

## *V From the Sea to the Land*

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### **Frederick Settles in New South Wales**

That said, it is now time to return to Frederick Bedwell in England in 1823, just back from his six year naval expedition to Australia. He was then aged twenty-six, with half of those years in the Navy, and although we do not have documentary evidence, it appears obvious that he thought that it was time to get on with the next stage of life. By then, he had been transferred in the Navy to half-pay.

It is understood that his first choice was to settle in Canada; possibly, there were some unpopular acquaintances in New South Wales, maybe he did not approve of the convict system, or he could merely have been seeking further excitement in new places: in any case, he apparently obtained permission to go to Canada, and did in fact spend some time there - but again, unfortunately, no information is available about that period.

In time, he decided that Canada was really less attractive than Australia, and it is understood that the weather was a factor in his decision. Frederick probably returned to Sydney in 1827, but no record of that movement is available at this stage.

In the Biography compiled by his grand-son, Mervyn Dickson,<sup>1</sup> it stated that while in England, he wrote on 3 August, 1826 to Sir Thomas Brisbane (the recently-retired Governor of New South Wales), applying for a land grant; in fact, that letter may have been a request for the ex-Governor's support of his proposed application. In any case, Brisbane forwarded the letter to Earl Bathurst, with his recommendation.

Dickson's Biography also records a reference in the Mitchell Library to a list of farms to be measured, dated 1824, which includes 1280 acres in the name of F. Bedwell at

Wybong, eight miles to the south-east of Oxley's Peak in the Liverpool Range.<sup>2</sup> The Biography also refers to another manuscript concerning land applications, which includes a reference to 640 acres on the Williams River, applied for by F. Bedwell; no date is given in the Biography.<sup>3</sup>

The date of the Wybong land reference is surprising, in view of the application in 1826 mentioned above; however, Frederick may have sought and received a land grant prior to that. In fact, he did receive land at Wybong Creek at some time, because in 1836, he and his wife, Susannah, leased 1280 acres named 'Swyndon' at Wybong Creek to Archibald Bell, who, according to G. Nesta Griffiths in 'Some Northern Homes', sought, with Captain Pike, to obtain good country where Denman is now, and he selected two properties on Wybong Creek.<sup>4</sup> One of those was probably the leased land.

On Frederick's return to Sydney, he appears initially to have stayed close to the sea. There are references to Captain Bedwell, Master of the government barque, 'Lucy Ann', on various journeys between Moreton Bay, Port Macquarie and Port Jackson in 1828<sup>5</sup> - probably Frederick Bedwell; and he is reported as being engaged in commercial undertakings including a dock enterprise, management of sea traffic between Port Jackson and Newcastle, and employment in a ship's store.<sup>6</sup>

At some stage during those early years, he had an address in Windmill Street,<sup>7</sup> and it could be assumed that this eligible, retired naval officer would have been socially involved with the young, unmarried women of the town, of which there were only few. In fact, there were considerably-less than one thousand of such women in their late teens or twenties. Adopting the curious age statistic of the 1828 Census, there were only one thousand four hundred females over the age of twelve in Sydney and district in that year; and the census summary makes the interesting disclosure that "there were no pagans among them." For that matter, for what it is worth, there were none recorded among any of the other inhabitants, either!

In a selection of letters of Harriet King, wife of P. P. King, which was published under the title 'The Admiral's Wife' (compiled by D. B. Walsh), there is a mention in a letter dated 3 November, 1828, that Frederick Bedwell is to marry one of the Miss Bells of Richmond.<sup>8</sup> It is likely that the comment referred to Frances Bell, the daughter of Archibald Bell, a lieutenant of the 102 Regiment, who had arrived in 1807 - he seems to have been the man who had pioneered the Bell's Line of Road over the Blue Mountains in 1823. The Archibald Bell who leased the land at Wybong Creek in 1836 was one of his sons. Apparently, however, that engagement of Frederick's did not proceed.

### **Frederick and Susannah Matilda (junior) - Life at Paterson**

You will remember that in late 1820, Eliza Bedwell was born, the daughter of Frederick Bedwell and Louisa Cilcot (or Calcott). Following his return from England, Frederick

arranged for a Deed of Trust to be drawn up by solicitor Frederick Garling, senior, whose son incidentally, was later to become Frederick's brother-in-law. Under the deed, Louisa conveyed her claim to a property in Harrington Street to Frederick Bedwell and John Blaxland, as trustees for Eliza. The trust was to be administered entirely for the benefit of the child, and the title to the property was to pass to Eliza upon her attaining the age of twenty-one years.<sup>9</sup> As mentioned earlier, little else is known of Eliza's future; she did become the wife of Henry Maitland Pearce, but there were no children.

