

John and Ann Reilly

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JOHN AND ANN REILLY

by Grahame Thom

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John Reilly was born in the parish of St Marys in the town and county of Westmeath, Ireland, in about 1784 (1) . The names of his parents are not known.

On 5 June 1809 John enlisted in the British Army's 6th Regiment of Foot at Belfast, Ireland, for unlimited service. During his time with the "Warwickshire Lads" the Regiment served in England, Ireland, Spain, France, Holland and Canada (1) . John's discharge certificate indicates he served overseas for nearly 4 years. The Regiment's pay musters have been searched but as regimental numbers had yet to be introduced for each soldier during John's service and as there were a number of John Reillys (Rileys) in the regiment, it was not possible to establish with certainty where John served. However, on his daughter Sarah Elizabeth's death certificate, it states she was born in France in about 1815 (2) . The Regiment was in France from 1813 to 1818.

After 12 years, John was discharged on 25 June 1821 at Hull, England. His Discharge Certificate states he had a large family who could not be permitted to accompany him on service overseas. Because of this, John decided to leave the army. His general conduct as a soldier had been good (3).

On discharge, Private Reilly was described as being 37 years of age, 5 feet 5 ¼ inches high, brown hair, grey eyes, fresh complexion, and a weaver by trade. To enable John to return to his place of enlistment, he received £4.4.9d towards the cost of travelling to Liverpool with his wife and 4 children on their way to Belfast. Then in July 1821 he received an additional travelling allowance of 18s 3d to proceed from Newry to Belfast with his family (4).

At about the time he enlisted in 1809, John married Ann Trainer and by 1826 they had at least 5 children. Mary Ann was born about 1811 (5), Sarah Elizabeth about 1815 (6), and Anne in 1826 (7). The names of the other two children are not known.

One wonders what happened to the Reilly family over the next five years. Perhaps John found it hard to settle down to civilian life. Maybe he could not find work as a weaver.

Perhaps the stability of being in the army and the possibility of doing better in a new country attracted John to calls for fit pensioners under fifty years of age to enlist in the New South Wales Veteran Companies for service in New South Wales and Tasmania. Three companies were formed specifically for the purpose of guarding and keeping convicts under supervision in the colonies (8).

John enlisted on 1st February 1826 at Chatham, England as a Private to receive 1s 3d per day with free rations (9). One of the terms of engagement being that the period of service in the Veteran Companies would be added to any prior service for the purpose of being entitled to a pension on discharge (10).

On 6 May 1826 John and his family sailed from London in the ship Orpheus bound for Sydney (11). This ship carried "213 men, women and children of the NSW Veteran Corps" via Rio de Janeiro and arrived in Sydney on Wednesday evening 13 September 1826 (12).

Very little is known about John's service in the Veterans in NSW. One of the popular pastimes for soldiers was drinking "hard liquor" and it's not surprising to find that John was charged with drunkenness. The

Superintendent of the Carter Barracks, (just north of the present Central Railway Station in Sydney) Mr R Moore, sent the following letter to the Colonial Secretary, Alexander McLeay, on 25 July 1827.

“The Supt. of Carter Barracks has the honor to state that John Riley Private in the New South Wales Corps (sic) acting constable at the Tread Mill at his establishment is discharged from the duties of that situation by order of Lt de la Condamine for drunkenness and Keeping Company with convicts belonging to the Barrack and request that another Private of the same Corps of steady and industrious habits may be forwarded in his place.” And overleaf on 14 August 1827 “Jhn Riley has been tried by Court Martial and sentenced to two months solitary confinement.” (13).

The paymasters show that John served his sentence from 25 July to 24 September 1827. They then record that John was transferred to Windsor in November 1830 where he served the rest of his time with the Corps (14).

On 18 December 1828 Arthur Hughes, a soldier in the Veteran Companies, killed his wife Margaret at Windsor and at his trial in Sydney on 6 March 1829 John Reilly and his daughter Mary gave evidence. John stated he was “a Private in the Royal Veterans and was stationed at Windsor”. Hughes was convicted of manslaughter (15).

John and Anne’s son Patrick was baptised at Windsor on 16 March 1829 (16).

On 24 November 1829, daughter Mary married widower Ralph Turnbull at the historic Ebenezer Church at Portland Head, north of Windsor (17). For details about their six children and Mary’s second marriage to James Ferris, and their two children, see *Pioneers of Portland Head* by R.M. Arndell, Sydney 1976.

In 1828 following reports from Governor Darling that the Veteran Companies were not carrying out their role in the colonies effectively, Lord Palmerston wrote to Darling advising that the King had ordered the Companies to be disbanded. Governor Darling then proceeded to gradually discharge the men who were considered not suitable for the task of guarding convicts (18).

