

# Men of Mangles, 1822



On 8 November 1822 the *Mangles* (2), in its role as a convict transport,<sup>1</sup> anchored in Sydney Cove, New South Wales. The master, John Coghill, had brought all but one of the 191 convicts who had embarked in Cork safely to port. This confirms not only Coghill's good reputation as master, but reflects the humane care exercised by Surgeon Superintendent Matthew Anderson. The ship came *via* Rio, which permitted taking on board fresh food and vegetables, an invaluable aid in the ongoing battle against scurvy.

The role of Surgeon Superintendent, established in response to the dire effects of inhumane treatment by master and/or surgeon on several earlier transports, had brought a new era to transportation. From 1815 the improved system, in brief, allowed a surgeon superintendent's directions re matters concerning the convicts' health or well being to override orders from the master except any affecting the navigation of the vessel.

Failure of the Transport Board Commissioners to invest the naval surgeons it appointed with adequate authority meant that such 'good and beneficial effects' often followed only if the individual surgeon proved able to exert considerable force of character. However, with Coghill as master, Surgeon Superintendent Anderson appears to have had no problems.

Nor is there any report of conflict, as sometimes occurred, between the surgeon and the officer from 3rd Regiment of Foot in charge of the military guard on board.

Given the above and with the 'hardihood' of Irish convicts in general,<sup>2</sup> it is little surprise to find that most men on board arrived in healthy condition, with only one taken from the ship to Sydney Hospital. Descriptions entered under 'Complexion' ranged from 'blooming' (the man in question, John Granger of County Cork, had youth on his side), through several who were 'hale' or 'ruddy', to a single one, Patrick Reen, of County Cork, described as 'sickly'.<sup>3</sup> The majority of entries record only 'freckled or pockmarked'. Each man's age, height, the colour of his hair and eyes and any distinguishing marks were also entered on the indent. This made identification simple should he later abscond. At this date ship's indents did not record religion, marital state or literacy. Listed were the man's place and date of conviction, length of sentence, native place and occupation.

Though numbers in each of the groups tried in the same time and place are too small to be statistically significant, they reflect the social upheaval caused by the 'outbreak' of peace after the Napoleonic wars, with ever worsening economic depression in both England and Ireland.

---

by Valerie Thompson

---

Nowhere was this felt more severely than in Limerick, where, overnight, anticipating the immediate reduction in the British Army, large contracts for Army rations and supply of horses were cancelled. Increased unemployment and widespread unrest inevitably followed among the already impoverished peasantry. The winter of 1821-22 exacerbated the distress of the poorer classes.

In January, a letter from T. Lloyd of Beechmont, Rathkeale, described the situation as 'beyond description. The severe weather has caused the loss of almost all their turf and they are cutting down orchards etc. for fuel. There are robberies and extortions in the neighbourhood under the pretence of buying gunpowder. Swearing in is extending daily'. He suggested the application of the Insurrection Act.

Bills for this Act and the suspension of habeas corpus, introduced into the House of Commons on 7 February 1822, received royal assent four days later.<sup>4</sup>

By 1 February, 300 men were awaiting trial for crimes associated with the 'war'<sup>5</sup> in Munster and the government was arranging in advance for the transportation of 200 men. Conviction under the Act meant a sentence of transportation or death. No third choice existed for the judiciary. At the subsequent trials thirty-six capital convictions (one in ten sentences) followed. Charges ranged from 'administering an oath' through 'breaking the curfew', to assaults and murder.

The British government for once proceeded with caution, well aware that public opinion would never stand for wholesale executions. Except for the crime of murder (itself often commuted to transportation for life), sentences were mostly for seven years.

The majority of trials in County Limerick, placed under the Act on 1 May 1822, took place in Rathkeale or Limerick City. Conviction was not automatic. From 1822 to 19 April 1823, of 445 people tried, 21 were pardoned and 246 acquitted. So in a sense the lottery of transportation had begun with a conviction rate of no more than 40% of those charged.

Seventy-three men, with two exceptions, listing Co. Limerick as their native place, formed the largest group on *Mangles* 2.<sup>6</sup> Forty-three of these received a seven year sentence at the 1822 Special Sessions held in the County Court. On the other hand, twenty-two men tried in the same court at the Spring Assizes in April and May 1822 were, with one exception, sentenced to transportation for life. This severe sentence may have been received

with some relief by at least eight men, Patrick Corbett, James Donoghue, John and Patrick Fennell, James Griffin, John and Thomas Kennelly and Michael Walsh, all previously sentenced to hang on 18<sup>th</sup> May of the same year.<sup>7</sup> An account of their crime had appeared in the *Limerick Chronicle* on 26 September 1821.