It is interesting to speculate on the circumstances which led to the establishment of that trust for the benefit of the child, Eliza. It is unlikely that Louisa would have set up the trust unless there were special circumstances. One possibility could be that Frederick had purchased the property for Louisa after the child was born in 1820, intending it to be of assistance in rearing Eliza. Then, on Frederick's return in say 1827, enquiries may have shown that there was a need for a trust to ensure that the property would be preserved for Eliza's benefit; for instance, Louisa may have been intending to marry, which could have resulted in her husband becoming the owner of the property; or, alternatively, Louisa may by then have been in failing health. Further research in time may provide clarification.

At least on two occasions in 1831, Frederick was obliged as a citizen of the colony to carry out the duties of Special Juror, one case being that of McLaren v. King - the details of the action are not available to me. At the time of the second case in September, his address was shown as Windmill Row.<sup>10</sup>

During the late 1820s, Susannah Matilda Ward (of whom more later) lived in Sydney with her four daughters, aged from eleven to nineteen years.

The eldest girl, Elizabeth, married Frederick Garling, junior, in 1829, and her next sister, Susannah Matilda (named for her mother), was then seventeen.

Nothing is known of the courtship, but when young Susannah was just twenty, she married Frederick Bedwell in Sydney, at St. James Church. The church had been consecrated by Rev. Samuel Marsden just eight years earlier, when the building (which had started out to be a court house) was completed. Susannah and Frederick were married on 7 February, 1832, by Rev. Richard Hill, under Special License. Official witnesses at the ceremony included Doctor William Bland of Pitt Street (who had cared for Susannah Matilda's only son, William, during the early, difficult years), Sophia Garling (probably the bride's sister-in-law), and Emma and Sarah Maitland Ward, the two younger sisters of the bride. The notice of the wedding in the 'Sydney Herald' on the 13th February stated that Susannah Matilda Ward, the bride, was the daughter of the late Lieutenant Ward, 1st Regiment of Royals, and the niece of the late General Hawkshaw of H.E.I.C.

Frederick and Susannah were later to settle on the Paterson River in the Hunter Valley, on a property which they named 'Valentia', no doubt in honour of Frederick's sponsor for the Navy. That property was a part of a larger area on the Paterson originally granted to Susannah, senior, and that portion was the area given to her daughter,

Susannah (Frederick's wife); other portions went to the other surviving children. The interesting but complex story in regard to the land grants to Susannah Matilda Ward will be covered in the section dealing specifically with her.

Frederick was involved in further land transactions also. The Historical Records of Australia (series 1, volume 17, page 1) mentions a despatch from the Under Secretary of State to Governor Darling, dated 10 June 1833, containing an introduction for Frederick Bedwell, lieut., R.N.<sup>11</sup> The despatch itself is not published in the Historical Records, and the document has not yet been sought in the Archives. That despatch is also referred to in Mervyn Dickson's Biography. However, there appears to be some mystery here; Governor Darling was in office from 19 December 1825 until 21 October 1831, and Frederick, despite his apparent unwillingness to push himself forward, would certainly have been known to the Governor at least in the latter half of those years. So, why would there be an official despatch of introduction to Governor Darling nearly two years after the Governor's term had expired?

As mentioned earlier, in 1836 Frederick and his wife, Susannah, leased their property at Wybong Creek to Alexander Bell, junior. Could the mystery despatch addressed to Governor Darling have arisen from a belated enquiry by Darling into the validity of Frederick's claim to land at Wybong Creek, and could the date discrepancy be simply due to an administrative delay in replying? In Dickson's Biography, he implied that Frederick Bedwell had actually worked that property, claiming that he left it as a result of the great hostility of the natives, and their killing of both sheep and even shepherds on some occasions.<sup>12</sup> There seems to be little doubt from the comments of W. Allan Wood in his excellent book, 'Dawn in the Valley', that the Kamilaroy, the predominant tribe in that area, were very warlike,<sup>13</sup> but there is no evidence available either that Frederick lived in the area, or that he had either sheep or shepherds there.

In regard to recorded dates in respect of land grants or purchases in those early times, W. Allan Wood pointed out that often a date related to the date of the authorisation of an application, or even a promise, and they were usually subject to conditions. The actual date of the grant or purchase could be very much later, and in some cases, did not in fact proceed to finality, at all.<sup>14</sup>

In any case, Frederick did in fact settle on the Paterson. In different Directories printed during those years, his address was shown variously as just 'Cintra' (the name given to the original grant on the Paterson, of which 'Valentia' was a part), and in another, as both 'Manning Wharf, Darling Harbour' and 'Cintra'.<sup>15</sup>

Unless, as is unlikely, he was well-provided with funds, Frederick could have been fortunate in not going onto the land until later in the 1830's; that is, if there is any 'right time' to go on the land, except with ample reserves.. The Hunter Valley, like much of the rest of the country, suffered severe drought in years just prior to 1830, and then, as so often happens, there were disastrous floods in both 1830 and 1831. Those years caused serious losses, and marked the beginning of the end for many on the land, despite a short-lived boom in the wool industry in the early 1830's. However, drought again struck in the mid-1830s with wheat crop failures; then, in the early 1840s, the

colony suffered a severe depression. Frederick did survive, fortunately, and his mother-in-law may have provided assistance.

