



# THE ANCESTRAL SEARCHER



Family History ACT

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## FAMILY HISTORY ACT

**Family History ACT is a business name of  
The Heraldry and Genealogy Society of Canberra Inc. founded in 1964**

Member of the Australasian Federation of Family History Organisations;

NSW & ACT Association of Family History Societies;

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**Front Cover:** Train crossing the Hawkesbury Bridge, used with permission of Fairfax Syndication

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# THE ANCESTRAL SEARCHER

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## *From the President* *Michele Rainger*

Hello to all our readers, and welcome to this final edition of The Ancestral Searcher for 2024. And what a year it has been as we have celebrated the 60th anniversary of our Society with numerous activities and events.

The 14 genealogy and heraldry enthusiasts who met at the Australian National University on 20 October 1964 to form the Canberra Genealogy and Heraldry Group could only have imagined how family history and our society would have developed and changed over the years. But I think that they should be well pleased with the way that the society that we now call Family History ACT, has grown and embraced new ways of thinking and new technologies, in conducting research and sharing our family stories with others. So much so, that the Council has recently endorsed the formation of a new Special Interest Group for the society - AI (Artificial Intelligence) in Genealogy.

It was great to see many members and representatives of other historical and heritage organisations from across the Canberra Region at our Birthday Weekend Celebrations in October when we launched our 60th anniversary commemorative book *Honour Your Ancestors: Sixty Years of Family History in the ACT* and caught up at our birthday luncheon. Many in attendance commented on how special it was to get together in person - not something that we tend to do so much these days. It certainly reminds us that our society exists to support our members and that we can do this in many different ways.

At our Annual General Meeting on 5 November 2024 we elected two new Honorary Life Members—Clare McGuinness and Gina Tooke. Clare and Gina have both made significant contributions to our society over a number of years and it was a great pleasure to present them with their awards. We also recognised and thanked Barbara Moore, who after more than 29 years as Convenor of our Irish Special Interest Group, has decided to step down. Congratulations to Clare, Gina and Barbara, and thanks for all that you have done for Family History ACT over many years.

We also elected our new Council for the coming year. I welcome back all the Councillors who renominated for another year, and I especially welcome our new Councillors Janette Lindesay and Marie Wensing. A list of your Council members follows. We are looking forward to a busy year as we look to the future and develop our Society's new Strategic Plan to commence in July 2025.

Michele Rainger	President
Sue Pillans	Vice-President
Margaret Nichols	Secretary
Cheryl Bollard	Treasurer
Marie Wensing	Councillor
Floss Aitchison	Councillor
David Wintrip	Councillor
Janette Lindesay	Councillor
Mel McNamara	Councillor
Howard Viccars	Councillor



*Our Council for 2025 l-to-r: Janette Lindesay, Michele Rainger, Howard Viccars, Cheryl Bollard, Floss Aitchison, Marie Wensing, Mel McNamara, Sue Pillans and Margaret Nichols.*



## *From the Editor's Desk*

*Clare McGuinness*

What an array of differing stories are presented in this edition.

First-person, third-person, a talking picture, a talking DNA segment, a talking house, Chinese refugees, gold miners and their wives, a father's death, a quest to experience a father's home, and war-time experience.

If you are a writer, we hope these stories from the competition, like every year, will stimulate you to draw inspiration for the tales to be told about your own family. If you are not writing about your family - why not!

I have decided to leave the surnames in these stories un-capitalised because that is how they were written and judged. In these days of digital reading, where we can search for a name more easily, there is less reason to highlight a surname in the traditional way. I wonder how our readers will respond to the absence of capitalisation? We will always have the surname register on the back, so perhaps it is something to do away with? I welcome your responses.

The March edition of *The Ancestral Searcher* will have the theme of **Biography**. I'd like to receive articles and stories about a single person. Someone you knew, or researched, but the focus is the individual. I hope there will be a wide variety of people, methods and messages.

For the June edition, I'd like to receive articles and stories with a broader **Family Focus**. Chain migration, family fortunes, new ways of understanding your family, occupational /sporting/military dynasties and charting. Or anything else!

Did you enjoy the DNA stories? Would you like a further edition next year, say in September? For while I like the concept of a themed edition, perhaps many of you do not. As editor I receive your articles in dribs and drabs. The theme was a way to encourage you to see that 'your article' would fit best in this edition, so perhaps a prod to better get writing. Our writing SIG is a resource for anyone not sure how to progress their writing, and is definitely not all creative non-fiction. I encourage you to use our journal for advertising reunions, forming groups and projects as well as being just a great read.

Let's hear from you.

## *Celebrating Excellence in Writing* *- 2024 E.M. Fletcher Award*

The winners of the 2024 E.M. Fletcher Writing Competition were announced at an Awards Ceremony on Saturday 12 October 2024. Thirty five guests gathered in person and a further 60 attended on Zoom for what has become an important annual event in the calendar of Family History ACT (FHACTION). This year's announcements included the 2024 short-list, the winner and runner up of the E.M. Fletcher Award, and the inaugural Rosemary McKenzie Prize formerly known as the FHACTION Member Prize.

Now in its sixth year, the E.M. Fletcher Writing Competition, sponsored by FHACTION and the Family History Program at the University of Tasmania (UTAS), is anticipated by the family history community and writers' forums more broadly as an annual initiative that promotes and fosters the preservation of family history research through storytelling. The 90 stories from across the country that were entered into the 2024 competition spanned a compelling breadth of subject and genre that is now a familiar hallmark of the competition.

Michele Rainger, President of FHACTION and MC for the ceremony, opened with a welcome to special guests John Fletcher, son of Eunice Fletcher after whom the competition is named, and Angela Little, daughter of the late Rosemary McKenzie, former FHACTION President and a driving force behind the competition from its inception in 2019 until her passing in 2023.

Michele also welcomed the three judges of the 2024 competition, Beverley Richardson and Therese Lynch who attended in person, and Dr Adam Ouston who attended via Zoom from Tasmania. As a member of staff in the University of Tasmania's Family History Program, Adam also represented UTAS – the sponsor of the competition's 2nd prize.

In a popular segment of the Awards Ceremony, each of the three judges provided reflections from their own distinctive perspective on the judging process.

Beverley Richardson's background as a high school teacher of English, and as someone who has spent her career nurturing young writers, focussed on the elements of good writing and what distinguishes those stories that showcase their authors' "command of the tools of writing". Beverley encouraged entrants to the competition to: "Enrich (your) story with your creative use of language and with the imaginative decisions you make on form, structure, setting and character, .. (and) get some feedback from a capable friend or join a writing

group”.

Therese Lynch reflected from the perspective of her former career as a senior Public Servant, and now active involvement in the field of genealogy with a boutique business supporting family historians with their research. In reading this year’s entries Therese looked for well written stories that were “informative and entertaining... logically organised and following good grammatical conventions”. Equally important for Therese was creativity and a story’s capacity to evoke the kind of emotional response that had her reaching for the tissue box and wanting to know more about what happened in the lives of a story’s characters and their descendants.

Dr Adam Ouston spoke from the perspective of both a published writer and a teacher of Creative Writing in the Family History Program at UTAS. In speaking of the challenges faced by the aspiring writer of family history, and by his students at UTAS, Adam commented on the excellent work being done, as attested by the quality of the entries in this year’s competition, and the fact that the Family History Program at UTAS is “delighted to sponsor the E.M. Fletcher Award and help nurture excellent research and writing in the field”.

In setting out what skills family historians need to draw on to create narratives that engage readers, Adam spoke about the particular skill of identifying the story amid the research, “the jewel among the rubble”. Not only does writing family history involve a lot of research, it involves a lot of letting go of that research in favour of the story: “The writer of family history takes the hard facts of genealogy and alchemizes them into liquid prose”. This is not easy to do, and involves being “part detective, part researcher, part poet, part editor, part office admin assistant”.

Having highlighted the challenges, Adam had these words of encouragement for this year’s competition entrants:

“In reading this year’s entries it’s clear to me that many of you have these skills in spades... The forms of the stories were as diverse as they were compelling. There seems no end to the creativity some of you lent to bringing these stories of your ancestors to life. From talking DNA samples to speaking houses and philosophising portraits to stories of mutiny, trauma, murder and escape, of longing and in the end of love. This year’s stories take in the full sweep of human experience, and that is in the end what we hope to capture in our work as writers”.

All three judges referred to the pleasure that reading this year’s stories had given them, the challenge posed by the breadth of subject and form they encountered, and the privilege of working together as judges. All were fulsome

in their praise of the entrants for writing and sharing their stories.

### ***Inaugural Rosemary McKenzie Prize***

This year the prize awarded to the story selected by the judges as the winning entry from a Society member, formerly known as the FHACT Member Prize, was renamed the Rosemary McKenzie Prize in recognition of Rosemary’s significant contribution to the life of the Society over many years, including two terms as FHACT President and as enthusiastic instigator and advocate for the E.M. Fletcher Writing Competition.

Rosemary’s daughter Angela Little accepted the invitation to announce and present the inaugural Rosemary McKenzie Prize. Angela spoke about Rosemary’s “unwavering commitment... to unravelling the complexities of the past”, which she had done within the FHACT community for many years. “She had a true passion for storytelling and she would be so honoured to have this prize and lasting tribute to her memory”.

### ***Shortlist and Winners***

Fifteen stories were short-listed:

A Thin Promise	Catherine Bell
Gorn	Jo Callaghan
I Thought I knew Something about This Place	Stuart Campbell
Lotus Feet	Derek Chan
Little Henrietta	Christine Fairhall
Tragedy at Cascades Road	Elizabeth Friederich
A Place in Time	Roberta Madsen
Nothing to Forgive	KT Major
The Biography of a DNA Segment	Clare McGuinness
The Gate	Kathy Mexted
She Married a Murderer	Denise Newton
The Goldfish Club	Michael Poe
Lost and Found	Karen Redlich
The Emerald Dove	Kathleen Ridgwell
Under the Influence	Anna Searls

### ***AND THE WINNER IS...***

Congratulations to Jo Callaghan, the winner of the 2024 E.M. Fletcher Writing Award. Jo takes home the winner’s prize of \$1,000 for her story Gorn, about

which the judges commented:

“With its wonderful turns of phrase, crisp (and cheeky) dialogue, and its locomotive pacing, Gorn is a deserving winner of the E.M. Fletcher Award for 2024. Taking as its focus a singular and telling train ride, we follow John (or Jackie or Straw Legs) on the 6:40 to Woy Woy on the Northern Line, as he tries desperately not to cry. He’s being sent, because his mother is ‘gorn,’ to Kincumber Orphanage, with only his few possessions and memories, under the watchful eye of ‘the cassock.’ The judges were impressed by the author’s command of language, how it is used playfully—“...they gonna give ya that Latin, ad nauseum. Ad-bloody-make-ya-sick-nauseum”—and earnestly to great effect, instilling within the story a sense of something far greater than its economical parts. We were also most impressed by the seemingly simple yet technical slides back and forth through time, which never miss a beat, as well as an elusive longing that pervades the story and is summed up so well by its clever title. We are very pleased to announce Gorn as this year’s winner.”

### **Second Prize**

Congratulations to Kathleen Ridgwell for taking home the 2nd prize of \$500 sponsored by UTAS. The judges commented that in Kathleen’s story *The Emerald Dove*:

“... we find ourselves in motion... on the *Sophia* sailing between Plymouth, England, and Fremantle. After thirteen weeks at sea, Honóra ‘Nóra’ Mulcreary is set to arrive in Fremantle to start a new life at the Swan River Colony. Suffering interminable nausea, Nóra witnesses a shocking incident between the ship’s doctor Dr Parr and one of the servant girls. *The Emerald Dove* revolves around the violence done to the women aboard these ships; those who witness it, those who have to remain silent for their own safety, and of course those who suffer it directly. But it is also about those who speak up. Nóra speaks up. With such powerful, elegant prose, and a command of the material, the judges felt they were in excellent hands here. The rich imagery of the homing pigeons, and their symbolism, as well as the memorable characters that are so well-rounded for such a short story, lends the piece serious literary merit. We feel like we’re aboard that listing ship, with all its inherent drama. It is a skillful work of short fiction, and the judges are very happy to announce *The Emerald Dove* as the runner-up in this year’s E.M. Fletcher Award.”

### **Highly Commended Awards**

Congratulations to the two Highly Commended Award winners, Clare McGuinness and Derek Chan. Clare’s story *The Biography of a DNA Segment*, with its imaginative approach to family history writing, gives voice to a DNA

segment and charms readers using a blend of genealogical discovery with themes of identity, legacy and mortality. Derek’s story *Lotus Feet* is a powerful narrative which transforms the revered symbol of natural beauty, the Lotus flower, into a representation of unnatural cruelty in this tale of a Chinese family’s struggle to survive set against the background of the wars that dominated the 20th Century.

### **Rosemary McKenzie Prize**

Congratulations to Society member Jo Callaghan whose story *Gorn*, as well as receiving the E.M. Fletcher Award, also received the inaugural Rosemary McKenzie Prize by virtue of Jo’s membership of the Society.

Our thanks to all the entrants for sharing their stories and ensuring another successful year for the E.M. Fletcher Writing Competition. To our judges Therese Lynch, Dr Adam Ouston and Beverley Richardson, - our heartfelt thanks – we couldn’t have run the competition without you. The collaboration that the competition fosters between FHACT and UTAS, the creative storytelling by entrants, and the dedication of our judges all combine to support an environment that encourages family history enthusiasts to write stories from their research, and to provide them with a forum for publishing those stories.



*Therese Lynch, Clare McGuinness, Jo Callaghan and Beverley Richardson*



# Gorn

*Jo Callaghan*

The 6:40 to Woy Woy clattered and clunked and rattled along the Northern Line as it chugged its way from the heart of the city, passed countless deserted platforms that would soon spring to life, meandered through the suburban sprawl, and left the city far behind. The little steam train rolled through the countryside, stopping at a handful of stations along the way, while the crisp coral-pink hues of early morning faded, and signs of a glorious day showed themselves through the October dawn.

Jack sat quietly on his seat in the carriage, hugging a battered leather satchel to his chest. Aside from the clothes he was wearing, the satchel held all of Jack's possessions: a shabby pair of pants that had been un-hemmed and re-hemmed and were still far too short, a moth-eaten jumper his mother had knitted, a few odd parts from a Meccano set and a couple of tattered photographs.

His tummy grumbled and he wasn't quite sure whether he felt sick or hungry. To distract himself, he closed his eyes and searched his mind for a melody and a verse to suit the train's rattling clanking percussion. Big-boys-don't-cry. Big-boys-don't-cry. Big-boys-don't-cry.

Not crying had become Jack's daily challenge. But not crying was virtually impossible because not thinking about it was beyond him. Something very bad had happened. Because of it the things that should have given his life stability, the very foundation of things, had vanished. When people he loved began disappearing, certainty had been replaced by a weird sort of anticipation for the unexpected.

The first time it happened, the sun was new in the morning sky and, bleary-eyed, he'd dragged himself out of bed and into the kitchen, looking for breakfast.

"Where's Mummy?" he asked.

"Gorn," said his sister through a mouthful of toast.

"Gorn where?"

She'd shrugged as she went out into the yard, letting the door shut behind her with a ... THWACK!

Having slipped from his lap, the satchel had hit the carriage floor and flopped,

rather rudely, against a shiny black leather shoe.

"Watch out," grumbled the shoe.

Jack slid nervously from his seat and retrieved the wayward bag. He wriggled the satchel's straps from their buckles and rummaged deep inside. His finger snagged on a moth-hole in the jumper. He wished he was at home and, all at once, was glad he wasn't. At home there would be no sister in the kitchen talking through a mouthful of toasty crumbs. There would be no wailing mother or shouting father. There would be no noisy little brothers. There would be absolutely no one. Just an eerie silence.

He wedged the satchel between himself and the tall black cassock sitting next to him. The train announced a mournful whoooo, and a dirty smoooshhh drifted across Jack's window like fog, blotting out the brilliant blue sky.

At Hawkesbury River Station, a pair of brown trousers made their way through the carriage, shouting as they went.

"Payyyy-paars, read all abooooout it! Flying Boats Hunt Down Bismarck!" shouted the trousers, their voice trailing off as they left the carriage.

Flying boats? Strange, thought Jack.

The station master's whistle blew its shrill farewell and the train eased gently away from the platform.

Jack rested his forehead on the grimy window and gazed out as the train crossed the Hawkesbury River Bridge. A hundred steel girders flicked past. They looked just like pieces of Meccano. Beyond the bridge, the train flirted with the edge of Mullet Creek. And beyond that creek, there was nothing to see but bushland and an occasional house.

Jack's red-rimmed eyes blinked as a chorus-line of swaying trees and squat little bushes sashayed and jitter-bugged past his window. A yellow house with a blue roof stared back at him, its hidden family's start to the day drifting out from the top of its brick chimney like a curly wisp of white hair. A window-eye winked at him and the front-door-mouth called out, Jack! Jack! Come inside.

Orright, I'm coming, Jack whispered. Puddles of creamy white eggs with bright yellow yolks and crispy brown edges spattered and squeaked in a pan, frying in bubbling hot lard. His mother, dressed in her warm woollen dressing gown, served them up with a huge cup of steaming, sweet tea. She frowned at him. Chin up Straw Legs, she said. Big boys don't cry.

Don't cry, dear.

Jack woke with a start just as the train was being swallowed by the gaping mouth of the mile-long Woy Woy Tunnel. When they emerged from the



darkness, the cabin filled with light and the train began to slow down. A flurry of activity began around him. Countless shoes and skirts and trousers busied themselves, preparing to get off. But Jack was stuck fast to his seat, a train-wreck of anxious questions and thoughts smashing through his head.

"John! John! Come on, we must hurry," demanded the cassock.



*Train crossing the Hawkesbury Bridge*

\*\*\*

At 8:35, the ferry *Stella Maris* bobbed and strained on her moorings, impatient to start her one-hour journey up the Brisbane Water from Woy Woy to Davistown and then on to Kincumber South.

Jack sat on an outdoor bench seat at the front of the ferry, sniffing big nostrils full of salty air. He was clinging to his satchel, waiting uneasily while the black cassock chatted with a navy blue dress.

"*Stella Maris*. Bet ya didn't know that's Latin for Virgin Mary," said the scruffy overcoat on the seat next to Jack. "They gonna give ya plenty o' that Latin where you're goin', kid ..."

Perched on top of the overcoat was a curly black hairball. Somewhere in there, underneath all that hair and whiskers, Jack imagined there could be a face, and if he looked closely enough, there were probably lips. Mum said it was

rude to stare at people, so he leaned over the railing and stared down at the water instead.

Sparkles of sunshine glinted, flickered and danced across the tops of small ripples like twinkling fairies. Seawater slopped and slapped against the side of the boat. Little mullets darted this way and that, silvery flashes just beneath the surface. Jack was so captivated by the aquatic light show, he hadn't noticed the hairy-topped overcoat was still talking.

"... they gonna give ya that Latin, ad nauseum. Ad-bloody-make-ya-sick-nauseum."

As he turned in the direction of the overcoat's voice, Jack was startled to discover it had sidled along the bench and was now sitting very close to him.

"Learn ya Latin, ver-bay-tum kid, ya gonna get along just fine. Squid pro quo, kid. Squid. Pro. Quo."

"This way, John!" interrupted the cassock as it slipped through a nearby doorway. Jack grabbed his satchel and scampered after the cassock. He was pleased to get away from the overcoat, which had begun to wheeze and sputter as it laughed itself into a phlegmy fit. Relief gave way to disappointment, though; he didn't want to sit indoors. Up ahead, the cassock had already made its way through the cabin and was disappearing through another door at the far end. When he finally caught up with it, Jack was thrilled. They were going to sit in the open air after all.

The short voyage of the *Stella Maris* as it made its way through the narrow winding passages between Woy Woy and Kincumber South was the most exhilarating ride of Jack's life. It was hard to stay still or quiet because nothing around him was still or quiet. From the surface of the water to the dizzying heights of the sky, his eyes didn't know where they wanted to be looking.

A huge black and white bird with a bill like a bulldozer was coming down fast. Its wings were outstretched like an aeroplane, but its feet were stuck out in front like two shovels. Jack was sure it would hit the water with a gigantic splash but, to his amazement, it slid elegantly across the surface and settled gracefully on the water. Like a flying boat, thought Jack.

A muffled shout turned Jack's attention to a little red-and-white fishing boat. He gasped as a wriggling catch was hoisted from the water, and he joined in with the chorus of seagulls that cried out with pleasure at the fisherman's success.

Cool breezes flicked and ruffled at his hair, which tickled his forehead. The ferry's engine whirred and thumped a cheerful throaty song. The sea bubbled,



frothed, gurgled and crashed as the ferry cut through the water. Sea-spray sprinkled onto his face and just as he thought he couldn't ever be happier, the *Stella Maris* settled, hard, against a tiny wharf.



*A ferry waits at Kincumber Orphanage Wharf*

\*\*\*

“Good morning, Mother,” said the cassock. “And good morning to you also, Sister Aquilina.”

“Good morning, Father. And who is this?” demanded the woman called Mother. Her narrowed eyes fixed firmly on Jack, who was half hunched over with his hands on his knees.