*Sunday night, at Shanagolden, an armed party of 200, many wearing white bands on their hats, attacked the village in search of firearms. They first went to the post office and on being told the family had no muskets, they broke the furniture and threatened to murder the inhabitants. They next proceeded to the Bridewell and broke it open, thence to other houses and after demolishing the doors and windows of each they attacked, entered and took what arms they could get. A reward was offered by the Post Master General for their capture.*

The procedure on arrival in Sydney at this time was to land the convicts and march them up to the recently constructed Convict Barracks at Hyde Park, where Governor Brisbane would address them, reminding them that they now had an opportunity to begin a new life provided they gave no further trouble. No record exists that this happened with the men of *Mangles* 2, but 117 men en route to their final destination in country districts were sent off by boat on the Monday after arrival to Parramatta. Others not assigned to private employers in Sydney presumably remained in the Convict Barracks or Carter's Barracks.

Apart from rural occupations, those listed by Limerick men included apothecary (1), mason (2), tailor (2), carpenter (2), shoemaker (1), smith (1), tanner (1), coachman (1), with two men shown as former soldiers. No less than 47 men made an unlikely claim to be ploughmen, not mere labourers. Possibly some hoped to ensure they were sent to country areas, not left in the town. However not all ploughmen left for the interior, nor were all tradesmen retained in the town.<sup>8</sup> Settlers requesting their services ranged from large landowners, e.g. John Blaxland, to emancipists, e.g. Maurice Wholeghan.<sup>9</sup> Assignment appears random, with no attempt to separate men tried for the same crime. Apparently neither insurrection nor collusion in further crime was anticipated. Brothers or other relatives might or might not be assigned to the same person. Some men tried together, but not on the ship, apparently remained in gaol awaiting the result of an appeal against their sentence, while men tried at other times, in other places, were despatched. Or an explanation may lie in the length of time the

latter had spent awaiting a ship. This could depend on availability of military or police to accompany them to the port of embarkation. For men arriving in 1822, other reforms to the convict system resulting from Bigge's Reports were unfavourable. No longer could they anticipate a free grant of land on completion of their sentence, nor could access to any money they earned be granted until they were free. Later reforms by Governor Darling, e.g. assignment to more than one master, resulted in a longer period of service before a convict was eligible to apply for a ticket of leave. As comparatively few men of *Mangles* remained for any length of time with their first employer, this affected many of them, even those whose reassignment arose through no fault of their own. However, Darling's removal of the necessity for a certificate of good conduct from their own master aimed at eliminating the injustice arising in cases where masters had withheld the certificate as a means of retaining a good servant.

The timing of arrival in 1822 was in another sense fortunate. Permission for settlers whose flocks and herds had outgrown their grants on the Cumberland Plain to spread to locations beyond the Nepean-Hawkesbury was being granted. Though the first Certificates of Occupation gave only a limited right to a few men to occupy land for grazing purposes, they initiated the spread of settlement beyond the Hawkesbury-Nepean river system and across the ranges encircling the colony. This, together with Government emphasis on restricting small settlers mainly to land in the south west,<sup>10</sup> led to the arrival in County Argyle and beyond of many *Mangles* men.

Space does not permit person by person minibiographies. However, the detail and reasonably accurate nature of convict record keeping in Australia, together with the 1823-1825 Musters, the 1828 Census, and the (partial) 1841 Census permit initial reconstruction of several men's lives. Of the total of 73 Limerick men, we can identify the locality to which 21 were initially assigned and employer and district are identified for a further 27.<sup>11</sup> In the course of time 24 men received their Ticket of Leave. Of these, nine later received a Conditional Pardon and Patrick Fennell an Absolute Pardon. Although then entitled to return to Ireland, Fennell elected to remain in NSW. After the introduction of squatting licences in 1835,<sup>12</sup> at least six Limerick men, John and Thomas Dalton, John Purtell, Thomas Shaughnessy, Edward Markham and James Fitzpatrick, became squatters with annual licences for extensive acreages and, for four of their number, eventual rights to purchase much of that land. Strong character, a certain amount of aggression and the physique and good health necessary to support it, were in general highly desirable in the man with ambition to retain the land on which he had squatted. However, John Dalton was eventually beaten by drought and Shaughnessy decided to seek better land in South Australia.

Three men, John Fennell and John and Thomas Kennelly, permitted by the regulations to petition for their wives and children to join them, did so, but Fennell's early death and the apparent death of the wife of Thomas Kennelly meant that John Kennelly's petition alone succeeded. Given that the imbalance in the sexes in the colony continued for at least the next twenty years and that employment for many men as shepherds involved lonely work on outstations, it is little surprise that few marriages have been identified. Some may, like John Dalton, have married in their forties or even later when this imbalance began to be redressed by the arrival of assisted female immigrants.

