (Mount Vincent), so that little doubt is entertained of its being Mr. Baker who was found dead as described in Mr. Child's (J.P.) letter. We may add that the Masons in Maitland were last evening engaged in making arrangements to bury him with all due respect, tomorrow (Sunday) afternoon; and they will no doubt communicate with his family in Sydney on the melancholy occurrence. Mr. Child's letter, addressed to Mr. Garvin, is as follows: - "Christ Church, Mount Vincent, Friday, January 16th. Mr. Henry Garvin, Chief Constable, Maitland. Sir,- This morning, about eleven o'clock, a man was found lying dead on the public road, near the church. He appears to have had a fit and fallen off his horse, as the horse was found by his side, saddled and bridled. There has been found on him a quantity of*

*sheet almanacks, a white shirt, £1 19s. 9d. in money, a pair of saddle-bags, and a few other trifles. I have taken a magisterial inquiry on him, and sent for Dr. Wilton, to certify as to death. I do not know the name of the man, but the enclosed paper (the address of Mr. Jacobs stationer, of East Maitland), was in his pocket, and I send also an almanack. Will you provide a coffin, six feet, for him, and make enquiry about him, and forward the coffin here at the Government expense, so that he may be buried tomorrow afternoon. He has already turned quite black, and cannot longer be kept unburied. He appears to be known, and was seen in Maitland on Wednesday, selling almanacks. The picture of the publisher is like him. Perhaps his name is William Baker. Your attention to this directly. I am, &c, W. K. CHILD, Mount Vincent."*

## **1819 Preparations for the departure of the Convict Ship 'Dromedary'**

Unfortunately there are not many shipping logs that have survived in comparison to the number of convict transports which came to our shores. If you are lucky enough to find a log relating to the voyage your ancestor made then you will get a good idea of what conditions were like. If you are incredibly lucky, you may find a transcription of the log you are interested in already published or on a web-site. At GSQ you can consult the handbook to the resources held at State Records NSW to see which shipping logs have been microfilmed.

A wonderful example of a ship's log is that of His Majesty's Store Ship *Dromedary* which left England on 11 September 1819 and arrived in Van Diemen's Land on 10 January 1820. Of particular interest are the details of the preparations made before the ship sailed, as recorded by the ship's Master, **Mr Richard Skinner** of the Royal Navy.

The ship was at Deptford on the south bank of the River Thames when the first lot of provisions were taken on board on 19 June 1819. These included 330 lbs of bread; 22 gallons of rum; 160 lbs of fresh beef; 120 lbs of cheese; 112 lbs of flour; 25 lbs of suet; 112 lbs of raisins; and 203 lbs of sugar.

It was not until 25 June that there was enough high water to get the ship out of dock, and the following day the ship pulled up alongside the hulk **Dedaigneuse** to continue preparations for the voyage. There they took on board 223 pigs of ballast (pig iron, not the animal variety!) and were still moored alongside the hulk a month later. The *Dedaigneuse* was not

a hulk on which convicts were kept. It was a French frigate which was captured off Portugal in 1801 and it appears to have been used to store ballast for ships. While still alongside the *Dedaigneuse*, new masts, new rigging and new sails were fitted and more provisions were loaded. A sailmaker came on board to install hammocks for more than 500 passengers.

The journey finally began on 5 August after receiving 448 lbs of bread, 31 gallons of rum, 44 pieces of beef; 64 pieces of salted pork and 206 lbs of fresh beef. The ship moored at North Fleet Hope in Kent and the first passengers were taken on board – the Second master, **W Morley**, and members of His Majesty's 69th Regiment of Foot (1 captain, 1 ensign, 32 soldiers, 3 women and 1 child). On 13 August, still at North Fleet Hope, more provisions were taken on board – 22,828 lbs of bread in 204 bags; 5,355 lbs tobacco in 10 puncheons, 11 hogsheads, and 2 small casks with 88 iron hoops.

For the convicts the following list was recorded: bread – 19,040 lbs in 170 bags; mustard - 370 lbs in 6 mustard casks; soap – 1,110 lbs in 1 chest and 2 boxes; mess beef and vegetables - 164 lbs 8 oz in 26 canisters; mess beef - 36 lbs in 9 canisters; mutton and vegetables - 338 lbs 7 oz in 72 canisters; soup and bouilli [bouillon] - 344 lbs 5 oz in 71 canisters in 4 cases; 1 bar, 6 iron hoops - the total 883 lbs in 178 canisters; concentrated gravy soup - 36 quarts in 36 bottles, 1 case - vegetable soup, 40 quarts, 40 bottles in 3 cases.

