



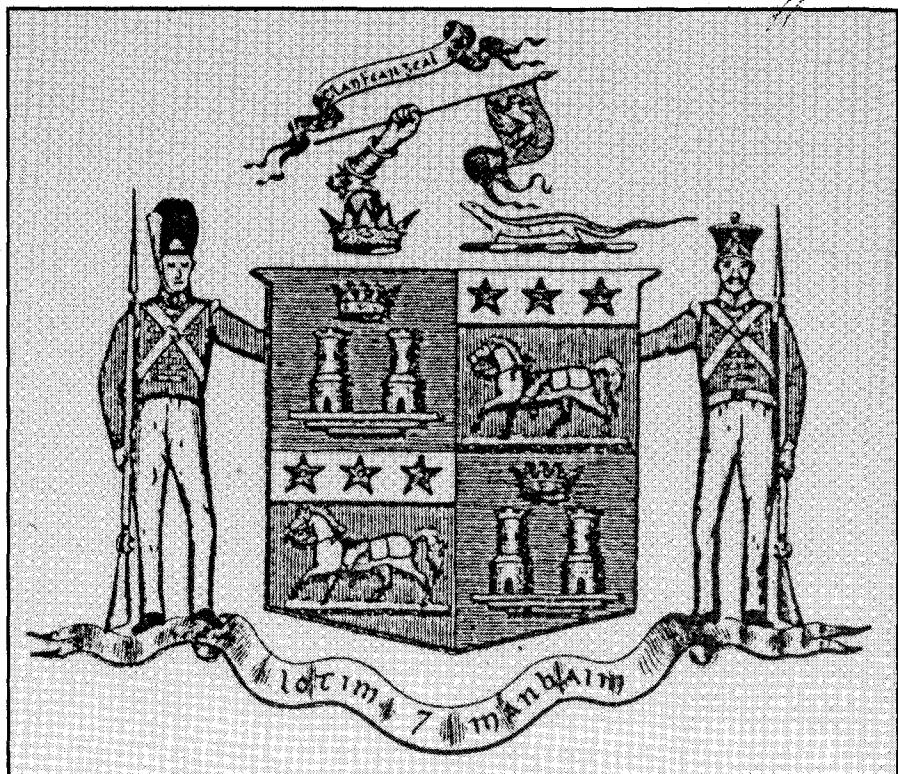
t is a far cry from Merchant's Quay, in the old city of Limerick, to South Australia; yet our story begins with young Thomas Shuldham O'Halloran, who left his family home at Merchant's Quay, overlooking the city's harbour, after the death of his famous grandfather, Dr. Sylvester O'Halloran, M.R.I.A., surgeon, antiquarian and historian, in 1807. With his sister, Ellen, he had kept the old man company during his last years. It is possible that other grandchildren may have also resided with him in Merchant's Quay, but one can be certain about Thomas and Alice, for the doctor left the latter a gold watch and his own silver watch to Thomas. The children were looked after by their aunt, Alice Connell, who also attended Sylvester to the end. Indeed, it was a stipulation in the great man's will 'that Alice Connell shall until the arrival of my son the said Joseph O'Halloran in Ireland have the care and management of all my grandchildren now in my house'. After Sylvester's burial in Killeely graveyard, the children were sent to England in the care of their mother's family.

Thomas Shuldham O'Halloran was born at Berhampore, India, in October, 1797. He was the second son of Major-General Sir Joseph O'Halloran, G.C.B., who served for 53 years in the British forces in that country. He was barely 12 years old when he entered the Royal Military College in London and four years later he sailed for India as an ensign in the 97th Regiment. On reaching his majority he was promoted lieutenant in the same regiment, and ten years later we find him captain in the 99th Regiment. In 1834 he returned to England, after spending 20 years in India. He soon transferred to the Coldstream Guards, and in 1837 joined the 97th Regiment. The following year he sold his commission and started off on the greatest adventure of his life – to the budding civilisation of wild Australia. This was an odyssey that was to establish him as one of the worthy architects of Australia, and ensure the future endeavours of his many descendants.