He looked back at her, but he couldn't answer. The drumroll of his heart was beating in his head and his mouth had no words. Minutes earlier, the cassock had leapt from the ferry, commanding Jack to follow it. With long legs, it had dashed up the hill, its robe billowing and black-shod feet making rhythmic crunching sounds in the white gravel pathway as it went. Jack had done his best to keep up with it. Head down, he'd focused his eyes on the white gravel and his mind on the task, pushing his legs with all his strength, willing them to go faster. His thighs burned and the satchel bounced annoyingly against his back. His body throbbed. Even his eyeballs seemed to have a heartbeat.

At the top of the hill, the ground levelled out and the going got a little easier. Jack lifted his gaze for a moment and caught a glimpse of two women in brown

robes and a group of boys milling about on the lawn. Before Jack could think, the cassock was steering him through a door, down a corridor and into this room.

“This is John, Mother. He's the older brother of—”

From over the cassock's shoulder came an enormous commotion. It could have been a galloping mob of wild brumbies, or the rat-a-tat-tat of a gatling-gun, but it wasn't either of those things. It was the stomping feet, the pushing and shoving, the grunting and groaning of two small boys jostling to be the first into the room.

“Jackie!” cried one.

“Straw Legs!” exclaimed the other.

Jack tried valiantly to brace himself as his two little brothers – ‘Ginge’ with his shock of flame-red hair and ‘Skeeta’ still smaller than a mosquito – launched themselves at him. It wasn't long before all three boys were in a giggling heap of wriggling arms and legs on the convent floor.

But their brotherly reunion was painfully short-lived.

“Ow. Ow-ow-ouch! My tummy hurts. I want mummy. Where's mummy?” cried Ginge.

“Dunno, Ginge. Gorn.”

“Gorn where?” asked Skeeta.

Jack shrugged. “They said she's gorn ter Blazes, or Billio or Bug—”

Mother Superior's chair scraped across the floor as she rose abruptly. Sister Aquilina, living up to her name, swooped down on the trio, hovering over them like an eagle above her prey.

“In Nomine Patris ... enough!” growled Mother Superior.

A strangled “Eh?” escaped Jack's lips as Sister Aquilina's talons lifted him from the floor by an earlobe.

“Horribilis. Horrendous. Horrificus. Corrrrrruptus!” spat Sister Aquilina.

And thus began Jack's getting of Latin. Ad-bloody-make-ya-sick nauseum.

### **Inspiration statement**

Following the Great Depression and impacted by global conflict, the early 1940s was a period of great uncertainty for Australian families, especially my own.



# The Emerald Dove

Kathleen Ridgwell

Nóra picked a rat dropping out of her stale piece of bread. She remembered a time when her dishes overflowed with piles of steaming hot Irish lamb stew and hearty potatoes. Oh, how she missed the tatties of the Emerald Isle. The Great Famine had taken them all away, and taken her family and her soul with them.

“Honóra Mulcreary!”

Nóra jumped at the mention of her name.

“Stop pickin’ at ya food, Nóra! You’ve become nothin’ but skin and bones. No man’ll want ya by the time we arrive.”

“Yes, matron,” Nóra murmured, feeling the heat rise to her cheeks. Her heart thumped in her chest.

Keziah glanced sideways at Nóra, as the matron walked away.

“Eat yer feckin’ grub, Nóra. Or ye’ll end up like me,” she whispered.

Keziah was one of the ship orphans, young women from the Cork Foundling Home and Holborn Poorhouse. Yesterday, Keziah had been caught up on the main deck fraternising with one of the sailors. As a punishment, Surgeon-Superintendent Dr Parr had cut all her hair off. Nóra reached up protectively towards her own fiery tresses, tucked away safely under her bonnet.

Nóra’s stomach lurched as she braced herself against the relentless sway of the ship. The ubiquitous odour of vomit permeated the air. It had been thirteen weeks since they departed Plymouth on the *Sophia*, yet she had been unable to quell the incessant nausea. She clutched her abdomen in agony, willing the journey to Australia to end. The ship tilted abruptly and Nóra’s plate slid off the end of the table, causing her inedible fare to scatter across the sea-soaked floor. Much to Nóra’s relief.

The storm had subsided by morning and so had her nausea, although to a lesser extent. At dawn’s break, she ferried the doves up onto the main deck for their daily homing exercises, a task that had been assigned to her due to her experience in training messenger pigeons back in Ireland. She cherished her time up on deck. The fresh ocean breezes. The warm kiss of the sun’s rays on her ivory skin. The joyful spectacle of children splashing about in the sail bath. Just the other day, Nóra had even been lucky enough to spy a whale breaching in the sea. She watched as her feathered companions soared into the horizon,

carrying her hopes and dreams with them, returning to their cages afterwards. Back down into the bleak darkness and workhouse howls of the steerage.

Only three more days remained until they arrived at the port of Fremantle, until she could start her life afresh in the Swan River Colony, she thought to herself.

After scrubbing down the steerage floors with a mixture of vinegar and chloride of lime, Nóra changed into a clean apron in readiness for cabin service. It was her duty to clean the upper cabins every morning whilst the first-class passengers ate breakfast with Captain Claborn in the dining saloon. She caught the gamey aroma of pigeon pies wafting through the air but loathed to speculate on the origin of the ingredients.

Dr Parr often took a dove or two to keep in the hospital cabin for his amusement, and sometimes they just disappeared. Even worse, the sailors thought the doves’ flesh had healing properties for their wounds and ailments and sometimes the doves were returned to steerage with their wings or feet missing. Other times, the doves came back weak and listless, the life sucked out of their little bodies. Dr Parr and the sailors had no regard for the doves’ beating hearts and gentle souls. Not like Nóra. She did her best to nurse them back to health.

“Ye don’t look so well, Nóra,” remarked Cath. Catherine Murren was the ship hospital assistant and Nóra’s appointed steward for cabin service. The cabin keys jingled on Cath’s waist as they climbed up through the hatches.

“You been eatin’ yer oranges like the captain ordered?” Cath asked.

“Aye,” Nóra lied. The children on board the ship needed the oranges more than she did. Besides, she could barely keep down her hominy porridge this morning.

“Be sure you do or you might catch y’self a case of Spring Fever,” warned Cath. “If yer gums start bleedin’, that’s usually a first sign. Either that or yer up the duff!” she laughed.

Nóra ignored the metallic taste in her mouth.

The first cabin to be serviced was the hospital, consisting of a few cots and a medical chest filled with vials of opium and willow bark.

“Ah, I forgot the broom. Wait `ere,” Cath instructed.

Nóra stood alone in the deafening quiet, surrounded by the haunting creaks and groans of the ship’s wooden hull. She had never been left unaccompanied in the upper decks before and, despite yearning for such freedoms, she felt exposed and vulnerable. She decided to enter the hospital cabin.

As she pushed the door open, a pack of sailors streamed out amidst a flurry of doves.

Nóra instinctively ducked her head to shield herself from the barrage of whistling wings. When she dared to look up, she gasped in horror, confronted by the abhorrent sight of Dr Parr taking improper liberties with Fanny Chevassant, another one of the servants. Fanny was pinned against the mattress, terror in her eyes.

Nóra dropped her copper bucket. It clanged loudly on the floor as Fanny struggled out from underneath Dr Parr, scrambling for her clothes and battling to hide her modesty.

“Leave her alone!” Nóra yelled, her voice wavering. She took a step back into the corridor. A lone dove tore past her head.

“Get in here now and shut that bloody door!” Dr Parr shouted at Nóra, pulling his trousers up as he did so.

Nóra did as ordered. Her legs trembled and she tried to steady herself against the wash basin.

“Leave her be and I won’t tell no one what I saw you doin’ to her,” Nóra said. Fanny cowered in the corner.

“I can do what I want with her. She’s nothing but a common biddy whore. Just like you.”

Nóra’s bottom lip quivered. She felt the tears well in her eyes and hastily wiped the sleeve of her soiled dress across her face.

“I... I’m not a whore,” she stammered. A tightness formed in her throat. He smirked at her, exposing the gaps in his blackened teeth.

“Yes, you are! We scoured the Magdalene laundries looking for fallen women like you,” he said, inching closer. She stood her ground.

“I came from no such place,” refuted Nóra. She fought against a battlefield of fragmented recollections of the life she had left behind.

“Oh, yes, that’s right. We acquired you from that baron in County Clare. He thought you were getting a bit old in the tooth, at twenty and five. Not me, though. Perhaps I’ll get to sample your wares myself one day?” he taunted.

Nóra’s stomach dropped.

“Young soiled doves like you and Fanny have only been given free passage to Australia to service the convicts, lest they mix with the natives. Now, let me examine you.” Nóra spat in his face. He slapped her back, sending her reeling against the door with a thud. The assault triggered a cascade of memories.

The baron. Secret smiles. Fleeting moments of ecstasy. A clandestine joy that had evolved into something more sinister. Being forced to lie with other men. Hiding her battered body and heart.

The cabin door swung open, causing Nóra to lose her balance and collide into Dr Parr.

“What’s goin’ on here then?” asked Cath. “Nóra! I thought I told ye to wait in the corridor? Dr Parr, my apologies for the imposition.”

Nóra and Fanny bolted past Cath and took flight down the corridor.

Nóra retired to her berth and swigged the rum hidden under her straw mattress. She stared up at the mouldy ceiling boards, teetering on the precipice of decision. Her mind grappled with a desperate desire to report Dr Parr for his depraved indiscretions, and the fear that if she did report him, it might inadvertently sully Fanny’s virtuous reputation.

Fanny sat on the end of Nóra’s bunk and dropped her head in her hands.

“Are ye okay?” Nóra asked quietly.

Fanny shook her head as a tear rolled down her cheek.

“Ah Fanny, ’twas a terrible thing that happened to ye today. But, only a coupla days now before the ship docks and we can all escape this feckin’ hellhole.”

“He’s been havin’ his way with me for weeks now. I couldn’t tell no one ’cause he said he’d throw me overboard. And now I think I might be with child.”

Nóra sat up in her bed abruptly.

“Are you sure, Fanny?” she asked.

Fanny nodded. Nóra drew her close, offering comfort with a gentle embrace.

The injustice of Fanny’s ordeal surged within Nóra’s body. Anger coursed through her veins, an inferno ignited by all the sufferings of every woman aboard the ship, and beyond.

For every woman burdened by the relentless weight of prejudice and the shackles of oppression. For every woman and child being exploited and abused in the world. For every dove that had come to harm. For herself. She knew what she had to do.

“Matron Barclay, is this true?” Captain Claborn asked.

They had been summoned to the captain’s cabin – Nóra, Fanny, Keziah, Cath, Matron Barclay, and Dr Parr.

“I can’t say for certain, Captain. I didn’t directly witness the alleged incident between Dr Parr and Miss Chevassant.”



"If I may, Captain," interjected Cath. "We also have other witnesses to Dr Parr's misconduct on the ship, including the two new mothers who he turned out of the hospital too soon after confinement. Many of your passengers have signed this witness statement."

Captain Claborn stroked his beard in contemplation as he perused the testimony.

"Matron Barclay, assuming the girls' stories are not a figment of their imagination, how could you allow this to happen under your watch?"

"I apologise for my carelessness, Captain."

Turning to Nóra, the captain asked "Do you have anything further to add, Miss Mulcreary?"

"Actually, yes Captain. I've reason to believe that after we land in Fremantle, Dr Parr intends to traffic the orphan girls on board this ship for immoral purposes."

"Aye, that be true," Keziah interjected. "Dr Parr told us we'd 'ave to work off our fare by sellin' ourselves to filthy bogtrotters."

The colour drained from Dr Parr's face.

"Dr Parr," the captain continued. "If these reports are indeed found to be true, it would be a disgrace to the moral sensibilities of my ship. I will be recommending to the Colony Board that a thorough investigation be undertaken. Let us hope you are cleared of any impropriety."

Nóra smiled triumphantly.

There was a loud knock at the door.

"Land ahoy, Captain! Land ahoy!"

As the ship sailed into Fremantle harbour, Nóra gazed out at the welcome party lining the sandy shores. She spied the *Scindian* convict vessel that they were told had arrived the month before. Further along, she noticed a plume of smoke rising above a mob of Aborigines gathered around a campfire.

The small settlement was dotted with limestone buildings and humble wooden shanties. A single church spire pierced the sky. Flocks of black cockatoos burst out from beneath the tree canopies, filling the sky with their raucous cries.

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Now that Dr Parr was out of the way, Nóra looked forward to opening her own respectable bawdy house. It would be clean and safe, and well stocked with liquor and clay tobacco pipes for the clientele. She would name it Dovecote and fill it with all the beautiful orphans she had befriended on the voyage.

Nóra released the doves into the sky one last time, knowing they would return to roost. For the first time in a long while, she no longer felt ill. Australia is my home now. Our home, she thought as she caressed her burgeoning belly. The emerald dove had arrived.

### Inspiration Statement

This story is inspired by my great-great-great grandmother, Honora. She made some difficult choices to survive. Her life was shaped by both trauma and resilience.



*Fremantle Jetty and Bathers Beach, 1870*



*Fremantle, 1848*



# Lotus Feet

Derek Chan

*Wherever you go, go with all your heart*

无论走到哪里 · 遵从你的内心

– Confucius

It was 1919, and Wong Chuey On knew from her husband's steely look as he read the morning newspaper at the kitchen table that he'd leave their village to find them a better life in the West. The nearby port city of Canton (Guangzhou) was the 'gateway to the West' given its proximity to Hong Kong, and the Cantonese were the first Chinese to hear about and settle in the West. Wong Pang Kwei had saved hard. He packed a trunk and farewelled his wife for the 'fairer Britain of the South Seas' – New Zealand. 'Fairer' distinguished the 'penal colony,' Australia, but the 27-year-old was about to learn the *other* meaning of 'fairer Britain...'

After a month at sea including a stop in Sydney, the *Riverina* docked in Port Nicholson in Wellington, the nation's capital. Weatherboard cottages dotted green hills around the harbour. Pan Kwei's nostrils flared with brisk sea air. On the wharf, stiff officials stamped and collected arrival documents. He watched *sai yan* 西方人 (western people) receive warm handshakes and walk free into the arms of beaming relatives.

"You, Chinaman! I'm talking to you!" barked a splenetic face behind a desk, demanding his thumbprint and the 'Poll Tax' of £100, equivalent to one year's salary. "Now, sign here!"

The Poll Tax was the primary legal instrument under the *Chinese Immigration Act 1881* to curtail the 'Yellow Peril' of Chinese immigration to New Zealand – shaped by anti-Chinese policies and fervent racism in the US, Canada, and Australia, and fomented locally in the 1860s among the working class, when Chinese men from Victoria in Australia were imported to dig the last of the South Island's gold once European miners departed. Now there was no gold. What would a 'Ching Chong,' 'Yellow Dog' like Pang Kwei do in 'fairer Britain'?

One afternoon, five-year-old Chuey On returned from school. She'd learn how to read and write Chinese, unlike most girls. She sat on a cane stool. Warm water and beige sand-soap trickled between her toes while her stony-faced mother knelt to wash them. After drying the feet, a bundle of expensive white

bandages was produced from the pocket of the older woman's *cheong sam* 長衫 (long garment). If the girl knew how drastically her life was about to change, she might have run away.

Without warning, the four smaller toes were yanked under each foot, then bound tight as a noose till both feet turned purple, throbbed with pain. The girl's back arched with agony but she refused to cry. Unable to walk or sleep for days, her feet were freed periodically to trim nails clawing the soles, clean infected sores and callouses, but quickly re-bound with fresh bandages.

*Chan zu* 缠足 (foot binding) began in the tenth century in Imperial China. *Sam cyun gam lin* 三寸金蓮 (three-inch golden lotus) or 'lotus feet' were bound, broken and constricted to a few inches in size, symbolising beauty and high social status, but also subjugation. An upstanding husband was guaranteed provided one escaped gangrene and sepsis, which many didn't.

Chuey On gazed at her lotus feet, thought about Pang Kwei. It had been three years. Would he return? And with good news?

1920s New Zealand was difficult for a Chinese '*Alien*.' Under the *Aliens Act 1886*, Pang Kwei carried an 'Alien Registration Certificate,' and remained on a police register. He couldn't be 'naturalised,' vote, enter political life, state employment, nor professions like medicine, purchase land nor property, nor receive the old-age pension. He needed to learn a totally foreign monetary and measurement system, quickly, to make money. And not speaking English proved a double-edged sword. It was a blessing not to understand the racism hurled at him and his kin, and being restricted by language to other Chinese helped find him work as a green grocer; but racial isolation merely heightened the racism.

In 1922, confident of the future, Pang Kwei telegraphed his wife to join him. Chuey On, 29, shuffled up the wooden gangway with a suitcase of favourite garments, keepsakes, a photo of her husband, and white bandages. A sea of trepidation and nausea swept through her. There were only a few Chinese men onboard (they usually emigrated first) since New Zealand permitted one Chinese passenger per 200 tonnes of cargo as another way to curb immigration. Deeply homesick and alone on the windswept deck, she rounded a corner, only to meet another Chinese woman – with bound feet! They would become the only two women in New Zealand with lotus feet, and remain life-long friends.

After a stopover in Sydney, the *Manuka* arrived in Wellington. Chuey On was thumbprinted by officious officials, then embraced Pang Kwei at the dock, tall and handsome in a bowler hat and dark suit. *Sai yan clothes?* And his hands?

*Foreign, too* – like sandpaper, cut and calloused from manual labour. But he was the same man she loved, who forfeited another £100 Poll Tax that took three years to save.

That night, Pang Kwei removed his wife's shackles, tenderly washed her feet. They looked like chicken claws. Were they even human? But he loved her more than ever. Eyes closed, head thrown back, Chuey On wiggled her big toes in the soapy water, feeling his attentive touch. *Would the new land bring liberation?* She came to her senses, thrust him clean bandages from her suitcase.

In 1926, the couple returned to Canton with two daughters and funds from the sale of a green grocery to build a forever home. A son and two daughters were born, and the family had a wholesale business that thrived for ten years. But an existential threat was looming...

Since the early twentieth century, Japan had subjugated Chinese territory north of the Great Wall. A skirmish at Marco Polo Bridge near Peking (Beijing) sparked the *Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945)*. Millions of Chinese soldiers and civilians perished, half the country destroyed.

One morning in 1937, the couple were sipping chrysanthemum tea at the kitchen table when the short-wave radio hissed news that Japan was marching south to Canton.

"When black angels descend, we will die," Pang Kwei said ruefully.

"The children mustn't know, but we must go."

"Go *where?*" cried Chuey On with child, watching the others frolic under the old lychee tree in the garden. *This* was their home.

Pang Kwei polished his round-rimmed glasses with a handkerchief, looked at the tremulous little bird seated opposite him with his steely resolve.

"We must escape. To Hong Kong."

Relatives agreed to safeguard the refugees till the war was over. Protected by Britain, Hong Kong was a cosmopolitan melting pot of Anglo-Saxon and Chinese cultures, full of bright neon signs, tall buildings, flashy automobiles, trams, and *sai yan* dressed like movie stars in the high street. Laundry hung on bamboo poles that jutted from apartment windows above bustling market stalls. What a far cry from their beloved Canton! The children were homesick, clung to their parents like rag dolls.

Chuey On, 45, was near term, her ankles engorged above her tiny feet. Skin on the shins – purple and cold – split open, oozed tea-coloured fluid on the bedsheets. She was verging on gangrene and septic shock, but no physician

could persuade her to unbind her feet.

"No," she said.

"I will have my baby, be true to mother, true to *Chan zu*."

Japan's bombing of Canton continued throughout 1938, and the family saw no future in China. But in an ironic turn, New Zealand softened, opened herself to Chinese refugees. And no Poll Tax! Pang Kwei never thought he'd return there. But the six-month-old baby? She wouldn't survive the journey...

"No," said Chuey On, in rare defiance of her husband.

"I'm taking our little one with us, no matter what."



*Refugee Family: On ship to Wellington, New Zealand (August 1938)*

In 1938, the family arrived in New Zealand as refugees. They bought a green grocer shop, worked six days till late, as all Chinese families who weren't market gardeners did. The eight slept in two rooms on beds and wooden bunks. Initially, there was no power. A copper was used for heating, fruit box lids for fuel. At night, windows were blacked out with newspaper to avoid airstrikes as the dark tentacles of World War II gripped the nation.

The family business took precedence. The two older girls, schooled in China, worked in the shop. The three younger girls attended secondary school but were pulled out early to work also, the youngest at 15. But the son, favoured by Chinese families, commenced engineering at university. Unlike their parents, the children were fluent Cantonese and English speakers, and took



racist slurs in their stride.

Working conditions were spartan – cold concrete floors; lifting 20 kg sacks or wooden crates of potatoes, pumpkins, cabbages; carrots and other root vegetables encrusted in dirt scrubbed in cold concrete tubs. The children suffered chilblains and fungal nail infections but never complained nor rued their shortened education.

Food united the family. Chuey On prepared good food, like steamed pork buns. She used a stone grinder to grind rice and water into a white paste diluted and steamed to make rice rolls. She made dumplings with rice, yellow beans and seasoned pork strips, meticulously wrapped in flax leaves steamed till the glutinous filling melted in the mouth. And on his day off, her husband prepared delicious fish balls, nourishing soups, stir-fried vegetables, and poultry.



Wong Family: Eight years in New Zealand (10 October 1946)

One morning in 1948, Pang Kwei was home reading the newspaper.

“I have pain,” he said, clutching his chest.

