

PART D: WERE THOSE THE GOLDEN DAYS?

John Cork and the two Charlottes Settle for Life in Queensland

*And broad-based under all
Is planted England's oaken-hearted mood,
As rich in fortitude
As e'er went worldward from the island-wall*

Bayard Taylor (1825 - 1878)

Searching for Treasure

Where is the Gold?

The Australian gold rushes were well under way by the time that John Cork arrived from England aged just twenty-two years. He came as an assisted immigrant on the 'Fitzjames', arriving on 28 July 1858; for the passenger list, he had given a name that appeared to be written as 'Frowley' in Kent as his 'native place', and had stated that it was there that his parents lived.¹ Later research has suggested that the place should have been written as 'Throwley' (see below), and there may have been some natural misunderstanding by the clerk preparing the document. On later records, including the certificate relating to his second marriage and also on his death certificate, his place of birth was shown as Faversham, Kent. On arrival in Sydney, John gave his occupation as being a farm labourer, and he stated that he could neither read nor write. As appeared to be the case with all male assisted migrants, John was paid £1 by the Immigration Board when he reached Sydney. It is likely that it was the great prosperity in the colonies as a result of the gold which had persuaded John and many other migrants to seek an opportunity in this still-new land.

On the International Genealogical Index, John Cork is shown as having been christened on 6 March 1836 as John Ward Cork, obviously using the mother's maiden name as a second Christian name. The christening was registered as occurring at Throwley in Kent, which may be a part of Faversham.

On that same ship, Charlotte Hedgland also arrived as an assisted migrant, and possibly their marriage in the following year was the result of a shipboard romance. On arrival, Charlotte was aged twenty-one years, and she was from Bradnich in Devon, where her

parents lived; her occupation was that of a general house servant. Charlotte was recorded as being able to both read and write. On the passenger list, it stated that Charlotte had two brothers living in this country at that time, John in Geelong and Robert in Surry Hills, Sydney. Interestingly, Charlotte received ten shillings from the Immigration Board, just half of the male rate!

John and Charlotte were married in Sydney at the Presbyterian Church in Pitt Street South, on 3 August, 1859, by Rev. James Fullerton, with two male witnesses recorded on the certificate, George Millers and Joseph Gould. On the marriage certificate, John had signed by his mark.

It should be mentioned that the name of one of the witnesses at the wedding (George Millers) was later included as a witness at the later burial of Charlotte (John's wife), after her untimely death in 1875 in Gympie, and it was probably the same person who was a witness at the wedding. He may have been a fellow migrant on the ship on which John and Charlotte came to Sydney, or even a relative of either of them who had arrived in New South Wales in the twelve months after they had reached Sydney.

According to the shipping records and the christening record of John, and also from the eventual death certificates, John's parents were John Cork (Labourer) and Ann Ward, and Charlotte's were shown as William Hedgland (Labourer) and Mary.

Nothing is known for inclusion in this history of the early years after their marriage, except regarding the birth of their children. In 1866, their fifth child (second oldest daughter), Elizabeth Ann (my grand-mother to be), was born in New South Wales at Duncans Creek on 8 April. There are two such localities in this State, one near Tamworth, and the other to the east of Tenterfield. There were definite gold workings at and near Duncans Creek in the Tenterfield area, and it had been initially assumed that John Cork may have moved his family there, seeking his fortune. However, birth records discovered later have proved that the family initially spent a couple of years near Maitland, followed by some further years in the Tamworth area, where at least three births occurred, before the family travelled further north.