After purchasing a tract of land in South Australia from the South Australia Company in London, the Major set out from Plymouth in the *Rajasthan* with his young wife and two infant sons, Thomas and George, 3 and 2 years respectively, and a number of servants, on 30th July, 1838 – the same year that his father received the Freedom of Limerick. This was a long and hazardous journey and it gives an early indication of the family's courage and initiative.

After three and a half months at sea

The O'Halloran's in South Australia



The O'Halloran family crest.

by Kevin Hannan

the ship anchored at Holdfast Bay in South Australia. Needless to mention, this was wild and mostly unexplored country, and, of course, there was no pier or other means of docking the vessel. The passengers had to wade ashore from the ship's longboat on the last few yard of the voyage. All their goods and chattels had to be brought ashore in the same laborious manner. The Major, like some other wealthy pioneers, had brought a pre-fabricated house with him; this also was successfully brought ashore.

Two other pioneers and their families disembarked here from the *Rajasthan*, Thomas Tapley, a farmer, and Richard Henley, a stonemason.

No doubt there was close co-operation between these adventurers in providing immediate shelters for themselves and their families. We are told that the Major tied his children to some trees for fear that they would wander into the unknown hazards of the bush while he was erecting his house.

Thomas was certainly a man who did nothing by half-measures. His diary

entry from 16th November, 1838, records: 'Anchored at Holdfast Bay', and for the 21st: 'Encamped at Glenelg with family'. A few weeks later he moved to what is now O'Halloran's Hill. His diary entry for January 14th records: 'Moved from tents into cottages', and on 20th April, 'Prayers read for very first time under our roof'. From these snippets we can conclude that the family camped for some time in tents pitched not far from where they landed, and that religious observance was of importance to them.

In due course the Major, always suspicious and ever on the alert, erected a strong stone coachhouse on the side of a hill, a strategic position dictated by his long experience of living among hostile natives in India. This building had .. two vertical slits 18 inches high in both east and west walls, to allow guns to be angled, tapering to 1½ inches wide on the outside of the walls. This coach house was part of the original local stone homestead built on the property and is still standing and in good condition. The prefabricated house was soon replaced by this substantial home. It was described as a country mansion, built into the hillside



and with an avenue of fine oak trees leading to it.'

His diary entry for 18th April tells us that the family '...dined in large house for first time. Col. Gawler (Governor), Sturt, Hall, McLaren and Calder present'. The house referred to here must have been the pre-fabricated one. It is highly unlikely that his stone mansion, complete with basement and wine cellars, could have been built in three months. In fact, this elaborate dwelling assumed its final grandiose dimensions only after many additions and alterations over a long period.

The house was named Lizard Lodge, after the Lizard which his father included in the family coat of arms. This alteration came about after Sir Joseph's life had been saved when he was awakened by a lizard crawling over his face during a surprise Gurkha raid in India.

The house still stands in good structural order, and, with the well laid out property which was once the pride of Major O'Halloran, is now preserved by the government.

The major had hardly settled down in Australia when he was sworn in as a magistrate, and a few days afterwards was signed on as a justice of the peace and special magistrate of Province.

