

# Storrs – Miller Saga: continuation

*by Ross Miller*

## The Parkes

John Parkes from Halesowen in Worcester, born 1767, was sentenced at the Worcester Assizes to seven years' transportation for the theft of a greatcoat (beaver coat worth 16 shillings). He sailed with 110 other convicts on the *Barwell* arriving at Port Jackson (Sydney) on 18 May, 1798.

He entered a de facto relationship with Margaret Southern who was transported on the *Experiment* arriving in the colony on June 24, 1804 and they began a family that eventually contained 12 children. Margaret was one of 338 on the *Experiment* having been convicted at Lancaster on 27 April 1803 of.... and given seven years' transportation. The ship left England on November 1803 and arrived in Sydney on 24 June 1804.

John – trained from a young age as a nailor (hand-made iron nails) – initially worked in the Government boatyard near Circular Quay under Thomas Moore who trained him in assessing the quality of timber. Having served his time, during 1816 John was granted 50 acres in the Botany Bay district, but due to disputes over a river crossing, the grants were not awarded until 1831. In the meantime, he lived in Campbell St, central Sydney between George Street and Pitt Street, next door to Ellen Stores and her son Edward.

Eventually John crossed Cooks River and set up on his 50 acres at the top of a ridge, surrounded by ironbarks, red mahogany trees and gullies full of ferns, flannel flowers and gymea lilies. The district of Earlwood has been known by four names in the times of European settlement. The earliest name was "Parkes Camp" derived from the Parkes family's name and a reference to the profession of John and his sons; at this time "camp" denoted the headquarters of a group of sawyers.

The Parkes' property was situated in the centre of modern suburb, Earlwood. The western boundary was the top end of Woolcott Street and the southern boundary was along William Street from Woolcott Street to Homer Street. The second Parkes daughter, Sarah, married her Campbell St. neighbour Edward Stores in 1827 at St. Stephens in Sydney. The land was divided into five farms for the children after Margaret's death in 1859. John, Joseph and Thomas Parkes, and Edward Stores stayed on the land continuing as the sawyers of Parkes Camp, while the others retained their small farms while living elsewhere. At one stage Edward was a publican in Sydney. They had three children – Edwin, Thomas, and John Robert who was born at Cooks River – so presumably on the Parkes' farm.

By about the 1870s the name of the district had changed from Parkes Camp to Parkestown, as the timber was cut out and the local people changed their occupations to suit the resources. Some people from this vicinity gave their address as Forest Hill, a name not associated with any particular family, but described the landscape as it had once been. The first known use of the name Earlwood, or at least a close version of it, was when Mrs Jane Earl subdivided her land before she sold it in 1884. "The Earlewood Estate" was used as the name of the property when it was surveyed to bring it under Torrens Title later that year.

John died about 1839 at Parkes Camp and Margaret died there on 24 March 1859. Margaret was born in Manchester in 1783 at the time of long hours in the clothing mills for little return. Like many she resorted to theft, but was apprehended for the theft of a linen shift and a linen apron (value one penny each) on 21 January 1803. The 19-year-old was chained and loaded together with other female convicts on 4/12/1803 and transported to Sydney on the Experiment 1, a journey from England lasting 173 days. She is thought to have been among the first convict women to be housed in the Parramatta Female Factory. She may have been assigned as a servant to John Parkes who was working in the docks area, or he may have chosen her by the then popular custom of a line up at the factory where the man drops a scarf or handkerchief in front of a woman to indicate his interest. If the woman picked up the token, the marriage was virtually immediate.

One of Edward and Sarah's sons, Thomas, is described as a miner, so it is more than likely he was one of many thousands who went inland after the gold starting in the 1850s and moving around a large part of the Riverina area. He married Catherine Connolly, daughter of convict Daniel Connolly transported from Tipperary in 1838. We assume he was head-over-heels in love with Catherine as she had a one-year-old daughter in tow. Ellen had been born in Tumut to Catherine and Thomas Edward Gelling, an immigrant from the Isle of Man. For whatever reason he forsook the child leaving the 18-year-old mother to the support of her family. Thomas Gelling was one of the first to be paid the government bonus for finding payable gold in the Temora district.