The family tried Chinese medicines but the pain continued. Health literacy was poor in those days, and eventually the family doctor – not an ambulance – was called.

“I’m very sorry, Mrs Wong,” said the doctor, who arrived out of breath. “There’s nothing I can do.”

During his ten years as a refugee, Pang Kwei, 56, built a business, provided

for his family, helped establish an association for Chinese migrants, had three children marry, and witnessed the abolition of the Poll Tax in 1944. But he died an ‘*Alien*.’ His children, aged 10-25, rallied around Chuey On, and the son forwent his studies to run the business. Four years later in 1952, the law was changed and the family became naturalised citizens.

Chuey On never let her feet hinder her. She wore children’s lace-up shoes loosely tied to accommodate the deformed high instep, and stuffed the empty toe space with cotton wool.

She’d sometimes walk six blocks to visit relatives and her good friend from the *Manuka*. One afternoon, she injured her ankle from a fall in the street, and was taken to hospital. Inquisitive white coats gathered around her bed.

“Mrs Wong, may we photograph your feet?” asked the orthopod, who’d never seen such a case.

The little woman was embarrassed by all the eyes. Apart from her family, she kept her lotus feet quite private.

“Mum says: *thank you for looking after me, but please, no photos*,” replied one of her daughters. The doctor smiled and covered her legs.

Chuey On’s lotus feet symbolised duty, tenacity, and acceptance of pain, disability, war, loss and hardship in a racist land. Ironically, they were a source of stability – a bridge between life in the East and the West: first, as a pioneering woman; then, as a refugee. She was compassionate, wise, and accepted others – even the bigots – and was ever grateful to be in New Zealand. Many people visited for her non-judgmental counsel, and her presence – or ‘*mana*’ as the Māori call it – commanded respect from all who knew her, her family and 28 grandchildren. In 1975, she passed peacefully at home in Wellington, aged 82.

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In 1949, one year after Pang Kwei’s death, news came that China had abolished the Chan zu tradition with the establishment of the People’s Republic.

Speaking in Cantonese, the children asked: “Mum, will you unbind your lotus feet now we’re in New Zealand?” Chuey On just smiled.

### Inspiration Statement

This story is dedicated to my maternal grandparents, who overcame war and colonial barriers so their family could live safely in the West.



# The Biography of a DNA Segment

*Clare McGuinness*

I've been here all along you know, waiting for you to find me. I should be patient and give you time to process the revelation of me, let alone find the ways to figure me out. But I just can't wait, there is so much I want to share, all the secrets I hold about you. So let's start right now. Let me tell you about my life, and where I hope we can go together. Are you ready? I know I am.

I know it's customary to start at the beginning, but even I am not sure about that. I know that I'm made of combinations of amino acids; just four – adenine, cytosine, guanine and thymine. All strung along two backbones made of alternating deoxyribose (that's sugar) and phosphate groups. I am 21cM long, not that you could even unravel me like the diagrams you like to draw to describe me. That's OK, it's early days for you. I feel like I have been around forever, but that's not true.

I was formed about 300 years ago, maybe more. I really don't understand your constructs of time. I always was, I will always be, but then maybe I won't 'be'. I don't mind telling you that my mortality is a little scary. Unless you have some children, I am just not going to go on. Deep breath, too soon to talk about that. How old are we anyway? Are we even male or female - I don't know because I am not on that chromosome.

Truly I hold your ancestry in my being. Being honest I hold just one thread of your ancestral being. Many people ago, no I am not sure exactly how many people, I was much bigger. I sit on Chromosome 8 right up at the beginning. I used to be almost 256cM long! I know, wow, I was important then. I controlled so many aspects of your ancestor's functioning. Next to me was a bit of Chromosome 8 that came from that ancestor's father – I think I came from that ancestor's mother, but as you can understand I have no way of knowing that. You'll be the one to figure that one out. I just am, or at that time I just was. Let's just say for now, I came from a mother.

Well, she became a mother, and now I can recall a disaster, because she passed down only 190cM of me. I lost 66cM, just like that; no warning, no request, no permission, no time frame, no careful negotiation about timelines and guidelines – it just happened. I know you are slowly working out some

tables about how long ago I might have existed at 256cM and then be reduced to 196cM, and I think you are on the right track, but it's impossible for me to work it out just on my own here in your nuclei. You seem to need lots of other relatives from the couple who formed the 256cM me to figure out when I could have been that size. Can you hurry up though, find a lot more descendants of that couple and combine all your data, and then we'll both know the answer to that question.

Of course I want to know. I just didn't know I wanted to know, because I never could know before and now that I can, well, of course I do want to know. You're not the only sentient being in this body, I'm in brain cells too. So where was I, yes, 256cM. Why is being a 21cM segment of DNA so hard!

Let's work together. Your theories say that I could drop from 256 to 21cM in one generation as an extreme outlier. Don't forget segments at the start and end of a chromosome are much less likely to break, so why should I be cut down like this? Much more likely I was cut down at the end of myself, away from the start of Chromosome 8. When that first 60cM was gone, how do think I might have felt? Broken, desecrated, disregarded, discarded – all of those and more. I was less of myself, that is hard, you have no idea.

I won't try and pretend that Chromosomes talk to each other, not in the way you humans seem to do. We don't. But we know when changes happen. We know when suddenly we have a new set of amino acids sitting next to us and expecting us to just get on with it and adapt and work a bit differently. I do remember those times, but just not when they happened. My next lurch was down to 102cM, and then 64cM and 37cM; and then a time when I wasn't cut down, when I sailed gloriously through two more people still at 37cM. Oh, happy days. Can you even begin to understand how it must feel to remain whole, to be accepted into the future just as you are? It was glorious, triumphant; I was here to stay!

And then in the blink of an eye I was just 21cM, over half gone. I went a bit mad then, because I don't have the memories of how many people I passed through at 21cM. Was it one or was it three? Maybe I lost enough of myself to no longer be myself. Help me! Only you can tell me now, only you can make sense of who I am and who I will become. So now you know my desperation, without you I am lost. I fear that I will cease to exist and no-one, no-one, will even know. Being lost like that, being gone and not remembered must be the hardest pain to bear. Thank God for genealogists; yes, I have borrowed that expression of yours, because I have no other way to say that this is big, really big, and I want all your effort to go into it!

That feels better, somehow, just to have said that worry out loud. In truth I was not even aware of how desperate I was feeling. In truth I was not aware that I had even acknowledged those losses of me over time. I think all us segments are existing quietly in your cells and never want to face this painful truth; it is too hard a concept to accept. Mortality. Why, why me, why now? It must be because you have found us, named us, labelled us, explored us – did you ever consider what your quest for knowledge might do to us?

Another deep breath, keep control, keep communication lines open. It seems we need each other now, as if the tables are turned. I must help you in any way I can. I am nothing without you, I am you, you found me, I came into existence. But all this thinking is starting to make my amino acids hurt.

I came from your ancestor, but which one? You have gathered your siblings, your first cousins, your second cousins, some third cousins and even some fifth cousins. Which of them has me too? Think, analyse, we need to know. Ah yes, I am in your siblings, well two of three siblings but not your brother John. What does that mean? OK, I get it, John just didn't get me from his parent, but you can see how that is a frightening thought. Which of your first cousins has me? Ah, your father's nieces and nephews, so I came from your paternal side, good, good. Where was your father born?

Alright, born in New South Wales, as was his father. But his mother was born in Victoria. No matter, different chromosomes. Nothing to do with me. Ok I am (was?) part of your paternal grandfather, oh he was called Harry. Ok now we are getting somewhere. What about second cousins? Which second cousins am I in? Find them, hurry up, just write to them and send them a kit. Someone will do take the test, but don't forget to send a few more reminders.

What do you mean two second cousins have more of me than you do – how much? 54cM and 68cM? How is that possible? And three of them have none? Maybe they are second cousins removed once or twice – check their birthdays, they are probably way younger than you. Data, data, we need more data to work this out. Try another database, hopefully you'll find me there. Hey, I knew there would be some of me in Scotland, I just knew it, and third cousins you say. I am in your third cousins, and fourth cousins! No way, this is so great.

Let's slow down and get this straight. I am in your second cousins on your grandfather's mother's side. Is she the one born in Scotland? No? Her grandfather was. OK, OK remember I am only a 21cM segment, I am not as bright as when I was 256cM. You're now telling me that I am in some of your third cousins on your paternal, maternal, paternal, paternal line. Did I get that

right? I sure wish I could understand those charts you draw; it would so help me get my amino acids around this.

And now you found me in some fourth cousins? In America, South Africa, New Zealand, and Scotland, yes of course. Your x3 Great-grandfather lived and died in Scotland, didn't he? This is wonderful! I almost can't believe it. Maybe I am not so diminished over time, but rather I am perpetuated all around the world over time. If only I could tell your other segments about what you are doing. It would sure be reassuring to know that they won't just disappear when you die without having children, or even if you do have children but they are not the segment passed down. It sure is hard to express myself within this tight bundle of DNA in every nucleus of your body, but I agree with you that it is all so important.

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Weeks fly by now. Months, seasons, years even. Still no child born to you, at least there is no-one in the databases. You might have mentioned you were 63 when you did the test. And now you have an illness. Time has almost run out. I can't believe you let this happen. You knew what it meant to me. Relying on your sister and brother was never going to be enough life insurance for me.

My amino acids are dimming, I feel a break in their chains, and this time I just cannot repair it. Your tumour has robbed me of even that. But I remember those months and years when we learned so much about me, truly it wasn't wasted. Believe me when I tell you, it was the best of times. But even the best of times come to their end.

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#### Postscript

This biography was written by a fifth cousin of the original test-taker, who in sharing their DNA discoveries, allowed the 21cM segment to realise that it lived on in many other descendants of their x4 Great-grandfather. And in that first test-taking body, it died in peace.



# A thin promise

*Catherine Bell*



*My final place on Chromosome 8*

## Inspiration Statement

What if a DNA segment had thoughts and feelings and shared your journey to discover its heritage?

*London, December 1854*

Sarah, make haste. We must leave now.

Sarah wants to scream in reply, I can't go, Father. I can't leave you. It's all a mistake.

But there is no time to reconsider. She quickly buttons up the children's woollen coats, ushers them out into the darkness, and gently closes the door behind her.

She takes a few short steps along Carter Street, then suddenly stops. Her heart is torn, but the carriers have already loaded the wooden chests onto the dray. She glances back over her right shoulder towards the dome of St Paul's, and farewells the view she has known since she was a young girl.

Sarah, her father Thomas, and the two small children follow the dray as it rumbles along the quiet streets down towards the river. Sooty fog creates ghostly halos around the gaslights lighting their way. Sarah barely notices the fog or the stench of blocked drains blanketing the city this morning, such is her anguish.

They walk in silence. The children cling to their mother. Sarah's face is steely with determined bravery. But her thin, angular body quivers like a whippet. She knows full well the dangers awaiting them at sea.

Thomas tells his grandchildren: Australia will be all sunshine and blue skies. You'll be able to play outside from dawn until dark. And you'll soon learn to hop like little kangaroos.

The children's eyes widen. Sarah affords the slightest of smiles. But she looks straight ahead, her footsteps laboured. They hurry on past fishmongers and bakers dressing their windows, barrow boys spruiking new-season fruit and vegetables, and night watchmen completing their rounds.

Despite the early hour, by the time they reach Blackfriars Quay, the inky black Thames is already crowded with skiffs and barges. Thomas lifts the children onto one of the small flat-bottomed barges and climbs in after them. Sarah sits between the children, staring out across the stretch of water. The tide is on the wane, and they pass quickly under Tower Bridge on their way to the docks.

As they go by the Tower of London, Sarah hears the distant, raspy cawing of ravens. She shudders. Is it a warning? She draws the children closer. Her own mother's words ring in her ears, reminding her how ravens often thrive despite

adversity. Sarah takes heart.

Thomas sees Sarah's tears running freely now beneath the brim of her black velvet bonnet. His heart is breaking too. She is his eldest, his constant companion since her mother, his wife passed away.

He knows there is no turning back now. Be of stout heart, he says to his daughter. Remember your brother will be in Melbourne to meet you. He'll take you and the children to find John at Fryers Creek.

Sarah smiles at the thought of seeing her husband again. They have been apart for two long years. She aches at the memory of his tender embrace, his wise and measured view of the world, and his words of comfort when her thoughts were low.

They soon reach London Docks where dozens of large ships are moored. The wharves are crowded and noisy with crews making ready to sail, thousands of passengers embarking, and families farewelling loved ones.

They walk further down the pier until they see the carriers loading their chests onto the *George Marshall*. The clipper's fully rigged, white sails soar high in the morning sky like elegant swans preparing for flight.

It is difficult to talk with such commotion around them. But what more is there to say? The children hug their grandfather's legs. He ruffles their hair, then bends down to kiss them gently on their cheeks. Be good children for your mother. He presses a golden coin into the palm of their hands. For good luck, he says.

Sarah embraces her father. I will write as soon as I get there. I'll write often. I will send you some gold dust.

Thomas cannot say the words in his heart: I'd rather have you and the children back, than any miner's gold.

In the end, their parting is brief.

Her father's rough, carpenter hands wrap around Sarah's like a glove. It is her last touch of home. Thomas's heart is full of foreboding. Until we meet again, my dear child.

Light rain begins to fall. Thomas stays by the dock until the last of the *George Marshall* slips down the Thames and disappears into the mist.

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*Twelve months later, on the goldfields near Castlemaine, Victoria.*

Sarah keeps her promise. She writes to her father in London describing her life on the goldfields:

"1855. Life is so different here. It is not easy. I cannot say I like the country much, but John likes it. He pays no rent or taxes nor buys any firewood. He can get a living by working for it. He does not say so, but I know he will be for England when he makes £2,000. It might be this week or in six years.

We have a good slab house to live in this winter which is much more comfortable than the tent. John can lean his back against the wall without danger of falling through the calico.

We have a nice piece of land with a good fence around it and the seeds are coming up well.

I have some fine quartz specimens, which I intend sending home to you some day with some gold to make them up. The children want to fill our letters with flowers and feathers for you. They are sending some flower seeds today, shaped like beans. It is called sarsaparilla and bears a purple flower. The other seeds are golden wattle, it's the gold I promised you.

John and the children are quite well, I am happy to say. Though I have been very dull and low since I came, but am getting better of it now, thank God. I will never send for anyone to come. Let everyone do as they please. I should be very sorry to persuade anyone to come as they might be unlucky or not like the country.

John's first claim at Kangaroo [Tarilta] was the best. He cleared a hundred pounds in eight weeks. He took it to Castlemaine and put it in the gold escort, leaving one ounce and a half of gold in the house. Since then, he has made a living, and we have about thirty pounds in the house. I often complain about John's frugality. But we live well. We eat plenty of meat. The mutton is pretty good, but the old working bullocks are tough. The children bring both happiness and frustration to our lives. Sophia and Tom grow fast, but I cannot get them very forward with their books. Sophia sews a little but is very idle. They are all for playing.

John has made a tool to sharpen his own picks, so he saves sixpence a point. He does his blacksmithing work every evening. He has made a kind of shed to work in which serves as cooking house and wash house. We bear the hot climate and then the rains very well, thank God. But I think there are very few on the goldfields that like the country. The children are always talking about going home to England. John is for going home some time – but he would like another good hole or two, and the thought of the voyage frightens him.

John has been driving tunnels in the hillside at Kangaroo [Tarilta]. It is 200 feet and another 60 feet. They have struck gold, and it is likely to pay very well. Today as I write to you, Tom is in the bush close by getting firewood. Sophia

and Johnny [the new baby] with him. The summers are hard as the heat makes the children very tiresome. Digging is very uncertain work. John tries hard but he is getting very little from his mining now. I must not complain as there are plenty in Melbourne starving. Some on the diggings nearly as bad.

Week after week fades away with little variation, and I am seldom many steps away from our home. In my quiet moments, I think of England, the green fields and pleasant climate. We are many miles apart, but you are always in my heart. We have had very little wet weather at present but the frosts at night have been sharp. The days have been pleasant, warm and sunny. I washed yesterday out of doors, which I generally do. But I would not like to do so today for the wind blows cold and there is no sun. I am spending my morning by the fire writing to you instead".

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*London, March 1858*

Each day I wait for the post, for news from Australia, from Sarah. This morning, a slim envelope passes through the slot in the front door. It floats gently to the floor like a dove gliding to rest. My heart sings, a promise of news from Sarah. I stoop down to retrieve it. The envelope is edged in black, the writing unfamiliar. My hands begin to tremble. I turn it over and over but cannot bring myself to open it. It sits on the mantelpiece until I can bear it no longer.

I tear it open. It is from her husband, John. I glance at the first page. All I see is one word.

"I am hartely[sic] sorry to convey to you the death of my poor wife on 18th January. But she is still living in glory. All the doctors in the Collony [sic] were of no use, for it ad [sic] got to her brain. She had all the attendance as could be had, for every neabour [sic] in the flat gave assistance, night and day, for she was respected by all.

We buried her on the Thursday at Fryerstown in the consecrated ground. The kindness of my mates and neabours [sic] I will never forget. Mr. Selby the Storekeeper went 4 miles to fetch an American waggon to carry her to her resting place.

Think of our parting in London, the misery of the voyage, the hundreds of miles traveling [sic] under an Australian sun, lying under gum trees, and now to be parted from one that I so greatly valued, the very joy of my life. But God's will be don [sic]. He rules for all the best".

My own heart breaks once more. My child has departed this life. Never to see her countenance again. And all for what? The thin promise of a fortune.

The letter falls to my lap. I gaze out the window. Through my tears, I see the morning sun catching the golden orbs of the Australian wattle thriving in the courtyard.

I hear her words: it's the gold I promised you.

### **Inspiration statement**

Letters written by my great-great grandparents provide insights into the reality of separation, as well as firsthand accounts of everyday life on the Victorian goldfields 1856-1862.



*The Library will be closed from  
12 December 2024 to 5 January 2025  
Merry Xmas to all*

# I Thought I Knew Something about this Place

*Stuart Campbell*

After a week in England shaking off the jetlag from Sydney, I fly into Belfast for the first time in my life. I've been preparing for the trip for months, creating a mental impression of the city from novels, short stories, historical works, films and documentaries.

My late father, born in Belfast, wrote a five-page family history in 1999 that traces the line from my great great-grandparents to my brothers and me. Will a visit to Belfast fill the tantalising gaps in his account? Will it keep his memory alive?

I'm staying in a house on the road leading out to the Antrim coast. The garden backs onto the muddy shore of the Lough where the ferries glide past Holywood and out to England and the Republic. The cold wind scours my Australian tan. A pale neighbour in swimming trunks waves to me as he braves the slippery rocks and seagull poo.

The great square girder crane of Harland and Wolff stares back from a mile away. It's the site of the Titanic exhibit now, but my grandfather and thousands of other Belfast men toiled there making steel ships.

It was the lack of steel that brought my ancestors from Scotland to Belfast. My great great-grandparents were from Coatbridge, a town sometimes dubbed the most dismal in Scotland. In the 1800s it was a hellhole of blast furnaces, but by the end of the century the ironstone deposits that had made the steel barons rich were exhausted, and the place was in economic decline. Around the turn of the century my great grandparents John and Mary left for Belfast with their children, following the path of Scots Protestants since the time of James I.

On my first day I drive the ten minutes to Carrickfergus, primed for an emotional charge. I mean, isn't Carrickfergus the subject of that haunting Irish song? But the big Sainsburys carpark and the dull public housing estates don't match the wistful ardour of the music. It's the first time – and not the last – that I find that what I think I know about Belfast is wrong.

But Carrickfergus is a long way from my family's territory; we came from the Shankill in West Belfast, the crucible of The Troubles. Great grandfather

John, as my father told it, was a strict Presbyterian who humped sacks at the Ulster Dairy Company until he was eighty. He abhorred gambling; the 'devil's cards' were forbidden in his two-up two-down gaslit house near the Crumlin Road Gaol.

Grandfather James abandoned his family in about 1932 to work as a greaser on the *SS San Zeferino*, a tanker sailing between England and South America. My grandmother took their three small children to England when my father would have been about four. The fact that Dad spent time in foster care in Brighton speaks to the struggle my grandmother must have faced to establish herself in London. When the Salvation Army brought James back from South America he presented my grandmother with a marmoset monkey.

It's time for my first taste of the city centre. I take the Larne railway that potters in from the Antrim coast. The passengers are courteous, unhurried, mostly elderly couples. An affable conductor sells tickets as we pass the featureless office blocks and warehouses into Lanyon Place station. There's thin traffic on the walk into the city centre. The bars have a hurdy-gurdy appearance with their lavish tiles and ironwork – no rustic English pubs here. City Hall looms into view, a baroque bastion of Unionism that bullies the surrounding city streets into submission. I'm lost, struggling for some sense of association with this city. My father left when he was an infant, my grandfather during the Depression. I'm ninety years too late.

When my brothers and I were growing up near London, our parents insisted we were Scottish, never Northern Irish. We were all given Scottish forenames, we knew our family tartan and a few Gaelic words like sgian dubh and ceilidh. The parents got all sentimental over bagpipe records on the gramophone. Mum, who was born in Somerset, was Andy Stewart's number one fan, although as far as I know she never set foot in Scotland. We went to see the Edinburgh Tattoo at Wembley Stadium, and one of my brothers had to wear a little kilt as a pageboy at a family wedding. To this day I wear my Scottish clan tie when I wear one at all.