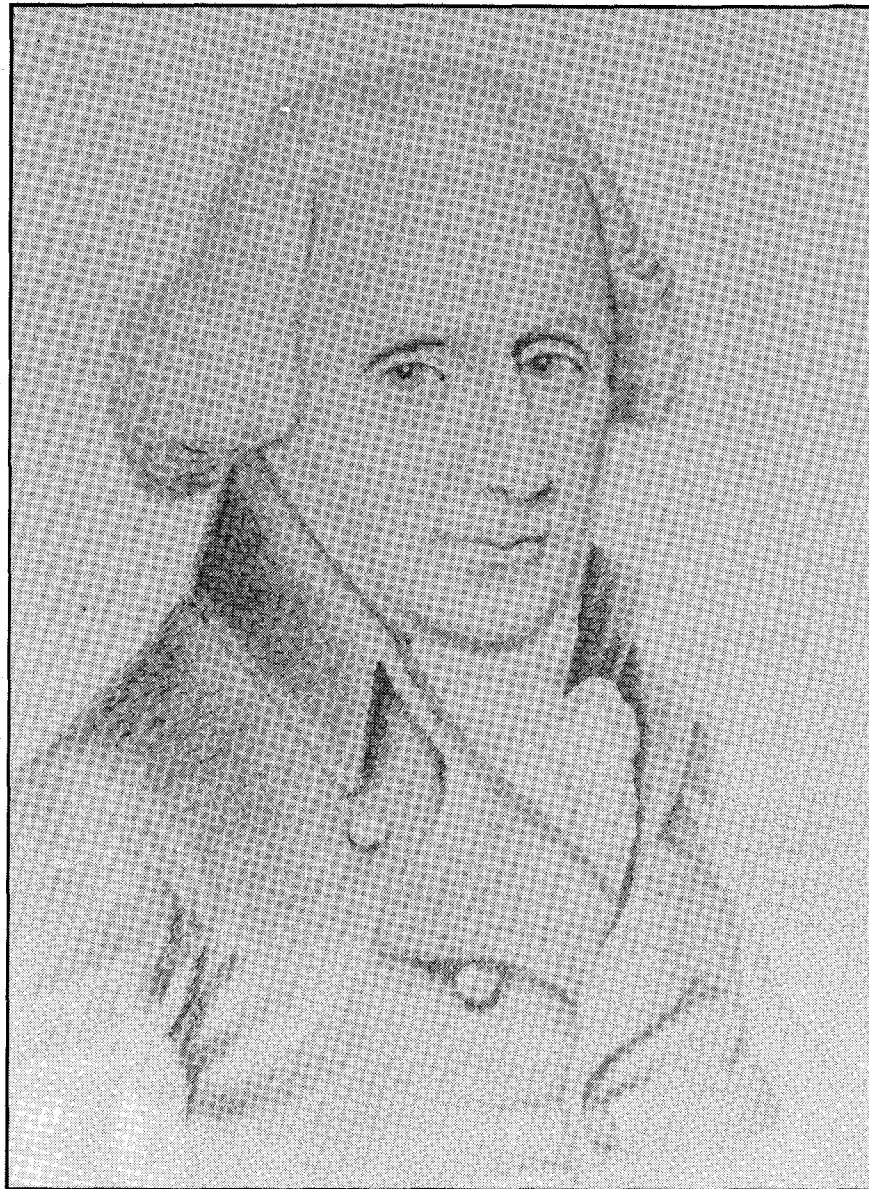
Early in 1840 he was gazetted major commandant of the South Australian military forces, and a few months later he was serving as commissioner of police. He immediately applied himself to the reformation of the police force. Doubtful characters and inefficient members were weeded out: he personally hand-picked new recruits and enforced a strict discipline previously unknown in the force. He also brought about a radical change in the organisation by creating a mounted unit.

'During the years he was Commissioner, he welded a strong, honest police force. He was popular with the men, particularly with the mounted police, with whom he shared many hardships and privations. Upon his retirement in 1843, they presented him with an inscribed silver snuff-box.'

O'Halloran was quite overcome by this gesture from his old comrades. He wrote: 'I beg to assure all that this token of their esteem shall ever be highly valued by me and handed down with pride to my eldest son.'

A leading journalist in *The News* commented in 1861: ...he died leaving the South Australian Police Forces as his finest monument.'

The Major's rapid promotion to the highest offices no doubt resulted from an early recognition of the strength of his character, and from his long experience as a British officer in India. He was resolute and exact in all his performances, though he was the subject of much criticism for his harsh treatment



Dr. Sylvester O'Halloran.

of the natives who were alleged to have murdered twenty-four of the survivors from the wreck of the *Maria*. This incident occurred in the Coorong when Major O'Halloran led an expedition to avenge the killings. Two of the natives, alleged to be the ringleaders, were hanged on the spot in the presence of the other Aborigines. Unfortunately this was no ordinary execution, carried out with some expertise; those who acted as executioners were, apparently, inexperienced, and the two men were cruelly strangled to death.