That afternoon more provisions were taken on board - oatmeal, 4200 lbs in 7 hogsheads and 1 half hogshead; 64 iron hoops; lemon juice - 4248 lbs, 59 cases and 1062 bottles; tea - 74 lbs in one tea chest; red wine - 222 bottles in 5 hampers; pearl barley - 52 lbs in 1 small cask; iron hoops 2; scotch barley - 74 lbs, 2 bushels, 1 small cask; 10 iron hoops; sago - 44 lbs; allspice - 15 lbs; chocolate - 22 lbs; pepper - 77 lbs; ginger - 2 lbs. In bag, sugar as oatmeal - 370 lbs in one barrel; 8 iron hoops; rice as cheese - 52 lbs in 1 small cask; 2 iron hoops.

Finally, on 19 August, the Pilot came on board and the sails were furled. On 22 August the ship cleared the Thames and anchored off Sheerness to receive the first lot of convicts – 100 from *HMS Bellerophon* and 99 from *HMS Retribution*. The following day they sailed for Spithead and on 25 August took on board another 100 convicts from the hulk *Leviathan* and 70 from the *Laurel*. A detachment of the 84th Regiment had also joined the ship.

Once the convicts were on board (all were males), they were given a

daily routine. Musters were held in the mornings as they went on deck, and at sunset when they were sent below. Provisions were issued weekly, and once a week, they had to wash their clothes and air their bedding on deck. However, they were still not on their way! On the 28th the crew and prisoners were still being received and in some cases, discharged. On the 30th the Master recorded that one of the soldiers was administered 24 lashes for drunkenness and insubordinate behaviour and another received 12 lashes for his behaviour. On 11 September the Blue Peter was hoisted as the ship finally sailed out of Spithead.

Each day, a note was made of what provisions had been used. The voyage took 121 days to reach Hobart where 347 convicts were landed. The journey was direct as the ship did not call into any harbour on the way. From Hobart they sailed on to Sydney where another 22 convicts were taken ashore. No deaths were recorded.

The arrival of the *Dromedary* was recorded in the *Hobart Town Gazette* and also in Robert Knopwood's Diaries. [**Robert Knopwood** was a chaplain. In 1803 he went to Port Phillip where he conducted his first religious service in the colony. When that settlement was abandoned he went to Hobart, and as well as preaching, he kept a daily diary until his death in 1838.]

Knopwood recorded in his diary that a signal was made for a ship on Monday, 10 January 1821. Arrived HM store ship **Dromedary**, **Capt Skinner**, a master His Majesty's Navy, surgeon **Dr Fairfoul, RN**. The guard consisted of a detachment of the 84 Regt, commanded by **Capt R R Cruise** and 69th **Ensign McCrary**, passengers **Lieut McCarthur, RN**, and **Mr Ward**, with 369 prisoners which landed here. She did not lose a single prisoner during the passage, neither did she put into any harbour. After being at Port Jackson she is going to New Zealand for wood.

The following day, Cruise and McCrary called on the chaplain where they took refreshment and fruit which was very acceptable after a long voyage. Knopwood then sent fruit to the ship for Mrs Skinner, etc. On Wednesday he boarded the ship and noted that four children were born on the voyage. Some of the convicts stayed on board until 21 February, the day before the ship departed.

More on the diary of **Robert Knopwood** –  
<http://search.archives.tas.gov.au>

The site states:- "Please note that the original manuscript of Knopwood's diary is located in part in the Mitchell Library of the State

Library of New South Wales and in the Royal Society of Tasmania, housed at the University of Tasmania Library. Some missing entries were published in the 'Historical Records of Port Phillip: the First Annals of the Colony of Victoria', edited by John J. Shillinglaw in 1879. (see Appendix to *The Diaries of the Reverend Robert Knopwood - 1803 - 1838 First Chaplain of Van Diemen's Land* edited by Mary Nicholls (Tasmanian Historical Research Association 1977)”

**<http://eprints.utas.edu.au/>**

*Diary of Robert Knopwood, Van Diemen's Land, 1805-1808.* University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Australia. (Unpublished)

Note: Two books using the diary have also been published – one on Port Phillip and the other on Hobart Town 1803-4.