So what to make of the Belfast connection? While my Scottish heritage was signified by tartan, bagpipes and caber tossing, the tokens of my Northern Irishness were few: Memories of my late grandmother, who lived in a council flat in North London and spoke with a strong Belfast accent; the five-shilling postal orders great aunt Agnes sent me from Belfast each birthday; my father's small stock of stories about Belfast, which since he'd left at the age of four must have been second-hand. I knew my grandfather was involved in conflict with Catholics (he was a B Special and a machine gunner in the Duke of Abercorn's



bodyguard) and that he belonged to an Orange lodge, but Belfast glowed dimly in my mind alongside the shimmering lochs of Scotland. By 1970 my great aunt – the last known member of my Belfast family – had passed away.

When I left for Australia in 1977 in the third instalment of my family's economic migration, The Troubles had spilled over into England; I was relieved to leave behind the threat of bombs in pubs and the London Tube. Belfast faded into my past as I shoehorned myself into a new homeland and an academic career. The Good Friday Agreement in 1998 was just another piece of international news alongside the resignation of President Suharto, earthquakes, and Monica Lewinsky.

But now I'm here in Belfast I'm hungry to know this place, hungry to see the places my forbears knew. It's a tiny city centre, easily covered in a day or two on foot. The grand Unionist institutions – City Hall, St Anne's Cathedral, Queens University – seem incongruously grand against the suburban ordinariness and the shopping strips dotted with shuttered stores that haven't reopened since Covid.

The pubs express an essential Belfast. I have lunch one day at the Crown Liquor Saloon with its intricate tiled frontage and maze of booths where guffawing boozers are packed in like kippers. I opt for a gigantic meat pie that even a pint of Guinness can't wash down. Next day in a white stuccoed seaside hotel on the Antrim coast I pass over the Stew, Soda Bread and Tea for roast beef and a serve of potatoes big enough to feed a village. "Nobody goes hungry here," says the uniformed waiter, straight out of 1960. The white tablecloths are starched rigid and the cutlery gleams. At the table next to us a New Zealand couple are tracing their Game of Thrones route. A middle-aged local brings his old mam in for lunch, and the waiter helps to manoeuvre her wheelchair into place with kindness and care.

I tell barmaids and Uber drivers the outline of my story: They've heard all this before from foreigners curious about the bloody mess their families escaped. They respond with relief and precarious optimism: It's much better now with The Troubles behind us. While truth telling on the South African model is a distant prospect, The Troubles and their antecedents are frankly explained in the City Hall public exhibition over sixteen rooms, albeit with scrupulously fair apportioning of responsibility. The Linen Hall, an exquisite library housed in a former warehouse, has a dainty tearoom alongside a collection of 350,000 items in its 'definitive archive of The Troubles'.

I want to see where my ancestors lived but it's outside the train line that loops around the inner city. My patch is around the Crumlin Road gaol. You'll need to drive there, someone tells me, but I'm anxious not to end up in a no-go area.

Instead I book a private taxi tour starting at the Falls Road and ending on the Shankill Road side of the Peace Wall. My driver is a seasoned in-car history tutor who challenges everything I think I know about The Troubles, including my lame assertion that religion was at its core. "No", he says, "It's all about identity", and expounds a plausible theory that the strength of identity with your faction correlates with the likelihood of becoming a paramilitary. We stop at the murals on the Republican side of the wall. Do I think they should be removed? I gaze over at the Bobby Sands mural, mumble something, and get a lecture on the arguments and counter arguments. More scrupulous fairness.

When we cross to the Loyalist side, he confesses he's a bit nervous at being there; I've already guessed he's a Catholic. In a public housing development that looks like the English council estate where I lived as a child, I'm astonished to learn that there's an imaginary line across the street that divides the zones of influence of rival Loyalist paramilitaries. As the BBC reports, these groups are 'involved in criminality and drug dealing'; you don't deal on the wrong side of the line. I'm even more astonished to learn that the massive steel gates in the Peace Wall are closed at 6.30 each evening; I thought there was peace here? I'm struggling to connect great grandfather John playing Danny Boy on his fiddle in the thirties with the banality of these cul-de-sacs of semi-detached red brick festooned with Union Jacks.

A glutton for more perplexity, I book the tour of the Crumlin Road Gaol the next day. I've been watching *Once Upon a Time in Northern Ireland*, the BBC series of heart scouring interviews with men and women who'd been participants, willing or unwilling, in The Troubles. For me, the cold, grim gaol feels like a macabre shrine to the memories of those haunted victims. I'm perplexed that you can book the place for a wedding reception, but then I'm reminded that people under twenty-five in Belfast have no direct experience of The Troubles.

Criminals sentenced in the Crumlin Road Courthouse were marched to the gaol through a tunnel under the road. Nowadays the tunnel is blocked halfway through, and the neoclassical courthouse stands boarded up and mouldering in a fringe of weeds after numerous fires and failed redevelopment plans. The ruined Courthouse and the gaol-cum-wedding venue stare at one another across Crumlin Road, perhaps relieved to have left their pasts behind.

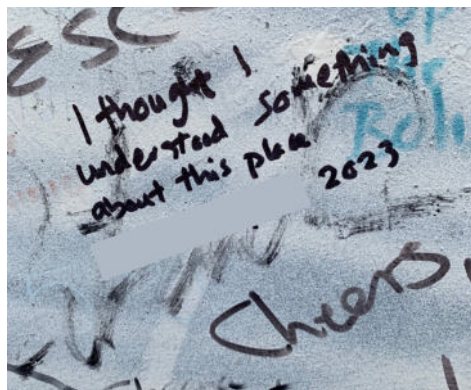
At Royal Hillsborough Castle, just thirteen miles away, the solicitous guides direct visitors through plush salons hung with priceless artworks. More a grand country house than a castle, it is the residence of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland as well as King Charles's pad when he's here. The guides have a stock of well-worn lame anecdotes about the visiting royals. If my reckoning is correct, grandfather James must have spent some time in the grounds with his machine gun guarding the 3rd Duke of Abercorn, who lived here from 1925. The castle is set in gorgeous gardens, and even the public

lavatories are trimmed in regal black and gold.

On my last evening, I watch the final episode of Once Upon a Time in Northern Island and have terrible dreams. Next morning I come across a picture on my phone: It's what I wrote on the Peace Wall when the taxi driver handed me a marker pen: 'I thought I knew something about this place.'

### Inspiration statement

After grieving my father for twenty-five years, I visited Belfast, the city of his irth, hoping to get to know him – and myself – better.



*My graffiti on the Peace Wall*



*Sketch of Carrickfergus Castle*

## Little Henrietta

*Christine Fairhall*

In 1800, Walter Oke Edye appeared new and slippery in the world, a rather fine little silver spoon in his mouth and he retained both silver spoon and slipperiness his whole life through.

It is now 1840 and approaching his house is the new servant, the comely 30 year old Mrs Sarah Pearcey. She has left an eleven year old marriage, a deeply disappointed woman. The household she left was of her husband, a builder, and they had married when she was nineteen, at St Dunstan's, Stepney, where he had been an active lay person so had been one to take his faith seriously. He was literate like herself, and in their household there had also been a dressmaker niece and his sister, a laundress and illiterate, all illustrating the lottery of life as to who gets the advantages and who does not. The deaths of several infants may help account for the failed marriage, who knows.

Tom had provided a reasonable dwelling but the house she will now dwell in, she sees, on arrival and looking up, is Georgian, two storey and beautiful. There is a small pocket handkerchief of garden in front. It is red brick, the end one of three semi detached dwellings, three tall windows across upstairs and downstairs are two windows to the right of a black front door with white surround. The proportions and the contrasting red brick and white trim are charming. At the roof line are dormer windows and clearly, from the chimneys, there will be fireplaces to clean.

She of course is to start work straight away. The absence of her predecessor is of two or three days so there is plenty of work to get through.

Her new mistress is beautifully dressed and her hair has begun to whiten, centre parted and rolled over each ear. She is a rather self-possessed, handsome woman of calm demeanour only just into her fifties. Sarah is comfortable in her presence and has no doubts about being able to maintain a good relationship with her.

On her brief view through the house Sarah thinks the master's study is perhaps the most interesting room, awesome in fact, despite it not being the biggest. She notes the fire place is full of two days' ash. She surveys the room quickly while her new mistress, Mrs Edye, stands in the doorway to see how she commences work. Once Mrs Edye has turned and left, satisfied, Sarah takes time to look around. The floor is parquetry and she must keep ash out of it and out of the central rug. Spindly chairs line the walls. There is also a buttoned velvet two-

seater sofa. In the latest fashion, it even has an attempt at springing within it, and the dark ceiling-height bookshelves each side of the fireplace are filled with tall volumes. The remaining walls under wall paper of formally arranged leaves and birds are covered with gilded picture frames, one even has a small cartouche set into it labelling its painting as of Bradfield Manor. There are some portraits also labelled with cartouches, Sir Walrond Walrond features, and some smaller oils are of angels and cupids. A round table off-centre in the room apparently serves as a desk.

She returns to work now in haste, filling a bucket with ash endeavouring not to stir up the fine particles. Now, where to carry this heavy object and how?

A man enters briskly and stops on seeing her. He is in his early forties, clearly younger than his attractive wife, and wears a dark frock coat, brilliantly white shirt the high starched collar of which carries a complex black cravat. Despite his large features and softened face he is attractive, manly, and like his wife, quite self-possessed, formal but pleasant.

“Oh, you’re the new woman — sorry the work accumulated. Go and find the footman Diggs and tell him my orders to dispose of the fireplace ash immediately.”

Having dealt with that disturbance to his comfort he opens his inkwell on the table and picks up his pen — there is the distracting situation of his Edye cousin who is risking bankruptcy in New South Wales through poor management and high living on a high status colonial salary and he is due some family advice, however long the journey such a letter will take — by the time it arrives his cousin’s folly could have run its full course. He forces himself to ignore the housework going on in his presence so late in the day and disappears into writing his palimpsest-like document, writes across the paper and then overwrites that in the other direction, the norm for writing to the colonies, and the letter on durably good quality paper then is folded to be its own envelope. Effectively, Sarah and her work are to him no longer there....

Time goes on.

Daily she rises early and sixteen hours later retires to her small bare room upstairs at the back of the house.

Time goes on.

And on.

The buttoned little sofa in the master’s study gets some new experiences.

It is a fine morning and the mistress, feeling sprightly, goes out to the long narrow garden at the back of her home to gather roses for her husband’s study. The footman will de-thorn them and hand them back to her to arrange in a vase, a

pleasant task for a lady proud of her home who does not genuinely work.

Walking carefully, her skirts do not even rustle, she goes quietly along the corridor so that the prepared bunch does not shake to dampen her silk skirts with the dew droplets that make the sweet roses even more beautiful, but she stops, arrested.

Her husband, Walter, is leaning across his study doorway taking his weight on his extended arms and standing within the space of his propped arms, gazing up, is Sarah.

All hell breaks loose.

Walter’s wife, Charlotte, packs quickly and quits, to reside, rather cleverly, with her sister-in-law.

Without delay she will soon remake her Will, the new document declares she is unmarried, and her considerable fortune she wishes now to go to her sister-in-law, Frances Cleave, widow of a man of the church.

Meanwhile, Sarah goes outside to again be sick.

Walter Oke Edye maintains his public persona’s respectability by installing Sarah out of sight in rented rooms nearer London. It is conveniently between his office in King’s Bench Walk, Middle Temple and his home. He has recorded a birth before, twenty years ago, without acknowledging true paternity. He has form.

This time he names the babe William Ormerod Edgar Oak but gives the mother’s real name, registers himself misleadingly as Walter Oak, clerk (i.e. lawyer) of the Middle Temple.

For the two future births, Sarah does the registering, but again without properly naming the father. The last pregnancy is twins, Edward and Henrietta.

Life seems straightforward enough.

William Ormorod Oak is not with them. A child of that peculiar name dies eight years later, elsewhere. At the home of a farmer. Sarah has however four “Pearcey” children, Arthur, Hubert, Teddy and Henrietta with her. She tends her little family, always patiently awaits the visits from Walter. Teddy has only one arm, but photos show a fake arm and yellowish hand later. She considers herself and the children, on balance, fortunate. She does not waste time hoping to marry Walter as she simply knows it is not going to happen. Besides, she is still married to Tom the builder. All the freedom belongs to Walter.

Life continues apparently straightforwardly but proves fickle: Sarah, and then Henrietta, get scarlet fever.

Sarah dies and Walter has several unacknowledged children on his hands.

Censi show he takes the boys into his home as “visitors” (later they are listed as “wards”) and he engages a fifteen year old nursemaid for them. A household servant and footman complete the new ménage. These are calls even on a lawyer’s purse and when Charlotte dies in early 1851 aged 67 he will shamelessly and successfully challenge her Will and will gain her fortune. This triumph thereby deprives his own sister, Frances, of this vast sum by means of his Probate Law Suit, *Edye vs Cleave*. Charlotte’s father, an Exeter lawyer, who perhaps had read Walter accurately, had insisted on a pre-nuptial agreement before they married but it is of no use now.

Henrietta, desperately ill, is quarantined elsewhere in the care of an illiterate servant, the physician hopefully prescribes head shaving, with the application thereon of damp cloths, and the ingestion of epsom salts and ammonia. The glands in her neck are huge, her mouth is swollen and her throat raw. Fevers burn furiously. The two year old’s glowing sandpaper rash moves beyond abdomen and groin, to extremities. She is probably dehydrated as she cannot swallow because of her rough sore throat to even call out in vain for her Mama. Besides, the servant probably endeavours to keep her distance from this notoriously fatal illness.

Little Henrietta Leonora Pearcey, aged two years and five days, dies alone.

And on her burial record, her surname is misspelt.

### **Inspiration Statement**

My research exposing a well-kept family secret, particularly the lonely death of little Henrietta, inspired this story.

## Tragedy at Cascades Rd *Elizabeth Friederich*

*Hobart Town 1856*

Mary-Ann was born in the Cascades Female Factory, the notorious gaol for female convicts in Van Diemen’s Land. Very few who were born within the high grey walls of this foreboding prison, with its cruelty and severe neglect, survived. Mary-Ann didn’t know this, or that it made her exceptional. She didn’t know much at all. She was only four. She didn’t know that six years earlier, her mother, twenty year old Mary McCarthy, was transported as a convict from Cork in Ireland. The struggle to survive during The Great Famine had lead Mary to set fire to a house, stating at her trial that it was with the set purpose of being transported. Mary-Ann was unaware of how desperate her mother had been then, seeing only poverty, hunger and probable death if she remained in her homeland, and how brave she had been to choose an uncertain future as a convict in a country so far away.

What Mary-Ann did know was that her Mammy and Daddy had been quarrelling and yelling at each other for most of the day. This was not unusual - her parents, John and Mary Rogers, were both known in the neighbourhood for their noise. Mary always spoke loudly and through her nose, perhaps as the result of Gaelic being her first language. Mary-Ann knew that although her mother was short in stature, she was feisty and had a temper. This day was worse than usual. Mary had been so enraged that she was hurling stones at the windows of their cottage, trying to shatter them. Shortly after four o’clock in the afternoon, she gave this up and flounced down the street to the knife grinder’s cottage to collect the milk tins he had made for her.

At last it was quiet in the house. John, still feeling angry, stoked the fire until it was blazing, bringing the two kettles hanging over it to the boil. The children had been running around wildly amid their parents’ drama and he bade them sit on the couch out of the way. The servant woman usually kept the fire going and an eye on the children, but she wasn’t there that day. The large fire in the hearth radiated warmth through the room and the children, tired from their exertion, settled quietly on the couch as they were told. It was unusual to have Daddy alone to mind Mary-Ann, her three year old sister, Caroline, and fifteen month old



brother, Thomas.

Mary-Ann's parents, were married just before she was born and both, having been well behaved as convicts, had since gained their conditional pardons. No longer being assigned as convicted servants, they had their own business and even their own servant. They made a living selling milk, with a small house in Cascades Road and six cows. Twice a day they went down the town selling their milk, leaving the servant to mind the children.

Today was a special day for little Caroline, "Bobby" as John called her, because it was her third birthday. Seeing Bobby looking forlorn, John put aside his annoyance with his wife and made a point of jollying his daughter to bring a smile to her face. John Rogers loved his three children dearly. When he was convicted, eleven years before, of stealing a sheep and consequently transported for seven years, he had left behind in Somerset, England, a wife and two small children. He still thought of them often, wondering what had become of them without him, his miner's wage and the free coal that went with it. Even though he was allowed a second marriage and another start in this new land, the pain and regret of never again seeing them remained. Mary-Ann didn't know that her father had given her the same name as his daughter back in England, and that baby Thomas had been given the name of his son.

As he sat by the fire with his children, John was thinking about his expected delivery of a cart of grain. He felt unsettled after all the quarrelling and Mary's departure half an hour ago. He was impatient to get the grain and wanted to go down the road to see if the cart was coming. After telling the children that he would be only a moment and to stay on the couch, he asked Mary-Ann to look after the other two. He did not intend to be longer than a minute. However, the time dragged on. It was a long time to stay on the couch and little Thomas was getting fretful. Instinctively Mary-Ann clumsily lifted her brother into her arms. He was heavy but she was confident in holding him as she was a big girl, nearly five, and often helped Mammy with the baby. She decided to take him down the road to find Daddy. He said he wouldn't be long so she would not have to go far. Caroline was being difficult, refusing to come with her, so was left at home.

Mary-Ann struggled along Cascades Road holding her brother and found her father, with the cart of grain, in the street outside "The Joiners Arms". He was talking animatedly with his mates and finishing a glass of beer. As John took the baby from her arms he asked where her sister was. The girl replied "I left her in the house". John helped Mary-Ann into the cart and had just started down the road when Emma Jones, their next door neighbour, came running

frantically towards them. "Your little girl is burnt" she cried.

Immediately John handed Thomas to her and raced to the house. Mary-Ann climbed down and ran after him as Mrs Jones hurried behind carrying the baby. There were many neighbours in the street outside John's house. By the time he ran into the yard Caroline had been stripped of her clothes and he saw his neighbours, Mrs Smith and Mrs Stafford carrying her into the house. Mary-Ann was ignored in the chaos and followed her father inside, where there was a strong smell of burnt clothes. She watched in horror as her father sobbed "Oh Bobby. My dear child..." Caroline struggled to say "Daddy". Mary-Ann stood back with eyes wide, shocked to see her sister's forehead red and burnt and her hair singed away, her whole body, arms and legs red, swollen and blistered. Neighbours were all talking at once, telling John that the child had run out of the house into the yard, with her hair and clothes ablaze.

The neighbour, Emma Jones, had run to her, picked her up and started to wrap her in her apron and dress. Emma's husband, William, had immediately taken the child from her and rolled her in the soft dirt in the street to extinguish the flames. Emma checked the house and finding it empty she ran to find the girl's father. The neighbour opposite, Mary Which, saw the child through her window and ran out with a bag. Soon many neighbours had rushed to help or watch the drama unfold.

People were calling "There is a child burnt". Someone had called "whose child" and Rosanna Stafford cried "Jack Rogers child".

As John looked, horrified, at his severely burnt little girl, he was so overcome with shock and fear that he was not able to do anything. He felt rooted to the ground, unable to think, only able to utter "My child, my child - oh my child is burnt - what shall I do?" The neighbours had already taken charge of the crisis and continued to direct each other. Mrs Smith was yelling "Put on some cold water" but Mrs Stafford interrupted loudly with "No don't - just wrap her in a blanket" and grabbed one from in the house. By then Mrs Harris had produced some oil and was covering Caroline's burns with it.

A little further along the road, in the knife grinder's house, Mary had been chatting with his wife,

Mary Rourke, telling her about how she and her husband had been having a few words. Interrupted by screaming and yelling outside in the street, they both rushed to the door to see what was going on. Neighbours were calling out and running to where a small child was lying, in the yard of a house, with people desperately stripping off her smoking clothes. Just as somebody yelled "Rogers child is burnt", Mary Rogers realised it was her Caroline and

immediately collapsed in a faint.

Recovering from the faint, Mary, shaking and sobbing uncontrollably, was helped to her house. She crumpled to the ground again as soon as she saw the child. John and Mary said nothing to each other or anybody else, both being so overcome by their shock and grief. Four year old Mary-Ann, confused and overwhelmed by all the people, was forgotten by the adults caught up in the tragedy.

Half an hour after the accident, at about five thirty, the doctor, James Agnew arrived. He entered the room which was full of people and ordered them out. Emma Jones took the baby, Thomas, with her, but Mary-Ann, bewildered and distressed, refused to leave her parents, even though they seemed unaware of her. Another doctor arrived and also directed the neighbours to leave the house, doing so himself when he noticed the presence of Dr Agnew. As the crowd left, Dr Agnew acknowledged the parents, John and Mary, and noted that they were both extremely distressed. The doctor observed that the child's burns were very extensive, almost over the entire surface of her body from her forehead to her feet. She was obviously in a hopeless condition from the shock and effects of the burns. All he could do was advise the parents to continue with the application of oil. Before he left, he suggested they try giving the child a little milk, but observed that she was not able to swallow.