At the time, many of his critics were horrified by the executions, especially the cruelty attended on them, but there was another view expressed at the time. 'Some of his contemporaries were incensed at these summary executions, but posterity has applauded his promptness in stopping what might have been wholesale massacre, first of whites, and eventually of

natives. He had come from India where discipline was strict and justice quick, and acted accordingly in the interest of the young country of his adoption.' (Surely the 'quick justice' referred to here must be interpreted as 'no justice'.)

However, taking into account the general pattern of colonisation by the British, the action was widely regarded as being responsible for saving many lives. According to the papers of Miss Margaret Milne, the Major was described as follows: 'Direct, forthright and uncomplicated, he was a dashing officer with little time for the tortuous reasonings of theorists. His energetic action in subduing Aborigines made the Murray River safe for overlanders and settlers but perturbed philanthropists. His independence prevented the Legislative Council from becoming a rubber stamp of governors or clamorous populace. His initiative as a farmer



made him one of the few successful large wheat growers in the province'.

He resigned on a matter of principle from the police force in 1843. At that time O'Halloran refused to take on the extra duty of police magistrate. We know little or nothing of his military activities after he was gazetted lieutenant colonel in the 1st Battalion Volunteer Infantry.

To quote again from the papers of Miss Milne: 'In 1843 he was the first non-official member chosen by Grey for the Legislative Council. In 1846 he walked out with other nominees in protest against Lieut-governor Robe's Bill for collecting royalties on minerals. He was active in founding Christ Church in O'Halloran's Hill, which was consecrated by Bishop Short in 1848. He also served in the preparatory committees for the Collegiate School of St. Peter's and became one of its first governors. His acquiescence in state aid for religion, however, lost him the Noarlunga seat in the part-elective Legislative Council, although his supporters gave him dinners at Morphett Vale and Noarlunga after the election. With responsible government in 1857, he was elected to the Legislative Council at the head of 27 candidates, receiving 3499 votes. He resigned on the 9th of June 1863.'

Despite the harsh methods employed by Major O'Halloran, indeed by most other British colonists as well, it must be conceded that his political and military prowess had a telling and lasting effect on the development of South Australia.

The Major was also prominent in the political and cultural fields. He was a confirmed conservative, but with an independence of mind that characterised the strong man that he was. He never showed the slightest hesitation in opposing the Governor in any proposal which he regarded as injurious or detrimental to the interests of the colony. It was said of him that 'Governors quaked where he snorted like a warhorse'.

He played a major role in the founding of Christ Church, O'Halloran's Hill, and was on the first committee appointed to arrange a prospectus for St. Peter's College, in 1847. He was one of the first governors of this institution, of which it was said'...not only South Australia, but the Empire has reason to be proud'.

Chief among his many benefactions was his great work among the many Irish immigrants who were lucky to flee their pestilence-stricken country, especially the orphans, aged between 14 and 18, who had been liberated from the overcrowded workhouses. These poor distressed people landed in a strange and distant country in 1849 with nothing but the hope of a little



Major-General Sir Joseph O'Halloran.

kindness and humanity from complete strangers. They were not disappointed. The Anglican and Catholic bishops, bolstered up by the St. Patrick Society, which had been established to promote Irish emigration, provided them with food and shelter, and secured them in employment that gave them a new dignity and independence. Major O'Halloran was the first president of this society.

O'Halloran was first married to Anne Goss, who died two years later in India, leaving two children. He married for the second time to Jane Waring, in July, 1834, and they had three sons and one daughter.

He passed away at the age of 73 years on 16th of August, 1870, and was buried in the family vault at Christ Church, O'Halloran's Hill. At the time of his death it was said that '...he was as

upright as when he first took oath to serve George III as a twelve year old ensign in the Middlesex Militia. To the end he never sat down to a meal before he said: "The Queen, God bless her!" '(Surely his grandfather must have turned in his grave every time this prayer was uttered by his grandson!)