The children were: John, who was born in 1860 near Maitland N.S.W. but who sadly died in the next month, John Robert who was also born in the Maitland area (in Smith Street, West Maitland) in 1861, followed by his brother, James Thomas, two years later in 1863, although the location of that birth is not known. Then came four girls, the first two births being registered in Tamworth (Charlotte in 1864 and Elizabeth Ann in 1866 as mentioned above), then Sophia Jane in 1867 (registered in Nundle, near Tamworth), and Harriett in 1869, probably the first child of the family to be born in Queensland (in Dalby), although the location of Harriett's birth has not been sought yet. Apart from my grand-mother, I remember only Aunt Harriett, who, as the wife of George Sawyer, reared their family in North Queensland in the same general area to which my grand-mother had moved with her children. Certainly, there would have been a continuation of contact between them, which could in fact have led them to the same area. Following the three girls, John and Charlotte's later children were two more boys,

William Henry (born in 1871, but dying as a very young child) and Edward who was born in 1873, almost certainly in Queensland, again probably in Dalby.

Let's Try Queensland

As mentioned previously in this story, the Cork family eventually moved further north into Queensland, which had been proclaimed as a separate colony in 1859. It was suggested previously that they may have gone on from Duncans Creek to either Dalby or Ipswich which are over the border. In the late 1860's, John and Charlotte Cork could have met William and Maria Dun, and any number of their descendants in Ipswich. Henry Percy Dun was there, having not yet moved on to Dalby where he married and settled; they could also have met Charles and Zorayda. Charles was to lease land at Lake Cootharaba in 1871, to which they moved soon after the birth of their third youngest child, Ernest, who was born in that year in Ipswich, the fifth of their children to be born there. The two youngest children of Charles and Zorayda were born at Cooloothin Creek, Lake Cootharaba, as mentioned previously. Others of the Dun family in Ipswich at that time would include Lucy, the youngest daughter of William and Maria, possibly Seaton Henderson, and also two other daughters of William and Maria, namely Maria and Clara, with their respective husbands and children.

John Cork would have been very interested in the gold find at Gympie by Nash in 1867, and in fact he may have hurried on to Gympie, rather than spending any time along the way, seeking other opportunities. In the thriving district of Gympie, work would be easy to find. In a booklet entitled 'A Century of Golden Success' which was organised by the Principal of the Monkland State School to celebrate the school's centenary year in 1984, it was stated that James Nash made his discovery on Caledonian Hill, and in a few years, mining developments along Nash's Gully disclosed the fabulous wealth of the Monkland, later to become known as the "richest hundred acres in the world."² By 1873, Monkland, only about three kilometres south-east of Gympie, had become a township in its own right.

The Cork family would certainly have reached Gympie by the early 1870s at the latest, and with the birth of their last child in 1873, John and Charlotte would have six children to support (the oldest then aged twelve), after suffering the deaths of three babies before the age of two. Assuming that they travelled from Dalby, it could be expected that the journey would have taken up to six weeks by dray, with very few roads, and those few being hardly worthy of the name - in the event of floods, the trip could have been even slower. What an exciting journey for the children!

Charlotte, unfortunately, did not have many more years to enjoy her family, and their new settled life in Gympie - sadly, she died on 24 July, 1875, and was buried in the 'old'

cemetery at Gympie, which has since been converted for building blocks and a park. John Cork must have thought that, despite its many blessings, theirs had been a marriage of sorrows.

Apparently, another migrant from London, England, had obtained work with John to care for the children, and in the year after the death of Charlotte, his first wife, John married that new migrant, Charlotte Brown. Charlotte's parents are shown as William Brown (Engineer) and Maria Leaper. It has been said that the brother of either Maria, or her daughter, Charlotte, was a guard at Whitehall in London.³ At the time of their marriage, John was aged forty, and his new wife, Charlotte, was twenty-one - with a ready-made family. They were married in the Primitive Methodist Church, Gympie, on 15 June, 1876. By all accounts, the new marriage worked well, and the children fortunately gained another good mother.

John is shown on his marriage and death certificates as a miner and it can be assumed that he worked for one of the many mining companies in the Gympie (Monkland) area. In later life, he was a market gardener.