Later there would be time for recriminations and guilt, but as the evening sky darkened, Mary and John remained in shock and alone in the house except for tearful frightened Mary-Ann and their desperately loved Caroline, as Caroline lost consciousness. The fire was left to die down and candles lit, as the family spent what precious time was left with their dying daughter. Mary and John, weeping, helpless and unable to do anything to save their precious child, watched her life fade away. At nine o'clock, the neighbour Emma Jones came to the house to discover that Caroline had died.

### **Inspiration Statement**

Mary-Ann is my great grandmother. This story brings her family to life. They become real people not just names and dates on a chart.

## A Place in Time

*Roberta Madsen*

As the sun seeps into my forlorn structure the warmth relieves some of my despondency. The fingers of the sun's rays stealthily creep into the shadows, highlighting two figures glaring at the threatening monster hovering above me.

As they gaze towards me, they suddenly look familiar. I am seeing them both from decades ago, when the old man was a young lad. At that time, he had clambered nimbly over my slate roof to put on my chimney pots. The other figure, a younger lady loved to skip around my garden as a child. I listen intently. I hear Albert relate to his niece how he balanced precariously on a tall ladder to paint my walls to make me beautiful.

I am not beautiful now.

The view from this land, on which my structure sits, once extended far on the horizon. The earth then felt the soft pad of the feet of the indigenous people of the Wangal clan of the Eora nation. They left this landscape undisturbed for thousands of years. Proudly performing their ceremonies, their voices wafted up into the tall eucalypts, the chants and dance recording their legends of the dreamtime. These were suddenly silenced. New people arrived banishing it all, leaving only the spirits. These aboriginal people adapted their lives to work with the land; these newcomers set about adapting the environment to serve their needs. The forests, that for so long had protected the earth, were destroyed. The timber was required for their buildings and furniture. Grasslands were created for a different species of animal to graze on. They tilled the land and grew crops, vineyards and orchards. Men with names familiar to these early settlers, William Patterson, Richard Johnson, William Cox and Robert Campbell claimed ownership and took possession of this land instigating these changes. As more settlers arrived stately homes dotted the landscape.

I became one of these. The sand stock bricks to construct my walls were first laid in 1882.

Sydney, initially a struggling penal colony, was now a city stretching outwards to form suburbs. The new railway station at Ashfield was an attraction for people to settle close by, building family dwellings. The Great Southern Road cut a ribbon through these. This road was busy with horses, wagons and carts travelling towards Liverpool and onwards to the south of the country. Laden carts would

travel the opposite way to the city wharves with piles of wool bales and other produce. In the nearby railway yards, there was a constant shunting of engines as they billowed their smoke and steam. Newly constructed shop buildings were slowly blocking my view of all this activity.

Alexander Bryant for some time had sold produce from his premises on Liverpool Road. Alexander and his wife Emily came to dwell in my now completed structure in 1883. They named me Fairholm. Their lifestyle and family activities, especially those of their ten children, pervaded this home for the next thirty years.

I was an impressive house then with a graceful cedar staircase and ballroom. My bay windows and the fine lace railings on my verandas created my Victorian elegance. Time moved on. The parents aged and the Bryant children became adults leaving to establish their futures elsewhere. Deserted of care, over the next ten years I showed signs of wear.

By December 1927 I was a sad sight of neglect.

Five-year-old Peggy and four-year-old Judy were the first to investigate my rooms. I had often observed them growing from babies into lively young girls at the property adjoining me in Liverpool Road. People visited here as Percy Peachey photographed their image for posterity in his studio.



*The neglected house in Norton St, Ashfield in December 1927*

The girls entered through my front door being careful of its shattered glass. Constance their mother and their energetic father Percy took stock of the work that was required to make my rooms habitable. Their recently widowed grandmother Grannie Brown, was soon leading the way with the scrubbing and cleaning, encouraging everyone in this activity.

Some major building works shook me for a while. A new staircase was constructed incorporating a porch entrance way. On its outside wall a shiny nameplate was attached proudly announcing my name was now Shenley. Connie and her mother Kitty often sighed as they polished the sign bringing memories of a home far away and loved ones left behind.

With furniture and precious family items installed and arranged I once again felt loved and cared for.

One day there was such excitement as a piano was delivered and placed in the stylish lounge room with its bay windows looking out on the fledgling rose garden. The lyrics of old and popular songs wafted through my rooms as the exquisite voice of Connie brought them alive. Musical occasions enjoyed with others became a regular pastime. The children's initial attempts at playing the piano were not quite so melodious. Not long after they settled in and made my structure a welcome home once again, I heard the cry of a newborn babe. Albert born February 1929, and his sister Anne born two years later in December 1931, joined their older sisters in making the house a vibrant family home.

Order and beauty came to the once overgrown garden enhancing my attractiveness. Connie created the garden beds with flowers replicating her family's English garden. The vegetable and cutting flower beds were laid out in neat rows at the back section of the garden. Percy, accustomed to his native Australian climate planted numerous fruit trees and was delighted with their eventual bounty. He developed an interest in keeping bees to promote pollination.

Percy and Connie were often seen stepping out of my wrought iron front gates for their involvement in community events. Always a delight to observe their fine attire when setting off to attend, often for Connie to perform in, musical concerts in the city. While Percy and Connie were involved in socialising with others who had shared their experiences of the war in France, visits with the children of these families were always exciting for the four Peachey children.

Decisions were made about the accommodation in the house, as the world experienced an economic Depression. Percy's photographic business suffered a downturn. Three upstairs rooms were made into a rental property. The room

at the rear situated above the kitchen and laundry, that some time ago had absorbed the chatter of servants, was remodelled into a kitchen.

Each working day, at precisely the same time, I watched Percy purposely walk up the long brick path through the garden on his way to his studio at 184 Liverpool Road. An exciting piece of modern technology in the way of a telephone was installed to enable contact with him while at work. On occasion the children would be allowed to turn the handle on the side of the wooden box to talk to each other, generally causing much hilarity.

With the decline in portraiture Percy continued to walk up the path as he developed his printing business successfully patenting his formula for printing on to aluminium.

The children left each morning in a flurry to attend the local Ashfield school opposite the studio. I excitedly awaited their exuberant return in the afternoon as their chatter resounded through the house. Later they became more composed when they ventured further to their high schools at Canterbury and Petersham. Eventually further studies saw them all proceed into adulthood with their chosen careers.

While dark clouds often brought hailstones hitting hard on my slate roof, a different type of dark cloud gathered. The world was to witness another world war. Like her mother in the previous war, Peggy, this time was the one to don the uniform.

On 20th November 1943 she took leave from her radar operator duties on Ash Island in Newcastle. She changed her Women's Australian Auxiliary Air Force uniform for the elegant bridal gown she had created. After watching her being photographed in my garden along with her bridesmaids, her sisters Anne and Judy, she left in the family car for the Croydon Congregational Church. Here she married RAAF pilot, Jock Fraser.

Sometime later, I heard the cries of a newborn babe. Peggy with her daughter Margaret Robin moved into the apartment upstairs. Not long after, at the conclusion of the war, Jock joined them here to make their family unit as he studied at Sydney University. With the arrival of another baby girl my home once again took on a spirited dimension.

The music stopped, the lyrics silenced, and sorrow descended. In September 1949 Connie died. The family dynamics changed. For several more years young Albert and Anne filled my rooms with the vivaciousness of their young friends before they too left for new endeavours.



*75 Norton St, Ashfield getting a fresh coat of paint.*

The second generation of children crossed the road to the same local school and delighted in growing up in my intergenerational house. They too experienced the joy of being immersed in the beauty of the flower gardens and spent time learning from their grandfather how to grow and care for the food crops nurtured in my productive garden. Watching them climb the now mature fruit trees to pluck the ripe fruit was a joy. They were always wary of the many beehives in the garden. While sucking the honey from the chewy comb was delicious, the bee stings were not so pleasant.

Soon, new spouses arrived and then a growing number of cousins. It was enlivening and sometimes chaotic as they all gathered each week for the Sunday roast luncheon.

In October 1958 there was immense activity occurring all around me. The furniture was removed. My rooms lay empty once more. After much chaos there was suddenly a devastating quiet.

The family were gone.

A red brick façade grew up around part of my walls, suffocating me. Many



people entered my rooms to meet to discuss business issues and to dine. The once tasteful 'front room' was filled with kitchen equipment. When after some time people from a different cultural background came to enjoy each other's company, this kitchen was the scene of my disaster. While people were revelling to welcome in the New Year, flames escaped from here scorching my walls and causing internal parts of my structure to collapse in the blaze. My roof that had sheltered so many was severely damaged.

Now, as the sun's rays brightened and dispersed the shadows, that menacing crane unleashed its destructive force and my bricks returned to being a pile on the ground from where they had originated.

The architectural structure that once formed this house vanished.

Shared memories of our home are all that remain.

My childhood was enriched growing up in this intergenerational home.

The wealth of family history was lived and absorbed within the walls of this house.

The power of a sense of place cannot be underestimated.

A place connects us and links us to our past.

### **Inspiration Statement**

Sharing memories with my 92 year old uncle as we witnessed our home being demolished inspired research into the history of the house.

# Nothing to Forgive

*KT Major*

This is the story of my grandfather, who was a real bastard.

Firstly, I'll be mentioning many crimes yet to be prosecuted. All names have been changed, and the word 'allegedly' sprinkled liberally across this story. Secondly, this is oral history — lived experiences of my grandmother Popo, my mother, and me. I haven't found a paper trail, nor do I want to. I reserve the right to plead that 'recollections may vary'.

My grandmother Popo was eighteen when she married Liew Dahai in Malaysia. He was twenty-one, and hailed from China. Mama was born that same year in 1953.

Three years later, Popo was pregnant again, when Liew told her about his other woman. Mama clung to her father's leg, begging him not to go. Instead of comforting her, Liew connected his boot with her tear-stained face.

Liew was a policeman, who'd been sent undercover to another city to infiltrate a gang. But he'd been turned to the other side, lured with promises of flesh and cash. Awash with money, he'd bought a new townhouse in Petaling Jaya.

That day, he gave Popo an ultimatum. She could starve on the streets, or bear the ignominy of living together with his second woman, who was also pregnant.

Popo had no good choices. She gritted her teeth and moved into the townhouse. Soon, Popo gave birth to Auntie Leslie, and two months later, Liew's second woman gave birth to Uncle Fu.

But more humiliation was in store. Liew wasn't home much, but when he did return, he brought more women. The townhouse became Liew's harem.

One day, it all came crashing down. The police finally raided the house, and found guns under Liew's bed. Evidence, allegedly, of corruption.

Everyone was arrested. Two wives, three children, all thrown into jail. Staring at the walls and one another, struggling to feed the babies.

The hammer fell. Liew was to be deported back to Hainan Island. The same island known for Hainanese chicken rice. Otherwise, a hellhole.

When it came time, Liew pulled four-year-old Mama onto his lap, and asked if they would come to China. This was the man who was all snarls when his

daughter pleaded with him to stay, but all smiles when asking them to come with him.

At twenty-one, Popo had to choose between hell — this time in an unknown country — or poverty, now with two mouths to feed. Both Mama and Popo told him no. Then Mama hopped off his lap and went with her mum. They chose the possibility, however infinitesimal, of a better life.

Popo, Mama and baby Leslie got on a bus from Malaysia to Singapore, with only five dollars in their pocket. Popo nearly came to regret that decision. They were dirt poor. Mama and Auntie Leslie begged for scraps on the streets, earning pennies by folding paper bags and delivering newspapers at dawn, while Popo cleaned houses and mended clothes. Hungry all the time. Mama often gave up her food for Leslie.

But they survived. Popo remarried, and had two more children. My Gonggong, the grandfather I acknowledge, loved his four children. He was a chain smoker, but worked hard as a labourer to support his family. Popo tolerated his faults; she also loved him.

Mama found it especially hard when she couldn't afford books. A precocious student, she did homework by the light of kerosene lamps. Mama became a Singaporean citizen at sixteen, and joined the Teachers' Training College at twenty. When she walked into her music elective class, a man fell over himself giving up his chair.

That was my Papa. Ten years older, he called his students 'his kids' so often that Mama thought he was already married. Papa was good at teaching sports, and he taught Mama how to swim on their third date. Clearly, he was also pretty strategic. From the pictures I've seen, of svelte Mama, and a ripped and tanned Papa, I can safely say a good time was had by all. And, after her stepfather's chain-smoking habit, Mama chose my dad, who doesn't smoke. He's even allergic to alcohol.

Gonggong was there when I was born. I don't remember him much, except I was two when he died of cancer in 1986, and I was a little shit at his funeral. I drummed with incense sticks, and folded boats out of joss paper, while Popo hid and cried by herself in the car.

What happened to Liew Dahai? His other woman didn't want him either. She dumped her son with a relative and escaped to Penang. Liew was deported to China alone.

There, he established a great racket. He became Chief Policeman of Hainan

Island, receiving protection money from all. He had six more children with numerous women, fathering his youngest child in his sixties.

Popo went on to live her best life. She played mahjong, danced the cha-cha, and until recently, had boyfriends. Nobody begrudges her fun. She's earned it.

When I was eight, Popo and Mama brought my two sisters and I to visit Kota Tinggi, where Mum was born. We stayed in our friend Auntie Keng's *kampung*, a rustic weatherboard shack with a tin roof — like most houses in Sydney. Mama hadn't spoken much about her childhood, only conveying nostalgia for the food and community they'd left behind when they were forced to move. I was deeply curious to see the place.

We had a blast. We loved visiting the *pasar malaam*, or night market. Stalls lit by fluorescent lighting, run by noisy generators. The smell of charcoal-cooked satays mingling with the sweat of packed bodies. Plus, an old man selling bras, who could tell your cup size just by looking at you. That night, we slept on the *kampung* floor with full bellies, and a newfound understanding of why Mama had been happy here.

We were woken at 6 a.m. by frantic pounding on the front door. A strange man was calling Popo 'dama', and my Mama 'dajie'. Elder sister. It was Uncle Fu, son of Liew's second woman. They had all lived together once, in that dreadful townhouse in Petaling Jaya.

The old bra seller at the market had recognised us. He was a friend of Liew, who'd been searching for Popo for over thirty years. Uncle Fu had found his father on Hainan Island earlier and reconciled with him. Liew had handed Uncle Fu a bag stuffed with renminbi — protection money, allegedly — with instructions to find Popo.

Uncle Fu spent some of that money advertising in newspapers and offering rewards. After spotting us at the *pasar malaam*, the old bra seller had rung and tipped him off, and Uncle Fu had driven like a madman to Kota Tinggi.

It was a fraught reunion.

We weren't allowed in while the grown-ups were talking. My elder sister claimed the best eavesdropping spot by the staircase, so I resorted to pressing my ear against the thin walls. That was how I found out, in 1993, that I had a bevy of new relatives, and a grandfather still alive. I was flabbergasted. So was my mum. But she was also wary. She wanted to ensure Uncle Fu was — by all measures a stranger galumphing up at dawn — genuine, before allowing him near her children.

After decades, Liew Dahai rejoiced at finding Mama and Popo again. Would we come see him on Hainan Island?

It took fourteen more years of Liew chipping away at us. A stack of handwritten letters, detailing his longing to be reunited. Ever-faithful Uncle Fu always proffering his phone, with Liew on the other line. Finally, Mama relented.

In 2007, Mama bought tickets for her and Popo to visit Hainan Island. Just for five days, in case it all got too much. She let us choose whether we wanted to go. My sisters said yes. I was torn.

‘Don’t you want to meet your Gonggong?’ asked Mama.

I was twenty-three, and knew the full story by then. I was furious that Liew wanted acknowledgement as my grandfather, when he hadn’t spent a single second in my life. That he had the audacity to demand forgiveness for his sins. And he couldn’t leave Hainan Island, so we had to travel to him, like some sort of unholy pilgrimage.

While my belly roiled, Mama’s lessons rang in my head: ‘Forgive and forget. Respect your elders. Be the bigger person.’ I made my decision.

‘That man isn’t my Gonggong,’ I said firmly. ‘Gonggong died when I was two.’

It fell to my sisters Brie and Raine to accompany Popo and Mama to Hainan Island, where Liew reigned as king. According to Raine, a crowd gathered to witness the reunion of their famous Chief Policeman with his beloved first wife. Whoever did Liew’s PR was bloody good. There were even welcome banners and firecrackers.

But Popo, who’d been harangued into going by Uncle Fu, Mama, and friends, refused to speak to him. Not a word all visit, not a single emotion crossing her face, up until the moment she left.

My sisters said Popo broke down on the plane home, grieving at the spectacle of a reunion she’d been goaded into but wasn’t ready for, at the trauma she’d had to face again because her friends and family thought closure was a good idea.

She found no closure. Liew Dahai had had a merry life, surrounded by women and more children he could ignore. Fifty years later, Popo’s heart was broken all over again.

Months afterwards, Popo came to speak to me. She’d regretted going to Hainan Island, and now she was regretting not reconciling with Liew. She asked me why I’d refused to go.

‘Popo, I don’t know him,’ I said. ‘I’ve seen pictures, but it’s like looking at a stranger. For me, there’s nothing to forgive, because he’s nothing to me. Please, don’t be sad. Live your life well.’

A few years passed, and Popo enjoyed more mahjong and boyfriends. When she was ready to face Liew again — for her own sake — she flew over with Mama in 2013. This time, the brazen onlookers made Liew sing a love song. She unbent a little. Mama said Popo even spoke a few words to him.

Mama told Liew she needed to save up before visiting again. I know it wasn’t money she meant, but emotional fortitude. The strength to consider rekindling a relationship with her father, whose faults had not been blighted by time. To reconcile the duelling emotions of her three-year-old self who had been kicked away like dirt flung from his bootlaces, and the woman who’d grown up losing two fathers.

Mama never saw him again. Two years later, in 2015, Liew fell over in his bathroom. No one found him till it was too late. Liew Dahai died alone.

Thus ends the tale of the man for whom I feel nothing. Allegedly. The grandfather I refused to acknowledge, but just spent several pages describing at length.

In writing this story, I’ve realised it’s not a tale about the man, but of the women in his life. Popo chose to go to Singapore, to give us better lives. Where I was born, and grew up happy. Where I met an Aussie who became my husband, and for whom I left that tiny island for a much larger one — Australia — eleven years ago.

Mama rose above her impoverished beginnings and gave me every opportunity I ever knew. She even gave me the choice of visiting Liew. She could have said she needed my support. Or that I should respect my elders. But she allowed me, a quivering mass of outrage at twenty-three, to decide. That I could say ‘No’, without impunity or regret, is testament to her generosity.

Liew Dahai is nothing to me, because my mother and grandmother have borne all the pain themselves, and wear their scars on the inside. I’m not shaped by his blood in my veins, but by the brave choices of the women before me.

### Inspiration statement

The true story of my grandfather, crime lord and all-round scoundrel, who found us after decades lost, and begged for our forgiveness.

# The Gate

*Kathy Mexted*

The visitor's tail-lights narrow to a pinpoint half a kilometre away as he slows to take the corner of our driveway. When he is safely off the property, I take a moment in the still of the night to contemplate the boiling water in our glass kettle. It's hypnotic bubbles bounce around urgently as it reaches its peak in the see-through utensil. My cup of tea can cool while I do the dishes. The kids are all in bed, and I'll be packed and in bed by 8.30pm. Saturdays aren't what they used to be. I'm going home tomorrow, three hours' drive, to see Dad. He lives in care now, but he didn't want to sell the house, so it sits empty on the edge of town. 'Someone might need it,' he'd told me quietly. He was right. Four of us had moved in at some point after Dad moved out.

It's been a couple of months since I had vacated and come back to my own home after a stunted plan to move overseas – Dad's house was a great transitory hub. He was right – I had needed it. My husband is away working tonight and the little farm is quiet, except for the crackle of the fire. Our endless list of unfinished projects are invisible in the dark. It is the first night of winter.

The startling shrill of the Nokia ringtone makes me jump and suds spray across the bench as I peel off the snug pink gloves to answer to an unidentified number. 'It's Fiona from the Nursing Home.'

I know who she is. We worked together 20 years ago. Back when I was 'not a nurse's bootlace' according to a cranky old patient.

'How's things, Fi?'

There's a pregnant silence.

'Dad's gone!' she blurts out. She's upset. She loved him. They all did. He was 'always a gentleman' and 'no trouble.' I know that means a lot to the hectic lives of the under-resourced nurses. I was one of them.

'He died in my arms!' she continues. It was over in about three minutes and the news is just ten minutes old. We chat as I try to calm her. I thank her for her care and attention and I try not to cry as I think of his smiling blue eyes that were slowly dimming. His sparkly stockman's eyes that crinkled at the sides and his soft fleshy cheeks. The side of his face was always a bristly welcome, more so after he'd been harvesting and it was encrusted with rice stubble.

I run my fingers down the page of a blue address book as I sit alone on the

couch to ring my seven siblings. Only one answers the phone. No 1, 4 and 8 are in bed. No 2 is at a Memorial Service. No 3 is in the Alice Springs desert with No 7. No 6 is watching tele.

When we meet up at home, we all have so much to say, and the eulogy talks of pioneers, football, flying and family. Everybody has a story about the farm. How Mum supposedly burnt the house down so she could move into town. How Dad's first job was to walk the sheep from one end of the state to the other to fatten them on the roadsides, and then walk them back to market. He was 15 and he did it on a pushbike.