Following his marriage and the move to the Paterson, Frederick Bedwell appeared to be content to live the life of a quiet countryman, caring for his family, and farming the land. This seems strange after the obvious excitement and adventure of his younger years, although illness may have been the reason in view of his relatively early and apparently sudden death on 1 May 1853 aged fifty-six years. His lengthy bout of fever and dysentery in the second half of 1819, during one of the voyages of the 'Mermaid', may have had serious and long-lasting consequences. No record is available of any later communications with any of the fellow officers who were with him on those lengthy sea voyages, and, apart from some land transactions, the only records of any later activity, apart from producing a very, large family, involve brief mention in newspapers, minor official records, and probably any related documents.

Those matters included:

An application for three convicts at Hunter River in 1833;<sup>16</sup> in 1836, he was Secretary/member of the Paterson Church Committee;<sup>17</sup> strangely, in 1843, Frederick was fined £5 due to his absence from a jury panel at the Maitland Assizes;<sup>18</sup> but, in 1844, he was one of the official party welcoming the Governor and Lady Gipps at Paterson, where the Vice-Regal party proceeded "through the beautiful estate of Tocal, and breakfasted at the Paterson Hotel." After breakfast, the Governor visited the Scotch Church, the unfinished Episcopalian Church, the school house, and the court house and lock-up. It was reported that the Governor was "much pleased with the appearance of the children attending school in the kirk."<sup>19</sup> Then, in 1845, Frederick is recorded as being a Justice of the Peace.<sup>20</sup>

There were numerous land transactions, details of which were kindly provided to me by the late Lilius Humphreys, who was a woman of great knowledge and understanding of history, and to whom I am heavily indebted for much of the information concerning Frederick Bedwell and the Ward family.

There was a lease in 1839 from Frederick to James Lord of a public house on High Road, Paterson, including extra land from 'Cintra'; and another lease from Frederick and Susannah in 1840 of two roods to the Bishop of Australia. Other leases included a building on High Street in 1841 to George Wilkinson and George Armstrong, and an inn and land on 'Cintra' from Frederick to Edmund Long - this latter lease had not been registered when Frederick died in 1853, and his wife, Susannah, executed a replacement lease just before she also died in 1854.

Frederick was also shown as owning three town sites in Paterson itself. According to Mitchell's 'Hunter's River', two had a frontage to the west side of Queens Street, and the other was on the south-east corner of King and Duke Streets. It was suggested in the book that he probably intended to build cottages for investment, as in 1836, he commissioned John Verge to provide designs and plans.<sup>21</sup> This would seem to have been aiming high; John Verge had arrived in Sydney in 1828, and with his partner had designed many of the villas of Woolloomooloo Hill, of which Elizabeth Bay House is

one of the remaining examples. Of his rural architecture, Denham Court and Camden Park are two of his finest. Anyway, the buildings did not proceed apparently, and it could be assumed that with the worsening economy, investment plans were deferred.

Over twenty-two years of marriage, until her untimely death on 30 May, 1854, aged forty-two, Frederick's wife, Susannah Matilda, bore him twelve children (four boys and eight girls); there is also a claim that there was another son, (Phillip Parker), who died when very young, possibly named for his commanding officer on the surveys. The youngest child, a daughter, Frederica Matilda, was born about six months after the death of her father, who had died on 1 May, 1853. No details are available about the cause of Frederick's death, and it is interesting to note that their eldest child, Matilda, (said to have been crippled in some way since childhood), died only two days after her father; Matilda was then aged just twenty. Again, no details are available regarding the cause of her death, and as no coroner's report is recorded, it is unlikely that either of the deaths resulted from accidents. However, considering the lack of medical knowledge at the time, their distant location, and the prevalence of infectious diseases, double deaths may not have been so unusual. Father and daughter were buried on the same day in the same grave in the grounds of St. Paul's Church, Paterson.

Sadly, the mother, Susannah Matilda Bedwell, died in May of the following year, leaving as orphans the remaining eleven children ranging in ages from six months to the late teens. In the family, it is believed that those children were cared for by their grandmother, Susannah Matilda, senior, and by her daughter and son-in-law, the Garlings, who assisted while at the same time looking after their own family of eleven children.