But, there was misfortune also with one of the children of the second marriage. Within a year, Charlotte bore twins, Helen (Ellen) Louisa and Arthur William, born 24 February, 1877, but the girl died aged only eighteen months. In 1899, their son, Arthur, married, aged 22, to Clara, there being two children of that marriage, including Nellie (Helen) who married Charles Harris, a grand-son of Charles Allan Dun, as mentioned previously.

Though Families Drift Apart, the Legacy Remains

Elizabeth Ann Cork, who would have still been a young child when the family moved to Gympie, may have met Percy Vivian Dun when in her teens. They married in the District Registry Office at Gympie on 2 July, 1888. Percy was then aged 26, and Elizabeth was 22 years of age. At that time, Percy was shown as being employed as a bullock-driver. Their story has been told previously.

It is unfortunate that so little is readily available to me about the Cork family for this history, but future work will add to it. The names of pupils in the School Register of the Monkland State School, which were printed in the centenary publication referred to above, include children of the Dun family, two Cork families, and also the Sawyer family.⁴ It is understood that John Robert and his wife, Ida, (nee Holzmann), with their family lived for many years in Charters Towers in North Queensland (where all but one of their thirteen children were born), having moved there from Gympie in the late 1880s. There was contact between the Duns and the Corks in those parts, as well as

with the Sawyers in Ayr and Brandon. John Robert Cork was at different times the secretary of a mining company, and the sub-editor of a mining publication in Charters Towers; later, he became an engine driver at a sugar mill at Mackay, in which town he died in 1929.

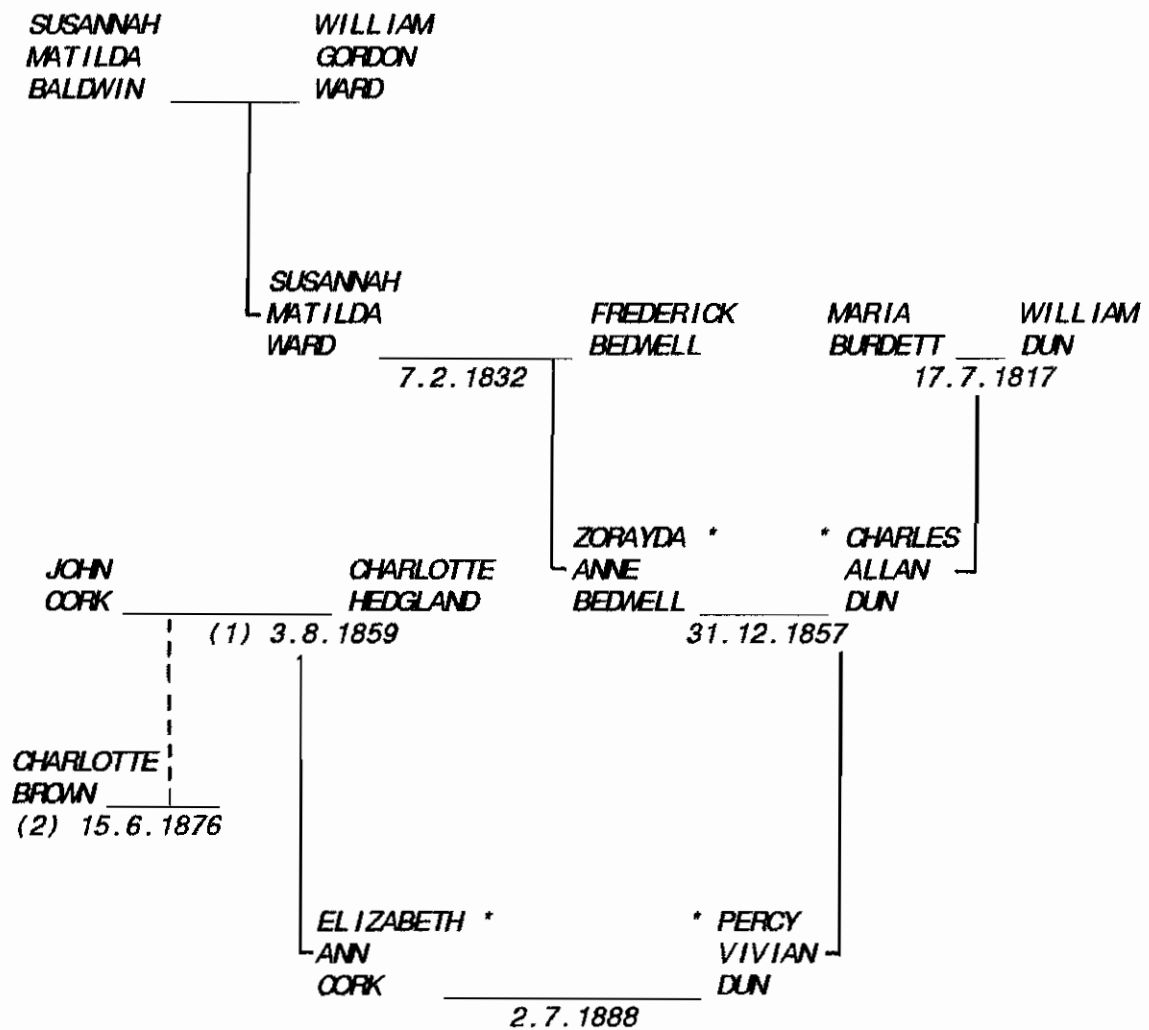
John Cork (the father) died in Gympie aged 73 on 24 October, 1909, being buried in the Gympie Cemetery on the following day. Charlotte, his second wife, lived to the age of 75 years, dying on 7 April, 1930, while living in Scott Road, Herston, a suburb of Brisbane. Their son, Arthur, and his wife, Clara, and family, also lived there later for many years. Charlotte Cork was buried in the Toowong Cemetery.