The day after the funeral, five of us drive the 17 miles out of town to visit the farm. The new owner parks his plough to chat with us by the shearing shed. Its rough-hewn sugar gum poles, held in place with wire, are collapsing at the joins. Our children rummage among the debris of a fallen roof and collapsed sides, wondering what we are doing here. The old house site has little to show for itself other than Grandma's plantation of lemon scented gums that create an eerie feeling of ghostly lingering. I think we'd found all the melted pennies and spent cartridges in the dirt at their base. Rabbits. Watch out for old rabbit traps, you know Aunt Vera almost lost her leg in one. Dangerous bloody things.

I search for a sign, a souvenir to ease the ache. We are all drawn to the shearing shed. It was the heart of the farm and the hub of weekends. The eulogy slideshow had a few seconds of Super 8 footage of me encouraging my sister to jump from its roof into my waiting teenage arms. She jumped. I missed. The cedar tree at the end of the sheep race seems smaller but the recalled taste of corned beef sandwiches, hot tea and biscuits, and the smell of dust and manure are large. They're as large as the look on his face when he showed me how to mark lambs and realised that I didn't fully understand what we were about to do. I was 15, but I got the hang of it. It wasn't considered a girl's job back then to hoik the lamb onto my torso, use its front legs to spread its back legs and then wait for someone to attach the elasticiser rings. The little lambs walked away with shaky voices and even shakier legs. It was character building for me. The lambs were a business.

At the fallen fence under the cedar tree there is the rusting outline of a H V McKay gate. It makes a deep impression in the overgrown winter grass. I love these gates. I have a sketch of my yet-to-be-installed garden drawn on butcher's paper with a H V McKay gate central to the view from the kitchen window. It's been sitting in the drawer for seven years.

'Can I make you an offer on this gate?' I ask the farmer, fondling the rusty wire with the piece of rotting sheep yard still attached.



He is surprised. 'Yeah, sure,' he says.

We shake on the deal and I drive the boundary fences. Nothing is like it used to be. Internal fences have been moved, tracks are grown over and redirected and though we are welcomed, we don't belong here. But it is part of us. We linger in the timber paddock to remember the digger who lived out his last year, at Dad's invitation. With a gangrenous smile, he always offered us rabbit stew. He was happy in his covered drover's wagon. Dad would load us into the car for the half hour drive home to our own open fire, Mum's cooking, and the convivial conversations at a kitchen table that was never off duty.

At the pub where he drank after a long day, I rest on a stool with my feet on the bar rail. I'm wearing his R M Williams boots. I couldn't bear to bury him in them. I gave the undertaker his slippers – maybe he could shuffle to heaven. The boots needed to come home with me, to walk a different paddock. I put them with his shovel, crowbar, and fence-hole digger.

My sister pulls out some cash, 'I drew a bit out for funeral expenses, and I've got this much left over. We'll call it Dad's last shout.' We laugh and raise our golden glasses to the little ones at our feet.

The week is filled with reminiscences as we close the chapter on our childhood. We are now orphans. The house is cleaned out and each night we sing by a campfire in the back yard. I practice my night photography without a flash. The boots shine a dull glow against the orange and yellow coals. I'll fix it in post-production.

On the last night we are down to sorting through the photos. Three little cowboys in black and white; their cheeky grins and 60s hair telling of their time and Mum's handwriting on the back confirms it. Dad sits with a bended knee on a shearing shed deck, his booted leg raised under his elbow and his wide-brimmed hat resting on his stockman's trousers. It looks like a lunch well-earned and I wonder where it is taken. Was he the farmer, the shearer, or the agent? It's not our shed.

I'm so tired I can barely speak and I pack my bags with an iPod playing intimately. Springsteen sings to me, 'Is it you Babe, or just a Brilliant Disguise?' Somehow it seems fitting, because Dad was also a man of well-chosen words. A brilliant performer of bush poetry who rarely shared his deepest thoughts.

I'm up to the third verse and finishing the last suitcase when my sister lifts up one earphone. Why has she come to annoy me at 10pm when we're all leaving at first light?

'We've found a letter!' Her eyes flash with excitement. 'You've gotta come and listen while I read it out.'

We crowd into the small lounge room, gob-smacked at the ten-foolscap page letter written in his hand. It was meant for a time capsule, but page six tells us he can't bear to finish the letter. It is too much like saying goodbye, he reckons. And then from the grave, on our last night, he continues with the story of his life, thoughts, and feelings. How much he loved the farm, his footy, his family. He looks back with great recollection and shares with us the words that perhaps we'd never stopped to hear. And then he looks forward and tells us how to proceed without him.

Most of it I know, because we spent time together. I can't bear to listen to the end. I'll save it for when I'm alone and I can savour each instruction, each curve of the script and each carefully spaced emotional word. When I can't stand not to see his crinkly eyes twinkling at me again, I'll go back and find the letter that tells me how to go forward. And wearing his boots, I'll go and hang Grandpa's gate.

### Inspiration Statement

'When we hung the gate, I thought about all the conversations that would have been had around it, and the ones that I would miss'



# She married a murderer

## *Denise Newton*

*Campbell Town, Tasmania, 1862*

She thought it all spiteful gossip, vicious rumours from people who did not like her or know Tom as she did.

If only she had listened.

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Ann knew something of her new man's past. A Ticket-of-Leave convict, transported from Ireland for theft of a sheep. Being Irish herself that never troubled her; so many of her countrymen and women had worn the broad arrow.

She'd lost Michael after he was trampled by a horse, the mangled mess brought home on a stretcher unrecognisable as the husband she'd loved. The memory of it haunted her for the next five years, spent alone.

When Tom arrived in Deloraine to work on Coulter's sheep farm, they caught each other's eye under the balcony of the Deloraine hotel where she was housemaid. He had no money to speak of, and a rough way with him, but none of that troubled her. Being poor, she was used to grimy hands, muddy boots and curses. She hoped for better times with a man around again; in six weeks, they were living as husband and wife.

Tom had kissed the blarney stone more than once—honey could drip from his tongue. He'd tell a tale to have her in stitches, then quick as lightening, tell a sad one to make her weep. She was happy to come home to him after a long day washing floors and making beds at the pub. Tom gave her laughter and loving, and then two wee boys: the first named for him, followed by Hubert two years after. A grand little family, she thought.

The whispers started when young Tommy was learning to walk, his pudgy thighs trembling, him grinning with astonished delight. Her heart squeezed with love for him as she walked to the grocer, Tommy on one hip and a basket on the other, to buy vegetables for a stew.

As she dropped the goods into her basket, she heard low voices from the corner and glanced across. Two women, who fancied themselves Deloraine's better sort of ladies, deep in hushed conversation. She caught his poor first wife, beaten and life sentence, before they saw her looking and their

murmuring ceased.

Walking home she puzzled over what she'd heard. Were they talking about Tom's first wife? She'd died, Ann already knew that. But beaten to death? And by who? Surely not Tom. The women said the killer had received a life sentence—Tom had his Ticket, wasn't serving life. Whatever had happened to his wife, Tom had no part in it. Besides, he wasn't a violent man, had not lifted a finger against her or the baby.

But that night she slipped in a question as they lay together in their narrow bed.

'What was your first wife's name, Tom?'

There was a brief silence.

Then: 'Catherine.'

'How did she die?'

'Met with an accident.'

'The same with my poor Michael! What sort of accident?'

The blanket was dragged from her shoulders as Tom sat up. 'What are all these questions for? I don't pester you with questions about Michael. All that's in the past.

Leave it there.'

She lay very still until he slid down and she could pull the covers over her cold arms.

Try as she might, she couldn't halt the thoughts that bucked and spun in her mind like that panicky horse that had killed Michael. She had a sudden pang of longing for her first husband and for their lost years together.

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The whispers did not stop that day. She heard them many times, always quickly swallowed when she came near or turned to look directly at the speaker. The same words repeated: first wife, killed. She began to hear new ones: murder, trial, mercy.

She never again asked Tom about the manner of Catherine's death. But she couldn't stop herself from questioning him about her: what was she like? Where did they marry? When did she die? It was a strange compulsion to learn about this woman who had once shared his bed.

He gave up snippets, small nuggets that she stored away to consider later. She learned that Catherine had been Irish, and a convict like him. She learned that

they'd married in Launceston in March, 1851, but not had children.

Hubert was four in 1859 when Tom and Ann wed, in Saint Michael's Church. A bright day, spring blossom everywhere as they stood outside, greeting well-wishers. Widower and widow, united by God as part of His holy plan. So she thought.

By then they'd moved to Campbell Town, leaving behind the rushing sparkle of the Meander River for the gold of wheat fields and brown of sheep paddocks. Here Tom found work on local farms and they settled into a small cottage, just one room and a sleepout at the back, but comfortable enough.

After the wedding Tom's behaviour towards her began to change. He disliked it if she spoke to others, especially men. He cut short conversations at the hotel or the grocer. She couldn't understand his jealousy—she had no interest in flirting or gazing at other men. He was all she needed, but as his manner became more abrupt and suspicious, she gradually became aware that she'd begun to be a little afraid of him. He had never hit her.

He didn't need to. His size and strength, the ugly glower on his face when he was displeased, his unpredictable temper—all told her to take care, to never give him reason to strike out.

She was happy when she made a friend in Campbell Town. They met at the store. Their children were similar ages; they all shyly regarded each other over stacks of newspapers.

The woman picked up a copy and began to read from the front page.

'There's a conference of Temperance Societies in Launceston this week,' she said as she paid for her purchases. 'What do you think of the Temperance aims?'

Ann stammered, knowing nothing of Temperance but not wanting to show her ignorance.

The woman continued, 'I support their objectives. So much grief comes from drink. Not just from men's drunkenness, either. Do you remember the case from some years back in Launceston, a woman beaten by her husband when he found her drinking with other men? He killed her. Was sentenced to life, but that helped his poor wife none.'

Ann's chest tightened. His poor wife. All those whispers. Before she could stop herself, she had grasped the other woman's arm.

"Do you know her name? The murdered woman?" The word murdered fell

heavily from her tongue.

The woman thought. 'Tipping was her last name, I think.' She gave a small smile then looked closely at Ann. 'Did you know her?'

'No, no, I don't think so.' Ann went to gather the boys and leave, but hesitated. 'Do you live near?' she asked.

'Yes, the blue painted house; it's not far.'

'I'm on the corner. Would you like to come to mine? I'll make tea and our littlies can play. My husband is at work.' She didn't know why she felt a need to say that last bit. 'Lovely! We've not been here long; I don't yet know many neighbours,' the other woman replied.

Over tea Ann learned the woman's name was Martha, that her family had moved from Launceston but returned there often to visit her elderly parents, and that she was a staunch supporter of the Temperance movement, which she explained was about combatting the evils brought about by the demon drink. The two women became firm friends.

Ann tucked away the new nugget of information that had stopped her in her tracks in the store. A murdered woman in Launceston. It lay in her mind along with the others she'd secreted there, the whispers she'd heard. They gnawed away, troubling her as she went about her day and disturbing her dreams at night.

After months of this, she asked Martha if she knew of more about the dead woman from Launceston.

'No, but we are visiting my mother there next week. The Examiner has its office in town; my husband is a friend of the Editor. Perhaps he can find a back issue with a report on the trial.'

'Please don't go to any trouble.' Ann was beginning to regret asking.

'No trouble.' Martha tilted her head. 'But I think something is troubling you.'

After a long hesitation, the dam wall of worries broke and out they poured. Tom's harshness and jealousy. His first marriage in Launceston. The whispers. The murdered woman.

Martha's expression changed and she said, 'If you are correct, you could be in danger. Keep things calm at home until I return. Don't question or upset him.' Her tone was urgent; Ann promised she would try.

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Two weeks passed. Long days in which she tiptoed around Tom, careful of

word and deed.

When Martha finally knocked at her door, Ann could scarcely wait for her friend to take off her hat before asking, ‘Well?’

Martha sat down heavily, withdrew a paper from her pocket.

‘Edgar copied it from the news report. The killing happened in April and the trial in June, 1851. Eleven years ago.’ She made to pass it to Ann, who shook her head.

‘I can’t.’

Martha took it back and began to read.

‘Thomas Britt, convicted of murder, was brought up for sentencing. Catherine Britt came by her death from a kick given by him, but she was drunk, and he had reason to suspect her of other immoralities...His Honour said due allowance should be made for the excited state of his feelings; a manslaughter verdict would have been more proper. Mercy recommended.’

Ann felt sick.

Martha said, ‘I’m afraid there is more. The report on the inquest held after Catherine’s death gave more detail as to what happened. Do you want me to read...?’

At a mute nod from Ann, Martha continued,

‘Britt was inflamed by jealousy...he used revolting language towards his wife, swore he would do for her that night. On the way home he subjected her to most brutal assaults. A witness...placed himself between them but Britt knocked his wife to the ground and stamped violently on her head as she lay...she never spoke again and died the next day.’

Ann gave a choking cry. Murder. Those women had whispered the truth, after all. Why had no one told her to her face about Tom’s past crime? Would she have listened? She no longer knew, no longer felt sure of anything. She’d married a murderer, a man who had killed in a most brutal way. Would he do the same to her? Or her boys? Horrible visions engulfed her, the lads lying bloodied while their da stamped on their little heads. She buried her face in her apron, shuddering.

Then another horror as she remembered that Tom and Catherine had married in March, 1851. He had murdered his new bride within a month of their wedding! And the judge had recommend mercy? Where was the justice?

She would never be safe again.

She looked up at Martha, jaw clenched. ‘What can I do? I can’t leave; I’ve

nowhere to go, not with two lads.’

She gave a half sob, half laugh. ‘My da would say: You make your bed; you must lie in it. Seems he was right.’

Ann had no more words for her despair and fear. She’d walked unknowingly into a trap and now she must live there, caught in a vice that only her death would release.

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Postscript:

Friends of Ann Britt of Campbell Town are respectfully invited to attend her funeral on 12 June 1862, at the Roman Catholic cemetery.

Inspiration Statement

My 3 x great-grandfather’s murder of his first wife brings into sharp focus the devastation of family violence, which continues to this day.

185/ MARRIAGES in the District of Launceston							
When married, and where.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Rank.	Signature and Description of Parties.	Name of Clergyman, Officiating Minister, or Deputy Registrar.	When registered.	Sign. Reg.
March 1851	Thomas Britt Catherine Tipping	30 27	Ind Ind	Labarez Spindly	Rev. John Hogan	March 1851	
ried in the Church of Launceston according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Catholic Church by whom he This Marriage was solemnized between us Thomas Britt Catherine Tipping (In the Presence of us) John Hogan John Hogan							

Marriage registration of Thomas Britt and Catherine Tipping at Launceston Tasmania



# The Gold Fish Club

*Michael Poe*

Sunday April 9th, 1944, in West Scotland was a miserable, grey, gloomy, day and for several hours a light drizzle had fallen. In the late afternoon three young airmen serving in the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm trudged across the tarmac of HMS Landrail, the Royal Navy Air Base at Machrihanish, in Scotland, to their Fairey Swordfish aircraft, number LS161. Thomas the Pilot, aged 22, the navigator/observer Buster, and the Telegraphist Air-Gunner Joe, both only 19, had flown together for the past eight months. They knew each other well and it was a familiar routine but although they would not have admitted it they were nervous. Joe pulled out his lucky mascot, a small handknitted human figure and gave it a squeeze. He did not fly without it.

This was the first day they had flown this aircraft. They had just returned from a month's leave and had been allocated LS161 one of the oldest aircraft in the fleet. They had flown the short hop from Maydown in Northern Ireland to Machrihanish that morning. The cloud ceiling was only 100 feet and the drizzle had made it a miserable trip in their open cockpit. During the morning trip Joe had complained about the radio which had intermittent problems. The weather had not improved for their afternoon flight and their gloomy mood matched the weather.

The Fairey Swordfish was a biplane designed in the 1930's and in 1944 was still in active service despite its old technology. It was nicknamed 'stringbag' as it looked as if it was held together with string. The aircraft and crew were attached to 836 Squadron based at Machrihanish in Scotland and Maydown in Northern Ireland. Their role was to provide protection for the convoys crossing the North Atlantic to Halifax, Canada. They operated from merchant vessels that had been converted to aircraft carriers (MAC) that accompanied the convoys. MACs were unique in that they were merchant vessels with a civilian captain and crew but also carried two Royal Navy aircraft, two air crews and a support crew, all being Royal Naval Personnel. LS161 and Thomas's crew were currently assigned to MAC, Empire Macrae, a converted grain carrier, and this ship, currently in the Forth of Clyde, was their destination.

Joe and Buster were jokers and those that knew them best knew it was their

way of coping with the stress of operations. Today the jokes had been weak. "Bloody Hell it's cold" said Joe. He felt cold despite the fact that he was wearing thermal underwear, shirt, white woollen submarine jumper, flying suit, flying boots, silk scarf, hat and goggles, and a lifejacket.

"What's up Joe, not got your lady to keep you warm eh?" replied Buster.

Joe had spent his leave in St Merryn, the Royal Naval Air Base in the west of England with his girlfriend, a Wren stationed there. Buster had been giving him a hard time all morning.

Thomas interrupted their banter, "Cut it out lads, let's get the checks done and get this 'stringbag' into the air." He was irritated by their constant banter.

A few minutes later the aircraft was lifting off into the cold, cloudy, late afternoon sky. Buster shivered as the cold wind hit the small area of his exposed face. Joe immediately started testing the radio communication. He was having difficulty remaining in contact with the base.

"Shit, this Radio's R.S."

"Try contacting the ship, Joe, that might be easier." Thomas suggested

"I've already tried that but they can't hear me."

The aircraft was flying under the clouds and it had started to drizzle. Visibility was very poor and the light was fading. Suddenly the engine spluttered, lost power and the aircraft began to lose height. Joe, who faced the back of the aircraft was worried.

"What's up Skip, why are we losing height," asked Joe.

"The engine's cutting out. We may have to ditch. Send a mayday signal Joe."

Joe immediately followed the emergency procedure.

"Mayday, Mayday, Mayday, Can anyone hear this?"

Buster began to show his anxiety. "Shit, Skip we're getting very low."

"I can't keep her up. Brace yourselves lads we're going to ditch in the sea. It's going to be a hard landing."

Thomas was a competent pilot and in a few minutes he had executed a near perfect crash landing. The aircraft hit the water hard and Joe fell forward hitting his shoulder on the butt of the machine gun. Apart from Joe's shoulder there were no other injuries. They were soon on a wing and Buster inflated the rubber life raft.

"Shit, there's no bloody paddle," Buster exclaimed.

Thomas was decisive, "The aircraft won't float for much longer, let's get in the

raft. Be careful we don't want to get too wet or we'll freeze. We'll probably be in it all night. Joe did you get a mayday away?"

"Yes, Skip, but I doubt if anyone heard me."

"Buster, did you get a good fix on our position?"

"Not a perfect fix but my calculations put us about four and a half miles from Arran."

"We can't be too far from land but we have no means of propulsion so we're going to drift around at the mercy of the wind and tide."

It was now dark, the clouds covered a new moon and the wartime blackout ensured the night was ebony black and nothing could be seen. They were cold, alone and in total darkness.

"OK", said Thomas, "We can't do much until morning. We'll take two-hour shifts to keep watch while the others try to rest. I'll take first watch"

"Will they send out any boats to look for us Skip," Buster asked nervously.

"I doubt it," replied Thomas, "the visibility is bad and they wouldn't want to use search lights. They won't start looking before first light."

"We may as well try to get some sleep Buster," said Joe

But there was little sleep that night and little banter, the crew being content to keep their thoughts to themselves, hoping things would look better at first light.

After a long night, just before dawn, Joe shouted.

"Look, it looks like we're drifting towards Campbeltown Harbour but the tide may be turning and we could drift out to the North Sea."

Thomas interrupted, "If that happens we might never be found. It only looks about a half mile to shore. Perhaps one of us could swim ashore to raise the alarm? I can't swim."

"I can but not very well," said Buster. "But shouldn't we just sit it out. They'll be looking for us soon."

Thomas thought about it for a second but then replied, "We're going to be difficult to spot in this small life raft in choppy seas. If someone's going to swim, best do it now while we're still reasonably fit."

Joe was worried. He knew that the water temperature was between forty° and fifty° Fahrenheit and survival time would be between one and five hours depending on clothes, life jacket, and level of activity. If he took off some of his heavy gear he should be able to do it.

Joe answered, "I can swim quite well but I'll have to get some of this heavy

gear off. My shoulder hurts a bit but I should be OK. I'll have to get going before the tide turns."

Joe was a good swimmer and had won a few medals in local swimming competitions in Portsmouth but he was worried. He stripped off his heavy duty boots, trousers and jacket and put his life jacket over his woollen jumper. He stuffed his lucky mascot under his jumper. John looked at his crew as he slid into the water. "Wish me luck."

The water was colder than he expected and he immediately felt a numbing effect on his legs and feet but found that he warmed up as he struck out in the direction of the shore. He was surprised by how quickly he tired in the freezing water and wondered how long he could keep going. After an hour he stopped to rest as he was exhausted. He looked up to see that he was only 100 yards from a rocky beach. He struck out hard for the beach. As he reached land he attempted to walk. His legs and feet were numb with cold. He struggled up the rocks and to his relief could see the harbour below. There was not much activity but he could see a group of fishermen gathered at one end of the wharf. He struggled down towards them and as he came over the rise one of the fishermen spotted him and ran to help.