The last will and testament of Susannah was signed on 13 May, 1854, a little over two weeks before her death.<sup>22</sup> The fact that she signed as 'S. M. Bedell' in error, probably suggests that she was extremely weak at the time. She left her estate to be shared equally between all of her children living at the time of her death, with a special proviso in the event of any who died before coming into the inheritance. The amount was to be paid at age twenty-one, or on prior marriage. Frederick Garling and Gilbert Cory were appointed under the will as trustees and executors, and also as guardians of the children. At the granting of probate, the value of the 'goods' involved was shown as \$310; no doubt, that did not include real estate.

As pointed out previously, it has been claimed that Frederick Bedwell had been promoted posthumously to the rank of Lieutenant-Commander. Apparently, the story is that in a letter written in the 1920s by Frederick's son, Edward Albert, then in his mid-seventies, he stated that his mother had received a letter from the Admiralty in London, addressed to Frederick, which arrived about six weeks after his death. That letter enclosed papers for signature by Frederick in regard to his promotion - unfortunately, it was too late. It is understood that the family was granted a pension. However, whether the promotion had occurred, with the completion of the papers merely a formality, or whether the higher rank could not be effected without the completion of the papers is not known. Further research will clarify this.

The second daughter, Zorayda Anne Bedwell, was eighteen when her mother died, and it could be expected that much of the work of raising the family would fall to her, in the earlier years. However, in less than four years, Zorayda was to marry Charles Allan Dun. More will be said about Zorayda and Charles in a later section.

Fortunately, the two next-oldest daughters (Clara Georgina and Elizabeth) were not to marry for quite some time. Clara married J. M. Thompson of East Maitland in 1863, and Elizabeth didn't marry until 1878, to Alexander Waugh McDougall. Meanwhile, of the other girls, Sarah Alice married Richard Windeyer Thompson of West Maitland (the brother of J. M. Thompson) in 1864, while the two youngest daughters married in the early 1870s, (Emily Susannah to A. W. Simpson of Armidale, and Frederica Matilda to William McIntyre Dickson, the father of Mervyn Dickson of Rockhampton, Queensland, author of the Biography.) One girl, Caroline Eleanor did not marry.

Only two of the sons married, Crawford Robert to Joanna Henderson Martin, fathering fifteen children (and dying aged only forty-four), and Charles William who married Evelina Henrietta Smith, and became a solicitor and the Mayor of Tamworth, with a family of eight children. The other two boys, Frederick, the eldest son, and Edward Albert both lived into their eighties, but neither married. Frederick apparently lived in 'Valentia Lodge' until 1884, by which time the property had been reduced to only a little over nine acres. At about that time, Gilbert Cory, the remaining executor of Susannah Bedwell's will, sold the property to Joseph Green Smith, the grandfather of A.J.C. Smith, referred to previously.

There have been occasions when it has been thought that another naval officer in Australia, Edward Parker Bedwell, was related to Frederick. Research has proven otherwise; certainly they were neither brothers nor first cousins.

Another rumour had Frederick Bedwell involved in some naval expedition which involved action in New Zealand against the Maoris; no evidence is available to support this.

Some of the possessions of Frederick Bedwell, R.N., have survived. After enquiries some years ago, the late Ruth Nielen, another Bedwell descendant, stated that she had received an old 'bound scrap book' on loan from one of the many other descendants; it appeared to be a book which had been kept by Frederick himself. Included were a few small paintings, an old photograph, together with a small, faded photo of Frederick. There is a lot of uncertainty regarding the source of such items, and even the identity of some of the photographs is doubtful.

At about that same time, the Museum of Rural Life at Glenbawn Dam, near Scone in New South Wales, had on display a small number of earlier possessions of Frederick's, including his wax seals and the dress dagger which he had apparently received on graduation from the Naval Academy at Dudley, Portsmouth, England. There was also a small painting dated 1840 of the home of Frederick and Susannah at 'Valentia'.

Mervyn Dickson's Biography referred to 'heirlooms' in his possession or with other Bedwell descendants, including a photograph and a watercolour, some books,

Frederick's dress sword, the Bedwell seal, and a copy of the family coat-of-arms. There is a possibility that some of the items listed by Mervyn Dickson found their way eventually to the Museum near Scone.

Then, in the Mitchell Library in Sydney, there is a portrait of Frederick as a very young man, and one of his wife, Susannah, as a young woman; in addition, there is a copy of a portrait of Frederick's father.

Frederick Bedwell had a life of which anyone could be proud; for much of it, there was great excitement in which he showed commendable courage and skill, and he clearly proved himself also to be a caring family man. In the annals of Australia's explorers, he has received little or no recognition. Future years will hopefully bring a greater appreciation of the important part which Frederick played in the development of this country, as a member of a brave and capable team.

It is now time to tell the amazing story of the Wards, particularly of Susannah Matilda Ward, one of whose daughters (also Susannah Matilda) was Frederick's wife.