Those who succeeded in a material sense beyond any reasonable expectation either by themselves or those placed in authority over them are easiest to trace. A handful of letters, one diary, court records, participation (not in a criminal role) in one dramatic bushranging assault, as well as active involvement in another incident, and last but not least, newspaper reports in both Ireland and New South Wales, help to flesh out some participants in this varied batch. One such newspaper report consisted of an interview with Edward Markham, who named his licensed squatting run 'Springvale' after his birthplace in West Limerick. Originally convicted of being in possession of a pair of pistols, hence a 'criminal' of 1822, Markham was later a deservedly respected community leader. On arrival he and Thomas Shaughnessy were first assigned to James Byrne, a small settler near Appin. For Shaughnessy the assignment had an additional benefit. In 1829 he married Ann Byrne, daughter of his employer.

The one man of professional status, Robert Cussen, an apothecary born near Newcastle West, was possibly absent-minded, for he lost his precious ticket of leave. He was, no doubt, relieved when Governor Brisbane authorised its replacement.

When, on arrival, James Fitzpatrick was assigned to Dennis Bryan of Appin, he would have been aware that twelve of his shipmates, including a smith and one of the two carpenters on board, were assigned to William Howe Esq., who was then about to build his mansion, *Glenlee*, near Campbelltown. Fitzpatrick was one of six convicts chosen to accompany Hamilton Hume and William Hovell on their famous 1824 journey of exploration, which proved an overland route to Port Phillip was practicable. Fitzpatrick acquitted himself well and was granted his pardon. Having sighted the good but unsettled grazing land along the route, he was in an excellent position to acquire a squatting licence at Cowcumbra. In 1855 he added to his considerable assets by acquiring the mansion and land at *Glenlee*, an outcome certainly not foreseen on his first arrival in the district.

Although these instances are not typical of the future for the men of *Mangles 2*, most of whom lapsed into relative obscurity, several settled comfort-

ably enough that in later years they sent for or were followed by family members under assisted immigration schemes,<sup>13</sup> an unintended benefit for the original transportee and his family.

## NOTES

- 1 Between voyages as a transport, the *Mangles* functioned as a trading vessel. C. Bateson, *The Convict Ships*, 2nd ed., Sydney, 1983, p235.
- 2 The Reports 1822-23 of Commissioner J.T. Bigge, appointed in 1819 to investigate, *inter alia*, the convict system as it operated under Lachlan Macquarie, had described a sentence of transportation as 'less a deterrent than an encouragement to crime'. By November 1822, Governor Brisbane, who succeeded Macquarie, was implementing reforms. For information re Bigge's Commission see *Historical Records of Australia*, Ser 1, vol xx, p2 ff.
- 3 Reen survived and in 1832 received his Ticket of Leave (ToL). A ticket of leave allowed a convict to work on his own account and move freely within his selected district.
- 4 Members who attacked the suspension of habeas corpus included Thomas Spring Rice of Mount Trenchard. On its renewal in 1823, he was the only one to mount serious opposition. Powers granted under the Act lay dormant unless the magistrates in a county requested its Proclamation. G. Broeken, *Rural Disorder and Police Reform in Ireland*, Studies in Irish History, 2nd ser, vol 81 London 1970 pp94-7, 140.
- 5 In February 1822 the *Limerick Chronicle* reported that the Whiteboys drilled regularly at night at Curragh Wood, between Loughill and Ballyhahill. Two months later, Mr. A. E. Taylor from Woodcliff House, Lisready, reported to the Dublin authorities that Glensharrold was a principal haunt of Whiteboys and was stated to be full of arms. With this information, a sweep through the area by detachments of military, by then stationed at Templethea, Newcastle West and Loughill, was requested'. Cited in G. Curtin, *Recollections of our native valley*, Loughill-Ballyhahill Heritage Society, Ballyhahill, Co Limerick, 1996, p92.
- 6 Michael Sperin, William Stanton and John Whittaker, tried in other counties, also gave Co. Limerick as their native place.
- 7 Kennelly. For further information re Kennelly and Fennell brothers see K.Press and V. Thompson, *West Limerick Families Abroad*, Melbourne, 2001
- 8 Bigge had criticized Macquarie for retaining tradesmen almost without exception in government service.
- 9 The 1828 Census shows Wholeghan with 180 acres and 180 cattle at Airds. He arrived on the *Hercules* in 1802.
- 10 T.M. Perry, *Australia's First Frontier*, Melbourne, 1963.
- 11 Minor errors in transcription, e.g. Daniel Doran appears to be Daniel Horan, prevent exact figures.
- 12 The first list of licences was published in the Government Gazette in January 1836.
- 13 Known relatives include those of James Condon, John Neville, James Roche, Edward Markham and possibly Patrick Lysaght.