Joe explained the situation as quickly as he could and the fishermen looked concerned. "The tide will turn shortly and they'll be in the North Sea before you can blink an eye."

Robbie, an elderly fisherman suggested. "My boat's got some fuel and is ready to go. If someone joins me we might be able to find them pretty quick." There was no shortage of volunteers and Robbie, together with two others headed off to conduct the search. Joe was taken to the local hotel where he managed to telephone the base at Machrihanish before he had a hot bath. Warm dry clothes that were an approximate fit appeared and it didn't take Joe long to recover. His shoulder was now very painful but he was more concerned for Thomas and Buster.

Campbeltown is only eleven miles from Machrihanish and it wasn't long before a navy truck arrived to assist with the recovery. When the truck arrived there was still no sign of Robbie's boat returning with Thomas and Buster. It was another twenty minutes before a cry went up that Robbie's boat was coming into harbour. Joe and a small band of locals went down to the harbour to welcome the other two survivors. They were relatively dry and healthy but weary.

Thomas came up to Joe and thanked him for his efforts. Buster, with a big

grin on his face, wanted to know why it took him so long. Thomas had spoken to the truck driver who had instructions to bring the three survivors back to Machrihanish immediately.

There was silence in the truck as they drove back to Machrihanish as the three young men contemplated the events of the past few hours. Joe and Buster were not their usual jovial selves both thinking how lucky they were. Joe had his lucky mascot in his hand and believed it was the reason for his good luck again. This was the second crash he had survived.

There was no hero's welcome for them at the base. They were going to be sent back to Maydown immediately where they would be debriefed.

When they arrived back at Maydown they were sent for a medical examination. When Joe was asked how he felt he replied, "OK, but this shoulder is a bit painful."

Joe winced and screwed his face up as the medic manipulated his shoulder.

"Son, you have a broken collar bone."

Joe shrugged and said, "That's probably why it hurt a bit during the swim."

"You swam?" said the Medic.

Thomas and the medic looked at him in amazement. Joe just shrugged his good shoulder. Buster grinned, "Don't worry Doc. No sense, no feeling."

By April 23rd Joe was considered fit for duties again and once again the team were flying operationally. They continued flying together until January 1945 when the protection of the Atlantic convoys was scaled down. They received no special medals for their service but they were all admitted to "The Goldfish Club" recognising that their lives had been saved by a rubber life raft.

### **Inspiration Statement**

The story was inspired by my father's (Joe's) flying log and the entry "crashed into sea 4.5 miles from Arran" and family oral history.

# Lost and Found

*Karen Redlich*

"Sit still," a voice says irritably - but it isn't talking to me. I am a half-painted face, a cluster of oily blobs on a canvas. The painter, mouth pursed as if sucking a lemon, is flattening me out with a palette knife, blending me together. Titian red. Raw Umber. Eggshell. He spreads my colours over the large canvas, glowering at the person in whose image I am being created. "Don't move."

The studio door swings open, and a young man walks in. Burnt brown from the relentless Australian sun, he has coppery hair and hazel eyes. He grins at the painter - a fox contemplating an ill-tempered rabbit in a hedgerow.

"It's a decent likeness, but you've missed the best parts. The suspicious, beady eyes. The scar from being struck across the face. The gap where the tooth was knocked out."

The painter sniffs. "I charge extra for 'warts and all,' Mr. Brookman."

"Benjamin," my double says, "I've had enough of this mantelpiece for today. I have logs to split."

Benjamin leans an elbow on the painter's bald head, to his horror. "No. This is going to be a masterpiece. Above the mantelpiece is where we will hang it. Mine too, once it's complete. A reminder that we are rich now. The Richest family in the Colony." He fingers a tiny gold chain around his neck, fine as spider-thread.

The painter has finished his work. He has moved liquid colour into a patchwork that slightly resembles my double. But I am only a derivative of the real thing, without the memories and experiences. I only know what I see and hear, which is plenty, as I am hung above the fireplace opposite the bar. Benjamin's new hotel is called The Crown of England, but there are no crowns here. Only a shuffling mob of customers, exhausted from trying to scrape gold from the Ballaraat diggings- "It dried up after 1853," they mutter, "We'll try Castlemaine next." They wipe their beards and step outside - into the brown whoosh of dust and blowflies that is Sawpit Gully. This evening, however, the bar is empty, the log fire unlit. The crystal palace of bottles behind the bar winks in the candlelight.

"This is your fault." Benjamin is viciously polishing glasses. "You've completely flipped your lid. You've scared our customers away with your antics."

"I'm sorry. I can't do anything about the sleepwalking." The voice is quiet, the speaker obscured from view.

Benjamin snorts. "Well, can you at least do something about the nudity? Our patronage is as bare as your backside when you wander around here at night. I've heard you babbling, too. 'They're bleeding me dry. They're everywhere! What nonsense!'"

"It is not, Benjamin," my double replies. "It is very real to me."

The mansion of Glen Isla is younger than The Crown of England, but its dark wood interior makes it seem decades older. I'd like to see outside, but only a splinter of sunlight gets through the velvet drapes. Sometimes, the music of Maling Road finds its way inside - mechanical purrs, the parp of a horn, the occasional rumble of a horse and cart. I am adorning another wall, above another mantelpiece - a monster, adorned with copper dragons. It is unlit - and the huge room is dark. The mistress of the house prefers to spend her late husband's money on jewellery, not kindling or electricity.

"George is old money," says Ivy, who is seventeen and beautiful. Gone are the hoopskirts of Sawpit Gully, leaving her in a slim lace gown buttoned up to her throat. Her auburn hair is piled upon her head, and she glows - a lily in a burial vault. "George was decorated in the Great War, a hero. He is taking over his father's business next year. Why are you telling me to reconsider?"

Mama sits with her back to you, hidden by her high-backed chair. Her beloved Pekinese, Tobias, is about to squat on the rug next to her, next to one he has prepared earlier.

"TOBIAS!" Mother says, then gives up and turns back to Ivy. "George McCormick is a nice young man. He is an eligible bachelor. But he has been broken in the war, Ivy. His mind bears more scars than his body. You can see it in his eyes."

Ivy briefly turns her own eyes, a deep hazel, up at me. "You were a Brookman, Mama," she says. "You come from a long line of troubled minds. I remember Father telling me what they were like. Running around in the nude while their hotel burnt down. Being locked away at Bendigo Asylum. I suppose that one was a complete nutcase." She nods at me.

Mother waves a hand, pearl ring bobbing. "I don't even know who that is - some old person from England. The only thing saved from the fire. No wonder poor Grandfather Benjamin lost his mind - imagine watching your house get destroyed."

"I don't need to imagine it. This place is so chewed up by termites, the walls look like swiss cheese." Ivy moves to the hall stand, pinning a mauve hat onto her hair and pulling on a purple velvet stole. "I'll be back soon, Mama. I'm dropping in to visit George."

"TOBIAS!" Shouts Mama. "How many are you going to DO!?"

If I could squint my painted eyes, I could. Gone is the gloom of Glen Isla, replaced with sunlight pouring in, bouncing off the conservatory windows and into my face. "Granny," says a child's voice. A little girl, who looks even tinier from the study wall, stares up from under a dark brown fringe. She wears a pink sleeveless pinafore, and is sucking on an ice lolly, dribbling it onto her grubby sandals. "Granny, that person's face has boo-boos on it." Her translator, Granny, emerges, wiping her hands with a towel. She is all tightly curled hair and big

teeth, spectacles devouring her face. "Those aren't boo-boos, luvvey," she says in a jovial voice. "Those marks are from when I moved it to my place in the back of my car. The face got a bit banged up. I took it from my Grandmama's big old house before it got knocked down. It was too unsafe for anyone to live in."

The child absent-mindedly deposits the ice lolly stick into her pocket and wipes her hands on her front. "Who is that ?" Her big eyes rest upon mine.

"We don't know who that was. Grandmama's memory wasn't much chop when I knew her, so I never found out their name."

Granny then takes the girl into the other room and pulls out a familiar basket with toys in it for her - a mangy questionable object that might be a stuffed horse, a barrel of monkeys game, some books. Another younger woman emerges from the kitchen, mug of tea in hand. She is tall and thin, frizzy carrot hair tied up in a clip. She wears a man's overall, oversized shirt and suede heels. She glances up at me. "Still got that musty old thing, I see," she says to Granny. "It's the worst painting ever. Look at the wonky face. And the hair looks like a fur hat."

Granny chortles. "Yes. Grandmama offered it to Ivy, but she didn't want it. Said its eyes looked deranged, and it might give Pa more nightmares."

"Granny," the girl calls out, "How come you call her 'Ivy' and not 'Mummy'?"

Granny shakes her grizzled head and says, "She never felt like a Mummy to me, dearie."

Orange Frizz looks forlorn. "I do miss Grampa George. He was such a lovely, gentle man. I bet he was relieved when Ivy died, though. Bossy cow that she was."

Granny wipes a dab of ice-cream off the carpet. "I was relieved when Ivy died. But Pa...he said that she was his angel."

I live in the newest house now. No fireplace can be seen, but there are fresh plastered walls and a sofa like a brown leather punching-bag, over which I preside. There are odd, sleek machines in every room. Little boxes that chirp and glow with blue light until they fizzle out and must be attached to the wall to stay alive. The peculiar treasure-box with its glowing picture show, which transfixes the family for hours. The autumnal colours of the Brookmans aren't evident in the faces of this family, although the mother tells the adult daughter that she was a natural, flaming redhead back in the eighties. "I took after Ivy in that respect. I don't have the temper to match, however," she adds. The daughter chuckles. She looks somehow familiar, with a fringe of dark hair, generously seasoned with salt and pepper. "I remember Granny saying how Ivy used to wake her up for school by squeezing a wet sponge onto her face. And how she'd give Granny's dinner to the dog when she got home from school late."

"Well, Ivy had Brookman blood. They were all nuts, apparently."

"Isn't that portrait supposed to be one of them?"



The Mother shrugs. “Granny thought so. It’s very old. Look at the style of clothing.”  
“I used to wonder who it was when I saw it as a little kid. I’d still like to know. It’s like having a visitor at your house every single day, but you don’t know their name.”

Some time later, the daughter is sitting at the dining table, shuffling through a tower of papers, criss-crossed with her squiggly writing. Her tortoiseshell spectacles are pinching the end of her nose - she has been researching for hours. “Have you found a name yet?” the mother asks, coming in and pulling up a chair. “Read it out.”

I’m excited. I can barely remember the name of the person I represent. How many newer burials do they lie under? Even their grave markers would have crumbled away by now.

“Born in Bristol, Gloucestershire, 1835. Younger sibling of Benjamin Brookman. Transported to Van Diemen’s Land for trying to buy pies with a counterfeit shilling. Seven years in a convict workhouse, then reunited with Benjamin, who had emigrated and struck gold in Bendigo. The siblings lived together with their families at The Crown of England in Sawpit Gully, until it burnt down. Things are hazy after that, and I remember Granny saying that Benjamin lost his mind after the fire and later died in the Bendigo Asylum. But after Benjamin’s death, I found an 1890 memorial notice in the Ballarat Star:

‘In memory of my brother B. Brookman.

Yours were the hands that made that shilling.

I thought it a gift and I spent it willing.

Was sent as a convict to lands harsh and cold.

My innocence cannot be bought back with gold. - M.A.B.”

My mind is reeling, stories of my double’s early life surfacing from the depths to gulp air. They muttered about this as they paced the dark floorboards, nearly one hundred and seventy years ago, after a desperate fight with Benjamin, late at night.

“I didn’t know that coin was fake, I just wanted to buy pies for us all. Ask my brother, he’s the one that gave it to me....salt, doldrums, sick everywhere... oakum, picked apart by tiny fingers...misery, despair, work. Fleas. Skin crawling with them. They’re bleeding me dry...Benjamin says I’m a fool, as if he’d ever give a little girl a whole shilling....keep scaring customers away, and he’ll have me locked up...all over again....misery, despair, fleas...no fire in the grate, but one candle burning ...one candle. It only takes one candle to start a fire.

“Mary Ann Brookman,” the daughter says, looking up at me. “I’ve found you.”



### Inspiration Statement

This portrait hung in my Great-Grandmother Ivy McCormick’s family mansion. My genealogy research began with me trying to identify the woman in it.

# Under the Influence

Anna Searls

Under the influence

If... if only

My brother, James' life began and ended with words of Rudyard Kipling spoken each time by our Nan. She called him 'Fubsy' when he was born; a name which stuck until he could speak and inform his elders that his name was Jam and he no longer answered anyone who called him anything else.

Not that he abandoned Kipling - steeped in the language of *The Jungle Books* and *Just So Stories* he was never at a loss for something to say or a comment to make. At three and a half he leaned into my crib and shouted, 'you "scruciating idle" baby', which of course I was, and warned me he was a man of 'infinite-resource-and-sagacity' who scared his enemies out of their 'jumpsome lives'.

When I could totter about, I began to follow him and he turned on me, 'I am the Cat who walks by himself' so I hit him with a large, much loathed doll and 'hurt him hijjus'. After that he treated me as a proper boy and, with 'satiabie curtiosity' and his little black dog, we set out to discover the world. His little black dog was called 'Yellow-Dog Dingo' and I suspect I was the only person who did not question the disparity in colour between dog and name as I knew only 'lellow' as a colour and yellow as a new word.

Jam was always in charge and I'd follow as he shouted, 'Mark my trail...' calling himself the Wolf and me the Pack (I think):

*For the strength of the Pack is the Wolf, and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack.*

Our boundaries were set by parents. To the East the 'great grey-green, greasy Limpopo' which flowed beneath Tadpole Creek Bridge, to the west at the edge of a forest my brother called 'our jungle'. Our way north was blocked by another creek too wide to cross and to the south by a large paddock and a small house in which, we were encouraged to believe, lived a tall man who owned a large gun.

Occasionally we'd venture into the jungle beyond the first line of trees picking up a stick to defend ourselves should we be attacked. My brother's imagination brought forth many a creature needing to be felled and, cautioning me to 'Mark my trail...' he'd raise his stick and with Yellow-Dog Dingo at his side, charge

ahead chanting:

*This is the hour of pride and power, Talon and tush and claw.*

*Oh, hear the call! Good hunting all That keep the Jungle Law!*

More often than not our adventures were cut short when a noise foreign and frightening sent us hurtling from the trees. Slowing to a walk, Jam would dignify our retreat, 'Now, don't be angry after you've been afraid. That's the worst kind of cowardice.'

Yellow-Dog Dingo would trot ahead wagging his tail, undiminished by any form of self-doubt.

When I was four, I realised my brother's words formed a substantial part of the books being read to me by our Nan and I asked her, 'Has someone written down Jam's words?' She smiled and simply nodded; a missed opportunity to set me straight before school.

In Kindergarten my teacher read us Kipling's poem, *Quiquern*, and I was overcome with the need to inform her, 'My brother made that up!'

She looked all the way down her 'mere-smear nose' and said, 'And is his name Rudyard?'

Having lived a life of easy banter and gentle teasing I did not recognise her tone and charged on.

'My brother's name is Jam and he is the Wolf. He calls us the Elder Ice,' and undaunted I chanted:

*But the People of the Elder Ice, beyond the white man's ken —*

*Their spears are made of the narwhal-horn, and they are the last of the Men!*

My teacher rolled her eyes and summoned my mother. 'Your daughter believes her brother to be the source of all things Kipling. Would you kindly disabuse her of this notion.' My mother didn't which resulted in further embarrassment.

'He wrote that too,' said my Nan when I came home from school one day to tell her we were learning The Recession. 'Recessional,' she corrected.

'Jam made that up too?'

'No, Tilda, Rudyard Kipling.' And then I realised with the reading and re-reading of his poems and stories by our Nan and, occasionally by our father, Rudyard Kipling's stories and poems were engraved upon our memories from 'High and Far-Off Times'. I began to look with less awe upon Jam's sagacity until out of

the blue he bestowed a rare show of affection:

*Thou art of the Jungle and not of the Jungle. And I am only a black panther.  
But I love thee, Little Brother...*

He and Nan helped me to learn the Recessional at home and corrected my version which until then was rendered thus:

*Godiva of our fivers now unfold  
Lordiva our fuffling bat and lion  
Beneath whose offer land we hold  
Dom in ying of a porcupine  
Law god our ghosts be with us yes  
Less we forget – less we forget.*

My Nan thought my version had 'a certain merit' and wrote it down for 'future posterity'. My new command of the words was met with scepticism by my classmates who were still singing a version not unlike my previous one. Or it might have been the tune I sang. 'Tilda you're not singing in tune,' shouted the teacher over the other voices. I knew I was and told her I was singing the tune my Nan and Jam had taught me. I swear she said, 'That bloody family,' but given my lack of familiarity with words of that kind it could have been, 'That beautiful family.'

I stuck to my tune which in fact was a different arrangement to the 'Melita 1' version they sang. On Remembrance Day my teacher asked me to conduct rather than sing and that, I realised later, was how she foiled the teaching of my bloody/beautiful family. Of course, I had as little understanding of conducting as I did of the words but I had waved a stick in our jungle and I just did that.

Jam had been at school, a different school, for four years and 'finally' my Nan said, had a teacher who loved poetry. His teacher had set the boys the task of learning If, the poem that had hung on his bedroom wall since he was small. The whole family became involved and Nan took the opportunity to explain the intent of Kipling's messages. There were many and most targeted our misdeeds:

'Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose. You've just got to make sure neither winning nor losing stops you from being a good player,' Nan said to Jam referring to his cricket. He'd bowled someone LBW and they hadn't left the field. Jam drew on his 'infinite-resource-and-sagacity' and called the boy an 'effing cheat' and was sent from the field and home for two days.

My Nan had been appalled. 'Of all the language you've been exposed to

couldn't you have come up with something a bit more erudite?'

'You've done a bit of that Tilda,' mum said, 'a bit of showing off,' she added rubbing salt into deep and deeply embarrassing wounds.

Jam and I were relieved when it was learned and safely dispensed with. To avoid reminders, he took his copy from the wall and put it under his bed.

When Jam had gone off to boarding school and Yellow-Dog Dingo had retired from active service claiming four bad legs, I spent most of my spare time with Nan who led me into the world of Kipling beyond '*Just So*' and *the 'Jungle'*. She introduced me to a worn copy of 'Stalkey and Co', Kipling's stories written while he was at boarding school.

'That was your great-grandfather's copy. In the "*Far and High-Off Times*" he went to school for a brief while with Rudyard Kipling. He was younger than Kipling but remembered him because of his editorship of the school magazine.' She had kept this from us all these years and I said so. 'It didn't seem that important,' she shrugged.

When Yellow-Dog Dingo died some months later, Jam came home for his burial. Over Yellow-Dog Dingo's grave he partly read and partly said the Wild Dog part of *The Cat That Walked Alone*:

*His name is not Wild Dog any more, but the First Friend, because he will be  
our friend for always and always and always.*

'Yellow-Dog Dingo was my First Friend,' Jam concluded and we all shed tears. Later I told him about our great-grandfather and he said, 'It's almost as if we're related to Kipling,' and hurried to his room to rehang his copy of it.

In his final year of school Jam wrote Nan a letter:

'Dear Nan,

This letter is long overdue. I should have thanked you long ago for making Rudyard Kipling part of my life. I know I probably annoyed everybody when I was a very young boy shouting all those parts from *The Jungle Books* and *Just So Stories* to make myself sound fierce and fearsome. I think poor Tilda suffered most but she loves Kipling too and we both enjoyed Yellow-Dog Dingo's role in our lives.

I had an abundance of wonderful Kipling-inspired childhood adventures sometimes as '*The Cat that Walked Alone*' and sometimes the Wolf braving the Jungle, challenging the creatures therein, spearing crocodiles in the 'great grey-green, greasy Limpopo' which flowed under Tadpole Creek Bridge.

It was when I was forced to learn If, I realised I was probably not a very nice

chap. I wasn't a good sport and often behaved in an ungentlemanly way. Eventually the poem inspired me to be better to my friends and acquaintances and think carefully before speaking, forming an opinion, or taking action. I'm sure it helped me to become School Captain. I know it helped me decide what I want to do; I've been accepted into the Australian Defence Force Academy in Canberra next year.'

Jam was killed in Afghanistan in 2003 searching for Weapons of Mass Destruction\*. He was 23. My family refused a military funeral choosing instead, a graveside service in our hometown. I read from his favourite Just So story 'How the Whale got his Throat' and Nan concluded with:

*If any question why we died,*

*Tell them, because our fathers lied. \**

If disappeared from Jam's bedroom wall.

Rudyard Kipling's son John attempted to join the Royal Navy, but was rejected on medical grounds due to his terrible eye-sight. He then tried to join the military, but again was rejected for the same reasons. Finally, he was accepted into Irish Guards, but only because his father, who was close friends with the commander and chief of the British Army, pulled strings to get him in. Sadly, John died in battle, and sources say he was last seen stumbling in the mud in search of his glasses, which had fallen off during an attack.

US Secretary of State Colin Powell told the UN in 2003 that Iraq was 'producing biological weapons... However, he acknowledged in 2004 that the evidence for this "appears not to be... that solid"... The UK's then-Prime Minister, Tony Blair, said it was "beyond doubt" that Saddam Hussein was continuing to produce weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The two countries relied heavily on the claims of two Iraqi defectors - a chemical engineer called Rafid Ahmed Alwan al-Janabi and an intelligence officer called Maj Muhammad Harith - who said they had first-hand knowledge of Iraq's WMD programme. Both men later said they had fabricated their evidence because they wanted the allies to invade and oust Saddam.