But the O'Halloran concern for the welfare and development of the Commonwealth did not cease with his death. His son, Thomas Joseph Shuldharn O'Halloran, who was only three year old when his parents first set foot in Australia, was, from a very early age ever ready to step into his father's shoes. After leaving St. Peter's College where he was a brilliant student, he entered the Treasury as a cadet, and remained in the government offices for two years. He afterwards became manager of country branches of the



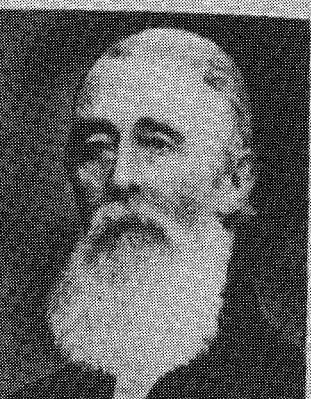
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MAJOR GENERAL SIR JOSEPH O'HALLORAN



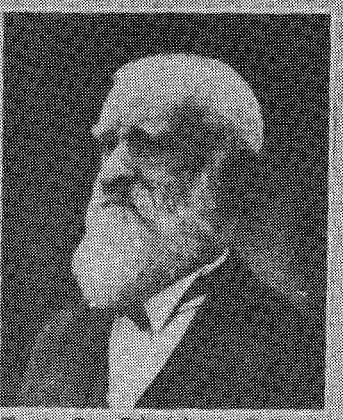
LADY O'HALLORAN



MAJOR T.S. O'HALLORAN



MRS T.S. O'HALLORAN



T.J.S. O'HALLORAN



MRS T.S. O'HALLORAN



DR. WOODFORDE



MRS. WOODFORDE



T.S. O'HALLORAN K.C.



D.B. ROSS LL.B.



MISS DIANA ROBERTS

THE O'HALLORANS OF O'HALLORAN HILL, SOUTH AUSTRALIA



National Bank. On his retirement from the bank, he received several gifts in recognition of his services, but the gifts he treasured most was a silver tea caddy which he received for his services as an arbitrator in the great Renmark strike. Both sides in this difficult dispute, employers and employees, spontaneously contributed to this expression of gratitude.

Shortly after his father's death, he was appointed stipendiary magistrate and served with distinction at Kapunda, Port Pirie, Gawler, Mount Gambier, Port Lincoln and at the Southern York Peninsula. Later he served in courts at Fowler's Bay, Franklin Harbour, Renmark and Morgan.

It is on record that 'he had a reputation for sound judgement and unswerving loyalty to the ends of justice. He dealt with his cases with the wisdom of Solomon'. He was renowned for his dedicated work as a lay-reader in the Anglican Synod. For a number of years he engaged in the charitable work of conducting services at the Adelaide Hospital, the Consumptive Home and the Destitute Asylum.

Thomas O'Halloran was married to a Ms. Woodforde, daughter of Dr. Woodforde, who was medical adviser to Col. Light and was later coroner. He came to Australia in 1836 in the ship *Rapid*.

He died at North Adelaide in 1922 in his 87th year and left three sons and four daughters: T.S. O'Halloran, K.C., one of the best known barristers in Adelaide; Mr. J. O'Halloran of Northam, Western Australia and the Rev. George O'Halloran of Western Australia. The daughters were Ms W.A. Ross; Ms. W.A. Milne; Ms H.A. Sweetapple and Ms. Meliora O'Halloran, all of North Adelaide.