### **A touch of Geordie**

Ellen met and married Durham immigrant miner/engineer Tobias Miller. The Millers (originating from Newcastle upon Tyne), like many other northern English miners left the coal behind to try for gold. The family (John, Ellen and Isabella) emigrated in the mid 1850s but returned to their native north of England aboard the *Red Jacket*, arriving Liverpool in January 1856. But obviously the conditions in English mines had changed little as the family (John, Ellen, Isabella, Gavin, John and Tobias, together with cousin Joseph Holt aged 21) re-emigrated to Australia aboard the *Forest Rights* arriving in Melbourne on 29 June 1863. They re-established themselves in the Ballarat area and four more children were born in Piggoreet (Springdallah district), a short distance south-west of Ballarat.

John and Eleanor were living in Newcastle Rd, Wallsend at the time of their deaths. It would appear that gold mining in Australia was no kinder to them than coal mining had been in England. The Newcastle Road home was a tiny miner's cottage with slab walls and a dirt floor in the kitchen. The family lived in it up to the 1970s when it was demolished to make way for a roundabout.

### **The Irish influence**

Daniel Connolly aged 16, married his, probably teenage, bride in the pretty mid-Ireland town of Roscrea – a peaceful haven of old monuments and buildings, including a 6th century monastery, that qualify it as a heritage town. However, throughout history it has been a 'border' town between the authority of the Butlers and the O'Carrolls, and seen many a fight and change in administration.

Daniel was caught stealing money in and appeared before the Tipperary Assizes as a 25-year-old husband and father of three boys. He was sentenced to seven years'

transportation on 23 March 1838. He was transferred to Kilmainham prison in Dublin to await travel abroad. Leaving behind his wife Ellen Donaher and three sons, he was shipped out from Dublin on the *Clyde* on 11 May 1838 with 215 other prisoners. His records say he was 5' 2½" tall, had a sallow complexion with many freckles, brown hair and hazel eyes and was a labourer by occupation.

Scurvy began to appear in the less healthy as they approached the Cape of Good Hope. They called at Simon's Town on 21 July and took on an additional 20 convicts, all military men in good health; and fresh provisions, including live sheep. They stayed seven days at the Cape and the health and spirits of the people were greatly improved. They were given a considerable quantity of potatoes and the surgeon was convinced that 'this liberality of the Government contributed greatly to our good health'. No cocoa was issued, but the allowance of oatmeal was sufficient. They departed the Cape on 28th July 1838.

The men were well behaved and were encouraged to dance and march around to the music of the flute. The decks were seldom wetted and afterwards were always dried by stove and windsails. Chloride of lime was freely used and every means taken to keep the decks clean and dry. By the time the *Clyde* arrived in Port Jackson on 10 September 1838, the men's clothing was in very bad condition and the surgeon remarked that 'the people were all in tatters'. There had been no deaths on the voyage out.

Daniel (number 38/1860) was assigned to the Yass area (that administrative area would have covered Tumut then). He was granted a Ticket of Leave to remain in the Yass area on 8 October 1842, and then his Certificate of Freedom was granted on 21 May 1845. He purchased a half acre of land for £4 in Buccleuch County, Tumut area, presumably Gilmore Creek.

Somewhere along the line Daniel took up with Mary Ann Healy (or Tracey) and had four children, three of them born in Gilmore Creek. Mary died aged 21, so their liaison started when she was at most 16 or 17 years old. Disaster struck on the birth of their fourth child – Mary Ann died in, or soon after, childbirth and Daniel was sent to Gouldburn goal on 25 July 1854 for three months, but transferred to Tarban Creek (Parramatta Asylum) as a lunatic on 24 August 1854 – at that stage he was described as a shoemaker. He died nine years and six weeks later from mania and diarrhoea at the asylum. He had aliases of Brassey and Donovan.