As with many in those early times, theirs had been a life with its share of sadness and disappointment, but their descendants have cause to be justifiably proud of the part they had played in those exciting years when our land was being developed.

COMPACT FAMILY TREE

Showing the relationships between those ancestors who either settled or were born in Australia

(refer to other charts for family details)



* indicates Born in Australia

Looking Back with Pride

So much has happened - science and technology have changed our lives to such an extent - that it is difficult today to think of our forebears in the last century and to recover some feeling of daily life as it would have been for them. We so often visualise those ancestors as older people, and if we are not careful, we can invest them with 'old' thoughts. But, we should always remember that all of them were once young; they grew up with their dreams, their loves and fears, they struggled against adversity (often different from that of today, but serious and dreadful nevertheless) - and the fortunate ones could find time to enjoy life, and to laugh. Many of them, often the lucky ones, survived and prospered; others merely existed, while, always sadly, death was in constant attendance.

Though many might disagree, our country today is a much easier place in which to live. But, given the choice, how many, if they could, would choose to re-live the life of one of those ancestors? How stimulating it would be to experience the years as Susannah Matilda did, battling against bureaucracy, successfully, to establish a worthwhile place in this new land for her children and herself. And who could fail to be inspired by the great adventures of Frederick and his companions, under sail, so far from homeland, finding new places on our vast coastline? Then, there was William and Maria; theirs was the more settled life, but in what was surely the 'far beyond'. Think of the excitement of daily survival, a very few people in a large expanse of land, exposed to the risks from escaped convicts (even from the convict work-force), or from the local black inhabitants whose land was being taken over. And, there was John Cork who seemed to be seeking the golden prize; that has always been a powerful attraction.

There were many others, all with a powerful story to tell, of pitting their strength and skill against the unknown - and usually winning. Most of us would say: 'I wish I'd been there too'.

The fortunate crossing of the paths of those early settlers (playing their particular part in life) has left a worthwhile legacy, as is the case with many pioneering families, and today that contribution adds to the solid foundations of our great land.

*All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts, ...*

*From 'As You Like It' (Act II Scene VII)
by William Shakespeare.*

*Breathes there a man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land?*

Sir Walter Scott