By December 1831, only 51 Privates, 2 Sergeants and their Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Dumaesq remained with the Veterans on full pay (19). The end of 1831 saw the Companies finally disbanded and John was discharged on 31st December 1831. His conduct was described as good and the only change to his description was that he now had grey hair (20).

On 7 December 1831 the recently arrived Governor Bourke decreed that discharged soldiers were now not entitled to free land but must bid at public auction for land made available for soldier settlement (21).

On 22 May 1832 Lieutenant Colonel K. Snodgrass wrote to the Colonial Secretary advising that there appeared to be no objection to John Reilly, a discharged soldier, receiving a grant of land according to the above regulations (22).

The auction took some time to organise, for it was not held until 12 April 1833, when John bid £15 for a sixty acre block on Liverpool Road in the parish of Bankstown (23). The regulations required that John must cultivate and reside on the land for 7 years and not absent himself for 3 months at any one time (24).

On 12 June 1833, William MacPherson, Collector of Internal Revenue, wrote to the Colonial Secretary advising that John had called into his office to sign the mortgage (John had 7 years to pay the £15). Also, John advised the Collector that as he had purchased several head of cattle and hired a man at “great expense”, he would like the Deed be prepared as soon as possible. The Deed had been issued on 1 June 1833 (25).

This land is now part of the suburb of Yagoona on the south side of Liverpool Road west of Yagoona Railway Station and runs through to Marion Street. The area was then called Irishtown and in 1832 was described as a number of small grants with many bark huts and some houses (26).

John and Ann’s daughter Mary Ann’s husband died at Portland Head on 17 November 1840. It is likely that Ralph died on his 70 acre farm at Mud Island, on the Portland Reach of the Hawkesbury River. Mary Ann

must have found it difficult to support such a young family of six children. The 1841 Census taken in early March lists three families living at Mudiland Farm (sic) in three separate houses. Mary Ann, children and servants were living in a stone or brick house, Ralph's son by his first marriage, John Turnbull and family in a wooden house, and John and Ann Reilly in another wooden house (27). It is reasonable to conclude that John and Ann had come to assist their daughter. Perhaps it was a short visit. But due to the circumstances it is likely to have been for a longer period. How long John and Ann remained at Mud Island is not known but it could have been until about the time Mary Ann married James Ferris of Parramatta on 9 December 1844 (28).

Other than for this sojourn it is reasonable to assume that John and Ann lived at Irishtown until John died in October 1852 (29).

Since his retirement from the Army, John had received an army pension of 9d per day (30) and cultivated about 20 acres. By his Will, John left his property in equal shares to his two married daughters Ann Prevost (31) and Sarah Elizabeth Lasham (32). Ann died at Pitt Street, Sydney, a year later in October 1853 (33). She was probably living with her daughter Sarah and son-in-law John Lasham as they were living in Pitt Street in 1851 (34).

It is likely that John and Ann were buried in the old Devonshire Street Cemetery in Sydney, which is now the site of Central Railway Station, as both burial services were performed in the parish of St James, County of Cumberland, by Rev. S. A. Sheehy, Roman Catholic Priest.

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- 3 Discharge Certificate, 6th Regiment, John Rielly, Public Record Office, England, WO97/1205.
- 4 Ibid
- 5 Sainty, Malcolm R. and Johnson, Keith A, editors, Census of New South Wales, November 1828, Sydney, 1980, entry R0470, Mary Reiley aged 17 years, came free, Orpheus, 1826, Catholic, servant to Stewart Ryrie, Sydney, p314.
- 6 Sainty, Malcolm R. and Johnson, Keith A, editors, Census of New South Wales, November 1828. Sydney, 1980, entry R0471, Sarah Reiley aged 12 years, came free, Orpheus, 1826, Catholic, servant to Stewart Ryrie, Sydney p314 and Death Certificate, Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Sydney, NSW, of Sarah Eliza Lasham, 9th June 1857, age 42 years, birthplace France, father John Riley, mother Ann Trainer (sic), entry 555.
- 7 Burial entry, Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Sydney, NSW. Ann Prevost (nee Reilly) aged 27 years, buried on 11th July 1853, Volume 119, number 724.
- 8 Proclamation issued on 12th September 1825 in London, by Richard Neave, Secretary and Registrar.
- 9 Discharge Certificate, NSW Veteran Companies, John Rielly, Public Record Office, England, WO97/285.
- 10 Proclamation issued on 12th September 1825 in London, by Richard Neave, Secretary and Registrar.
- 11 See notes 6 and 7. It is assumed that as two of the Reilly children were on board the Orpheus, so were the rest of the family. Also John Rielly appears on the pay musters of the Veterans in Sydney for the first time in September 1826. Public Record Office, WO12/11230, AJCP Reel 3917.
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- 13 Colonial Secretary's Correspondence, NSW State Records, 27/6928.
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34 Ford, W. & F. Sydney Commercial Directory, 1851, facsimile edition, 1978, p79.

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