#### Inspiration Statement

Kipling's childhood abuse and neglect are the possible reason much of his writing aimed at distracting children, giving them models and messages to live by.

## The Australasian Congress on Genealogy and Heraldry (AFFHO) Conference 2025 & 5th Queensland History State Conference *Hosted by Genealogical Society of Queensland Inc.*

#### Important dates:

<b>3 November 2024:</b>	Early Bird Registration closes
<b>21-23 March 2025:</b>	Conference Dates
<b>24 March 2025:</b>	Conference Tour

[www.connections2025.org.au](http://www.connections2025.org.au)

Brisbane's Bicentennial Year





# From Our Contemporaries

Pauline Bygraves

The items selected for this column are taken from some of the many overseas journals received by the Society – they usually mention Australia in some form or may be of general interest to Australian researchers. If you have an interest in a particular country or location, there will often be other relevant material – recently received journals are on display at the front of the Library.

E-journals are accessible on the computers in the main room. Open the FCER icon on the desktop and click on the link to “Electronic Journals” under “Electronic Resources”. If you have any comments or suggestions, please email the editor@familyhistoryact.org.au.

## AUSTRALASIA

\* Alan BALDWIN: “A Sangster Family Travels to the Southern Hemisphere” mentions seven children born to Alexander SANGSTER and Mary BEATON who emigrated individually from Scotland, mainly to New Zealand. William Beaton SANGSTER initially arrived there before moving to Australia where he married Strain DAVIDSON. His sister Wilhelmina married to a merchant seaman, William MURRISON, arrived in Melbourne in 1875. The New Zealand Genealogist Sep 2024 v55 n402 p111 (electronic journal).

\* Alexander Henry BEESLEY, Sydney Frank BELBIN, James Grant CROCK and Ernest Lewis DAVIES, all RAAF personnel, are among seven RAF bomber crew buried in the Dutch village of Jeslum. Detailed biographies are provided for each. The Midland Ancestor (Birmingham and Midland Society for Genealogy and Heraldry) Sep 2024 v20 n7 p426 (electronic journal).

\* Eunice BOLD-EDWARDS, from South Australia, is researching her PETTIGREW family who lived on the Muiravanside estate, with the STIRLING family. Central Scotland FHS Spring 2024 n67 p3 (electronic journal).

\* Christine CLEMENT: “Migration to New Zealand – a Guide” offers hints and tips to find the reasons people migrated and the when, where and how they possibly arrived given the time period, with several mentions of Australia. The New Zealand Genealogist Sep 2024 v55 n402 p118 (electronic journal).

\* Margaret FOGO (nee McINNES) corresponded with a Private LAING based at Codford Camp in 1917. At the time, there were two Private LAINGs at the Camp: Thomas born in Scotland and William John born at Sydney. The New Zealand Genealogist Sep 2024 v55 n402 p123 (electronic journal).

\* Martyn HAYES, with his parents Derrick Edward HAYES and Janette

WILLIAMS and older brother Andrew, migrated to Australia as ‘Ten Pound Poms’. They arrived at Adelaide in 1964 and Martyn describes the family’s experiences of settling into a new country. Tree Tappers (Malvern FHS) Autumn 2024 v29 p73 (electronic journal).

\* Roger SUTTON: “Australian Relatives”. Before his DNA test, Roger had identified only one relative who had migrated to Australia during the 19th century. As a result of his test, genetic links have been found in 17 instances over four different time-frames. Roots and Branches (Felixstowe FHS) Sep 2024 v39 n3 p7 (electronic journal).

## ENGLAND

\* John Gee FOWLER married Emma Barlow BAINES in Cheshire in 1840, and together they had seven children. John left his family in England and arrived at Port Phillip Bay on board the *Lady Head* in 1852. In 1856 while living near Bendigo he fell into a privy while under the influence of alcohol and died. The verdict of the Coroner’s Inquest was accidental death but this was questioned by some suggesting his head had probably been hit with some force which would not have happened if he had simply fallen in. The Manchester Genealogist 2024 v60 n3 p231 (electronic journal).

\* Daniel LUNN, son of Daniel and Mary, was baptised in 1779 at Smethwick. He was charged and convicted of stealing iron, and sentenced to seven years’ transportation at the Staffordshire Summer Assizes in 1835. He arrived in NSW in 1836 aboard the *Lady Kennaway*. The Midland Ancestor (Birmingham and Midland Society for Genealogy and Heraldry) Sep 2024 v20 n7 p400 (electronic journal).

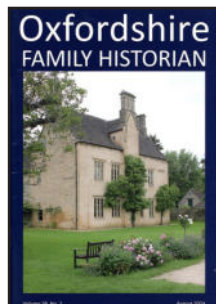
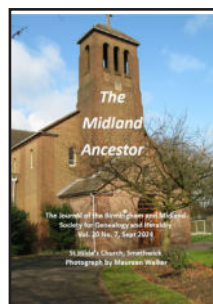
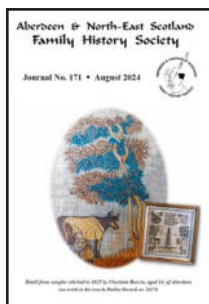
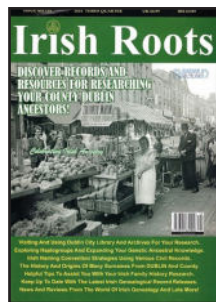
\* Richard SAYWELL, possibly born in 1793, hailed from the village of Eynsham in Oxfordshire. He and his wife Jane had six children, including Tobias born in 1819. Richard died in 1839, after which Tobias and his younger brother fell into crime. Tobias was imprisoned for horse stealing and, when later he stole a sheep, he was transported to Australia in 1850. Oxfordshire Family Historian Aug 2024 v38 n2 p92 (NOx9/60/01).

\* Benjamin TANDY, son of Joseph and Hannah, was born in 1807 at Birmingham. He was charged and convicted of burglary at the Warwick Lent Assizes in 1825, and sentenced to 14 years’ transportation. He arrived in VDL in 1825 on board the *Woodman*. The Midland Ancestor (Birmingham and Midland Society for Genealogy and Heraldry) Sep 2024 v20 n7 p421

(electronic journal)

## IRELAND

- \* Jennifer HARRISON: "Australian Irish Connections - Trowenna, Tasmania or Van Diemen's Land". Irish Roots 3rd Qtr 2024 n131 p26 (R9/60/04).
- \* Dr Mary HATFIELD: "Visiting Dublin City Library & Archives". Irish Roots 3rd Qtr 2024 n131 p6 (R9/60/04).
- \* James G RYAN: "Local Resources For Family History Research - County Dublin". Irish Roots 3rd Qtr 2024 n131 p10 (R9/60/04).



## SCOTLAND

- \* Frances CAIRNS (NSW) is researching GILFILLAN families connected to Stirlingshire. She is particularly interested in John GILFILLAN christened in 1682 who married Janet REID and their son George and grandson Alexander. Central Scotland FHS Autumn 2024 n68 p17 (electronic journal).
- \* Robyn PRICE: "Australia & New Zealand Group Meetings and Events" Aberdeen & North-East Scotland FHS Aug 2024 n171 p8 (electronic journal).
- \* William SHARP enlisted under the name James CAMPBELL and served as a private in the 63rd Regiment. He deserted at Nova Scotia in 1857 and was sentenced by court martial to 10 years' penal servitude which he initially served in Bermuda before being sent to Western Australia. He obtained his ticket of leave in 1865. He may be the James CAMPBELL who drowned at Busselton in 1886. Aberdeen & North-East Scotland FHS Aug 2024 n171 p25 (electronic journal).

# Obscure Resources in our Library

*Pauline Ramage*

## Log of Logs by Ian Nicholson

Vol 1 : A5/40/07 Vol 2 : A5/40/07a Vol 3 : A5/40/07b

These three volumes consist of a catalogue of logs, journals, letters, shipboard diaries, type of ship, and all forms of voyage narratives of ships from 1788-1988 for Australia and New Zealand and surrounding oceans.

Each volume is in alphabetical order, ships may be repeated in other volumes, so it is best to check each volume.

If you have a ship in which your ancestors were passengers or convicts aboard, and you are looking for more information, these are a good source in which to find more information. A list at the front of the books give the description of the codes kept and contact details.

## British Army in Australia 1788-1870 by James Donohoe

Book A5/70/18 microfiche drawers Y2/A8/1-2

This book provides an alphabetical list of almost all of the 20,000 men and some women who served in or with the British Army in Colonial Australia, and some who served in New Zealand.

If you have a relative you cannot find coming to Australia, who is not a convict or free person, there is a chance that they arrived as a member of the British Army. This book will give you the unit in which they served. Prior to 1820 Australians and British were recruited into the locally Australian military units. Australian-born lads enlisted locally, and a further 120 convicts and migrants enlisted in Australia. After 1820, troops were generally recruited in England and Ireland.

Details were prepared from the payrolls, the extract of each soldier's name varied from record to record, unit to unit, because of the variations made by paymasters in their payroll construction. It was not possible to identify

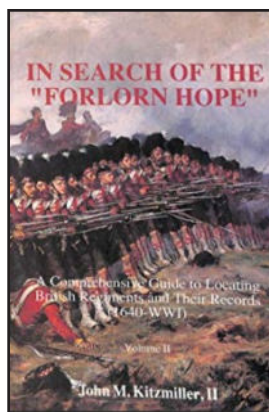
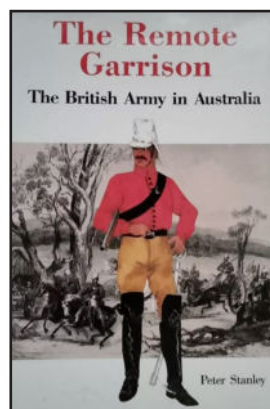
'Australian' recruits, as no mention is made of them in the payrolls.

### **The Remote Garrison by Peter Stanley**

Book A7/82/06

This book tells the story of British Soldiers in Australia from the arrival of the First Fleet to the departure of the last regiments.

It details the role of the British Army in Australia from 1788 to 1870, including color illustrations of regimental uniforms and a biographical register of soldiers in the New South Wales Corps. It also explores the military history of the Australian colonies prior to Federation.



### **In the search of the "Forlorn Hope" by John M Kitzniller**

Vol 1 M5/70/48a, Vol 2 M5/70/48b, Supplement Section M5/70/48c

A comprehensive guide to locating British Regiments and their records 1640-WW1, it details where all regiments served around the world. Well worth a look.

## *Society Education and Activities*

**Meetings** are held via Zoom, face-to-face in the Education Room, or "hybrid" via both methods. Refer to the website [www.familyhistoryact.org.au](http://www.familyhistoryact.org.au) for additional information or to register for the meetings. Contact the convenor if you have any questions.

**Education Sessions** – Registration is required for all paid Courses or Events. Information is on the website [www.familyhistoryact.org.au](http://www.familyhistoryact.org.au) or in the newsletters. Contact [events@familyhistoryact.org.au](mailto:events@familyhistoryact.org.au) for any questions about education events.

### **Calendar for regular Groups**

#### **AI**

7.30pm the third Monday of even-numbered months

#### **Australia SIG**

2pm the fourth Sunday of odd-numbered months

#### **Coffee and Chat**

10am the third Friday of each month

#### **Convict SIG**

7.30pm the second Wednesday of even-numbered months

#### **DNA SIG**

1pm first Saturday of February, second Saturday of March, May, July, September, November

#### **English and Welsh SIG**

7.30pm the third Thursday of odd-numbered months

#### **Family Tree Maker SUG**

10am the second Thursday of each month except January

#### **Heraldry SIG**

8pm the third Thursday of even-numbered months except December

#### **India SIG**

10am the first Saturday of even-numbered months

#### **Irish SIG**

9.30am the second Saturday of February, March, May, July, September and November

#### **Legacy SUG**

10am the third Thursday of each month except December

#### **Pauline's Parlour**

10am the last Tuesday of each month except December  
11am the third Sunday of each month except December

#### **Practical Procedures**

10am the fourth Monday of each month except December

#### **Reunion & Mac Support SUG**

9.30am the first Friday of each month, except January and December

#### **Scottish SIG**

7.30pm the first Thursday of each even-numbered month

#### **TMG Down Under SUG**

2pm the second Saturday of even-numbered months except December  
7.30pm the second Wednesday of odd-numbered months except January (awaiting convenor)

#### **Writers SIG**

10am the third Saturday of each month February to November (dates around Easter may change)

#### **Practical Procedures**

10am the fourth Monday of each month except December

## JANUARY 2025

- 16 10:00 am **Legacy UG**: convenor Julie Hesse, legacy.sug@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 16 7:30 pm **English and Welsh SIG**: *Priests and Preachers*; convenors Floss Aitchison and Nina Johnson english.welsh.sig@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 17 10:00 am **Coffee and Chat**: coffee.chat@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 19 11:00 am **Pauline's Parlour**: Round table support; convenor Pauline Ramage, parlour@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 27 10:00 am **Practical Procedures**: *Learn to use our Library and other resources*; Jeanette Hahn
- 28 11:00 am **Pauline's Parlour**: Round table support; convenor Pauline Ramage parlour@familyhistoryact.org.au

## FEBRUARY 2025

- 1 10:00 am **India SIG**: *The Next Generation of Macalisters in India*; convenor Prof. Peter Stanley india.sig@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 1 1:00 pm **DNA SIG**: *Using close relative's DNA results*; convenors Cathy Day and Clare McGuinness dna.sig@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 4 7:00 pm **Monthly Meeting**:
- 6 7:30 pm **Scottish SIG**: *The Highlands and Islands*, convenors Mae Mulheran and Clare McGuinness scottish.sig@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 7 9:30 am **Reunion & Mac Support**: convenor Danny O'Neill, ram.sug@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 8 9:30 am **Irish SIG**: *The Ordnance Survey of Ireland*; convenors Peter Mayberry and Nick Reddan irish.sig@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 8 2:00 pm **TMG Down Under**: *TBA*; convenor Lindsay Graham, tmg.sug@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 12 7:30pm **Convict SIG**: *Mary Wade Association*; convenor Michelle Rainger convict.sig@familyhistoryact.org.au

- 13 10:00 am **Family Tree Maker UG**: *TBA*; ftm.sug@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 15 10:00 am **Writers SIG**: *Writing about women in our families*; convenor Jo Callaghan, writers.sig@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 16 11:00 am **Pauline's Parlour**: Round table support; convenor Pauline Ramage, parlour@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 16 8:00 pm **Heraldry SIG**: *TBA*; convenor Chris Lindesay, heraldry.sig@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 20 10:00 am **Legacy UG**: convenor Julie Hesse, legacy.sug@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 21 11:00 am **Coffee and Chat**: coffee.chat@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 24 10:00 am **Practical Procedures**: *Learn to use our Library and other resources*; Jeanette Hahn
- 25 11:00 am **Pauline's Parlour**: Round table support; convenor Pauline Ramage, parlour@familyhistoryact.org.au

## MARCH 2025

- 4 7:00 pm **Monthly Meeting**:
- 7 9:30 am **Reunion & Mac Support**: convenor Danny O'Neill ram.sug@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 8 9:30 am **Irish SIG**: *Book of Kells, Book of Durrow and Celtic Knotwork*; convenor Barbara Moore irish.sig@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 8 1:00 pm **DNA SIG**: *Member queries*; convenors Cathy Day and Clare McGuinness dna.sig@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 12 7:30 pm **TMG Down Under**: *TBA*; convenor ? tmg.sug@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 13 10:00 am **Family Tree Maker UG**: *TBA*; ftm.sug@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 15 10:00 am **Writers SIG**: *Writing memoir, near and dear*; convenor Jo Callaghan, writers.sig@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 20 10:00 am **Legacy UG**: convenor Julie Hesse, legacy.sug@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 20 7:30 pm **English and Welsh SIG**: *Death and Diseases*; convenors Floss Aitchison and Nina Johnson english.welsh.sig@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 21 11:00 am **Coffee and Chat**: coffee.chat@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 24 10:00 am **Practical Procedures**: *Learn to use our Library and other resources*; Jeanette Hahn
- 25 11:00 am **Pauline's Parlour**: Round table support; convenor Pauline Ramage, parlour@familyhistoryact.org.au
- 23 2:00 pm **Australia SIG**: *Clothing the colonists 1787-1901*; convenor Pauline Ramage australia.sig@familyhistoryact.org.au



# Services for Members

## Photocopies

A4 25c

## Microform Prints

A4 45c

## GRO Certificate and PDF Service

Members \$24 certificate, \$16 PDF

Non-members \$27 certificate \$17 PDF

## Translation Service

Translations available for the following languages:

English handwriting c. 1600, Estonian, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Latin, Norwegian, Polish, Welsh, Yiddish.

Prices: A \$10 fee for assessment of the material is non-refundable. Prices vary according to language and are charged per 100 words or part thereof.

Further details in Library or from the secretary@familyhistoryact.org.au

## LDS Film Viewing

The FHACT library is registered as a Library Affiliate with the LDS FamilySearch Organisation. This enables members using the FHACT library, access to the approximately 25% of digital records held by LDS that have restricted access imposed by copyright holders.

## Discounts

Financial members receive a 10% discount when purchasing FHACT publications. Further details in Library

## Research Advice

The service providing free research to members, for those facing a "brick wall" in their research, is currently suspended.

## Research Service

Contact Jenny Higgins 0429 704 339.

## Readers' queries

Members may submit queries for inclusion in *The Ancestral Searcher* free of charge. No more than 200 words per entry please. Non-members \$27.50.

Contact: editor@familyhistoryact.org.au  
(all prices include GST)

## Notice to Contributors

The copy deadline for contributions to *The Ancestral Searcher* is the 2nd Monday of the month prior to publication.

The journal is published quarterly in March, June, September and December.

The Editor welcomes articles, letters, news and items of interest on any subject pertaining to family and local history.

Please send text files in either MS Word or plain text. Articles should be no more than 2000 words, with one or two quality images. Please limit footnotes to 3-4 per 500 words.

Digital images should be a high resolution and tiff or jpeg images.

The Editor reserves the right to edit all articles and include or omit images as appropriate.

Authors can assist by formatting dates to '1 July 1899'; months to be spelled out; no ordinals on numbers (no st/nd/rd/th); ship names should be italicised; all quotes to be in "double quotes"; and all family names should be formatted as CAPITALS. (But not in captions or end notes.) Submissions and questions to: editor@familyhistoryact.org.au.

## LIBRARY

Unit 7, 41 Templeton Street, Cook – 02 6251 7004

Opening hours:	Tuesday	11.00 am	–	2.00 pm
	Wednesday	10.00 am	–	3.30 pm
	Thursday	11.00 am	–	2.00 pm
	Saturday	2.00 pm	–	5.00 pm
	Sunday	2.00 pm	–	5.00 pm

The Library is CLOSED on all Public Holidays

## SOCIETY MEETINGS

**Reader's Access Ticket** for non-members: \$10 for one day, \$20 one week, \$30 one month.

Monthly general meetings are held beginning at 7.00pm in the FHACT Education Room, Templeton Street, Cook, ACT on the first Tuesday of each month, except January. The Annual General Meeting is held on the first Tuesday of November. Notices of special meetings, and social gatherings are advertised in this journal as appropriate.

## MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Membership begins from the date the member joins and will expire either one or two years later at the end of the month in which the member joined. New members, or members who have lapsed for more than 12 months, are required to pay a joining fee. Joint membership is available for additional members at the same address. A concession membership is available to Australian residents please check with our Membership Co-ordinator. Amounts are shown for one year.

Individual	\$ 84.00*	Joining Fee	\$ 20.00
Joint	\$ 128.00*	Journal Only – Australia	\$ 35.00
Individual – Concession	\$ 79.00*	Journal Only – Overseas	\$ 45.00*
Joint – Concession	\$ 118.00*	* GST free other prices include GST	

Membership forms are available on the website, at the FHACT Library or can be posted on request.

**The Ancestral Searcher** is the official journal of the Heraldry & Genealogy Society of Canberra Inc. The journal is published quarterly and available without charge to financial members of the Society and affiliated bodies. Kindred Societies can receive the journal on an exchange basis. Back copies are available for current year and previous two years at \$5.00 each. Earlier issues are \$3.00 each or \$5.00 for a yearly bundle of 4 issues (excluding postage).

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## ADVERTISING AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Copy for advertising and contributions is required by the first day of the month preceding the month of publication. Advertising in the journal:

Full page for four consecutive issues \$330; half page for four consecutive issues \$175;

Full page for one issue \$110; half page for one issue \$60.

Advertising in non-consecutive issues is charged at the single issue rate. 10% discount is available to advertisers who are members of the Society.

Advertising flyers can be included with the journal posting. These are to be supplied by the advertiser folded to A5 or smaller in size, cost for A5 20c, A4 30c and A3 or larger 50c per insert. Readers' Queries up to 60 words: members, no charge; non-members \$35.00.

Payment is required at the time of submission.

All prices include GST

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*The objectives of the Society are:  
To promote and encourage the study and preservation  
of family history, genealogy, heraldry and allied  
subjects, and to assist members and others  
in research in these areas.*