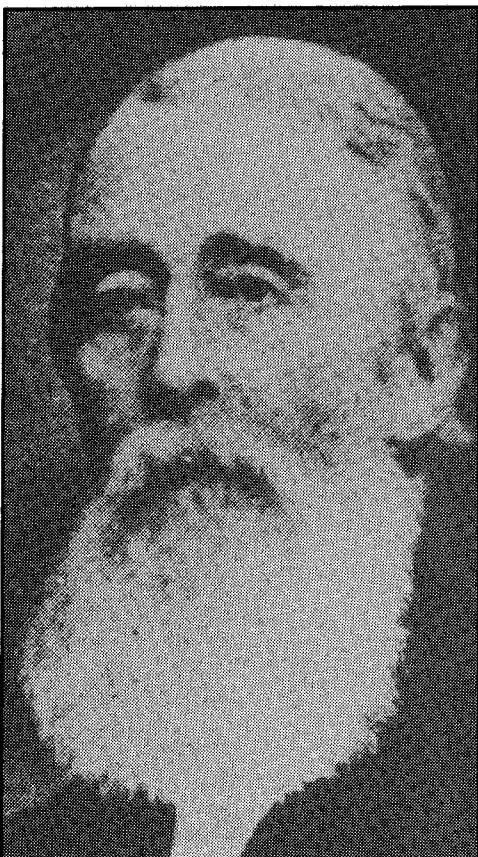
Sir Dudley Bruce Ross, LLB, was the son of Ms. W.A. Ross. He was born in 1892 and educated in St. Peter's College and Adelaide University. He was a distinguished barrister and served as Chief Justice of Western Australia. He served with distinction in the army in France during the First World War. His son, Mr. W.A. Ross, visited Limerick in 1975, and toured the various places associated with his famous ancestor in and around the city.

Sue Randell and Faith Beresford, O'Halloran's descendants, visited Limerick in 1976 and were shown the grave of Dr. O'Halloran in Killeely graveyard, and other places connected with him. Ms. Beresford has since died, but Sue Randell is still hale and hearty; her brother, Dick O'Halloran, the last of the clan to bear the name, is still living in Perth.

Frank Milne, the present Australian Ambassador to Ireland, is a grandson of Ms. W.A. Milne, and in his all too

brief stay in this country has shown himself to be a man of whom his famous ancestors would have been proud. He also displayed a lively interest in Limerick and its people and, with his wife Pat Milne, has been a frequent visitor to the city of his forebears.

Dr. H.A. Sweetapple had two children, G.A. Sweetapple, F.R.C.S. (Edin), and Marjorie Roberts. The doctor has one daughter and Ms. Roberts has two daughters.



Major T.S. O'Halloran.

While the contributions of the O'Hallorans to the development and well-being of Australia must be a matter of pride for the people of Limerick, it must also be admitted that their illustrious forebear, Dr. Sylvester O'Halloran, would have hardly favoured their unswerving loyalty to the regime that transported many thousands of Irishmen and women to a strange land 12,000 miles away from their roots. Many of these were criminals, but others were innocent victims of draconian penalties for trifling offences - like the poor Limerick woman from Palmerstown who was sentenced to 7

years transportation for stealing a loaf of bread to feed her starving children.

Then we had the transportation of the Young Irelanders, John Mitchell, John Martin and William Smith O'Brien, who sacrificed much in efforts to free their fellow countrymen from the bondage of British colonialism.

In his *History of Ireland*, Sylvester O'Halloran inveighed passionately against the subjugation of his fellows by the British, and did not his burning patriotism almost put him in the front line at the Battle of Culloden? In January, 1800, he chaired a meeting of Roman Catholics in the Mercantile Coffee-House at Quay Lane at which a resolution of disapprobation and dislike towards the Act of Union was passed unanimously. At this meeting Dr. O'Halloran described this legislation as '...a measure fraught with ruin and degradation to a country, which, since the glorious epoch of 1782 has been rapidly improving in commerce, manufactures, industry and population.'

It is ironic to reflect that the Limerick surgeon and historian had spoken out so passionately against colonialism as practised by the British. Though he was a Roman Catholic and probably remained one to the end, he did not dissuade his two sons from adopting the Protestant faith in the furtherance of their careers. Despite the burning patriotism expressed in his *History of Ireland* he showed himself to be a pragmatist when it came to his son's education and professions and it is likely he would have been proud of much descendants' contributions to the making of Australia.

To blame the O'Halloran clan for being a party to the annexing and colonialisation of Australia would be altogether unjust. They lived in a different age from their historian ancestor, and those of them that chose military careers distinguished themselves in many fields and attained the highest honours, while others in the medical and political spheres have done much to establish Australia as the nation it is today.

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