Their third child, Mary Ann, was unofficially adopted by Margaret and Robert Downing of Gadara and spent a lot her life at 'Killarney' with the Downings. She was reared by Mrs Sheahan, a daughter of the Downings, who breast-fed her alongside her own child. The question remain as to who looked after the other three children – the eldest, Joseph, was only six.

Note that Rebecca Gelling, second wife of Robert Downing, is sister of Thomas Edward Gelling who had an illegitimate child (Ellen) with Mary Ann's elder sister, Catherine.

Back to Tobias and Ellen: Ellen disappears from the pages of history until they married in Wagga Wagga in 1885 – the few facts known of the couple's early days is a meeting with some of the Kelly Gang and it seems Ellen's later independent thinking had already developed as she apparently fed them and generally assisted them. The couple spent some time in the bush frequenting with local aboriginals and later used native cures shown them to start a herbalist business after they migrated

to New Zealand.

The couple had moved out of the bush to Wallsend by 1887 when their first child, Ina, was born; Ina only survived a few months. Minnie was born in 1889 and married Ben Iveson, editor of the *Wairarapa Times-Age* in New Zealand. Norman and Reginald were born in Wallsend while John and Harold were born in Masterton after emigration – Norman and Reginald survived Gallipoli and John survived the Western Front, though all three were eventually severely debilitated and declared unfit for service. Their complaints affected their health for the rest of their lives.

Just getting to New Zealand was quite an adventure. Tobias travelled ahead to find a suitable place for his family, but fortune would have it that he travelled on the SS *Wairarapa* which became one of New Zealand's worst shipwrecks, sailing full speed into an offshore island in fog – luckily Tobias was a good swimmer and one of the few to survive in the foggy chaos of broken ship, panicked horses and floundering crew and passengers fighting surf on a rocky shore – 120 drowned.

The family settled in the Masterton area, which was a jump-off point for virgin forest being gradually cleared for farmland. While living in one of the track clearing camps for the new railway, the family had to flee a raging bush fire in the four-wheel horse cart – the two horses were so distressed by the time they out-ran the fire, they had to be destroyed. Tobias worked as a rail engineer, herbalist, sales assistant, door-to-door suit salesman, and a stores foreman.

It seems Tobias developed a liking for the drink, to the point where he joined the Salvation Army, no doubt at Ellen's insistence. According to his youngest son, Tobias used to fall off the wagon once a year, disappear for a week or so and come home bedraggled and broke. Ellen would clean him up and send him back to work. This may be where Ellen's staunch Methodist belief came from.

His last 'off the wagon' experience came from an increasing belief his wife was treating their boarder better than he. He disappeared and when he re-emerged several days later, he shot the boarder. The boarder, a shearing mechanic, was wearing a steel-braced corset (no doubt from a shearing injury) and the bullet bounced off a stay, saving his life. The media had a field day during his widely-publicised trial, labelling him 'The Monster From Masterton' and other elaborate epithets. Tobias was sentenced to seven years hard labour and died in 1928 after a prostate operation.

Ellen carried on, and the bright spot in her life was her youngest, Harold Gladstone Miller, who was one of New Zealand's early Rhodes Scholars attending Balliol College, Oxford, in 1920 and became one of New Zealand's best-known academics of his age. Ellen is remembered by her nieces as a suffragette who paraded publicly for the women's vote, a staunch Methodist, an 'old Tartar' who loved boiled sweets. In old age she developed Alzheimers' and occasionally behaved and spoke in a manner quite the opposite to her ladylike public demeanour.

Apart from two tours to the Pacific with the RNZAF during World War II for Ellen's grandson, John, life has been 'uneventful' in comparison for the Miller descendants!