

John Hurley: Pastoralist and Politician

John Hurley, (1796-1882), innkeeper, pastoralist and politician, was born in Limerick, son of John Hurley and his wife, Mary, nee Hassett. In October, 1823, he was sentenced in Limerick to seven years' transportation for insurrection, and, in 1824, reached Sydney in the *Prince Regent*. By 1828 he had been assigned to Captain Terance Murray, on whose Lake George grants he worked and became superintendent. He was freed from servitude in 1830, and, by 1832, had become an innkeeper at Campbelltown. He operated coaches from the King's Arms and was also agent for others in 1839. In 1841 he moved to the Royal Hotel, and, by 1844, had other hotels in the area.

Hurley bought land near Campbelltown, where he bred horses, and had a stud of Clydesdales at Mount Gilead. 'So favourably was his name known for the quality of his stock, that his horses were eagerly sought for the Indian market'. A keen sportsman, he sent his horses to local race meetings, and, from 1836, was judge at the Campbelltown races.

Under the 1836 Act, Hurley took out his first pastoral lease in 1837, and later others between the Lachlan and Murrumbidgee Rivers. By 1849 he had 40,000 acres at Houlahan's Creek and 50,000 acres, known as the Cootamundra run, on which the town was founded in 1861. Hurley also provided its coach service. Apart from visits to his runs, he lived in Campbelltown where he was a member of the first District Council and Roads Trust. In 1859 he was elected to the Legislative Assembly for Narellan, but defeated in 1860; he held the seat in 1864-69 and in 1874-80. In the assembly he was a 'roads and bridges' member. He never introduced a bill and, although he claimed to have voted in most major divisions in the 1860s, he rarely did so in the 1870s. He called himself a liberal and free trader, and advocated 'pensions to the old and infirm', triennial parliaments and amendments to the Land Acts.

After defeat in the 1880 election Hurley retired to his home, Alpha House. He was known as 'a friend of the poor', and was reputed to have assisted Caroline Chisholm. Aged 86, he died at Campbelltown on 27 November, 1882, from senile decay. Predeceased by his wife, Mary, nee Byrne, whom he had married at Campbelltown on 10



Lake George, in New South Wales.

January, 1837, he was survived by three sons and three daughters, to whom he left £25,303.

Sources

W.F. Morrison, *The Aldine Centennial History of New South Wales*, 2 (Syd, 1888); V&P (LA NSW), 1866, 1, 737;

SMH, 16 Dec., 1869; MS and printed cats. and newspaper indexes under John Hurley (ML); information from K. J. W. Willott, Campbelltown and Airds Hist. Soc.

Martha Rutledge

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