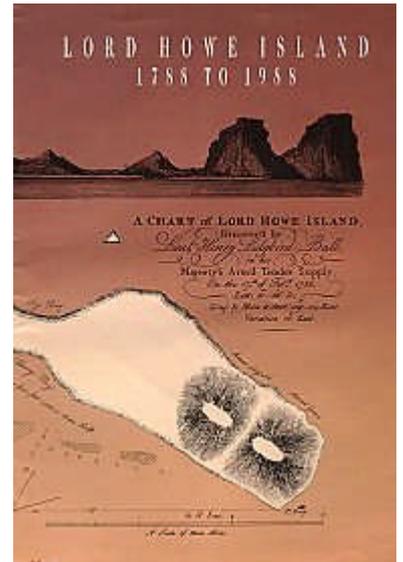


EARLY SETTLERS (1833-1880)

A Multicultural Community

Quite unlike the great civilisations of the Old World, Lord Howe Island has never been the site of monumental artwork, fantastic architecture, great battles, conquering heroes or towering statesmen. Yet, in its own way, the story of the Island's first settlers is not without a real dignity that transcends the veneer of great historical events. It reveals to us the lives of those humble men and women who have, time and time again throughout history, struggled to build a new life in a promised land.

The earliest settlers hailed from faraway places - England, Portugal, America, South Africa, Micronesia, New Zealand and of course, Australia. In their new home they were forced to turn an ingenious hand to whatever bounty they could exact from providence; they became farmers, fishermen, hunters, barterers and traders. The geologist, R.G. Fitzgerald, provided a succinct summary when he wrote in 1869: "The inhabitants are ... of a class quite equal, in my opinion, to the settlers on land in Australia, and they are thirty-five in number."



The Island was first discovered on 17th February, 1788 by Lieutenant Henry Lidgbird Ball, commander of the armed tender, Supply. Lieutenant Ball was sailing from First Fleet headquarters in Sydney Cove to Norfolk Island where it was intended to found a second colony. An entry in the ship's log records the historic event:



Winds, Weather and Remarks

Easterly, moderate and cloudy, At a quarter past five p.m. saw two islands, bearing E.S.E 13 or 19 miles distant. At noon the south end of the largest island bore S.68 E, the north end of the small one S.70 deg. E distant 15 miles. The largest was named Lord Howe's Island and the small one Lidgbird Island.

Ball did not land on the Island until 13th March, 1788, on his return journey, when he collected a quantity of turtle to take back to Sydney. For the next 45 years the Island was visited by passing ships for food, water and firewood, but it was not until 1833 that the first permanent settlers arrived.

At this time three white men, Ashdown, Bishop and Chapman, accompanied by their Maori wives and two Maori boys were brought from New Zealand on the barque 'Caroline'. They settled at Hunter Bay, now known as 'Old Settlement', where they engaged in supplying ships with meat, fish and vegetables in exchange for other goods. It appears, however, their chief occupation soon became the collecting of mutton bird feathers for bedding which were shipped away in large quantities. They continued at Lord Howe until 1841 when they were bought out by Captain Owen Poole, retired naval officer, and Richard Dawson, the first important iron founder of Sydney, for 350 pounds.

Later, in 1841, Poole took to the Island Wright, Hescott & McAuliffe and their wives, followed by Thomas and Margaret Andrews on the barque 'Rover's Bride' in 1842. All were employed to help carry on the industry commenced by Ashdown, Bishop & Chapman.

In 1843 Alan Isaac Moseley was the navigating officer on the vessel 'Jane' which called in to Sydney from London, where he met and fell in love with Johanna. He smuggled Johanna aboard his ship in a crate but, upon sailing, the master of the vessel discovered her and decided to put her ashore on the nearest Island, which was Lord Howe. Isaac, after completing that voyage, left the ship and returned to Lord Howe Island to be reunited with his sweetheart. They were married by Captain Owen Poole, the first marriage ceremony performed on the Island, but nearly 50 years later, when told by WE. Langley, the Registrar of Births, Deaths & Marriages, that their marriage was illegal, they were married again.

In 1844 Dr. John Foulis, who had bought a half of Poole's half share, arrived with his wife and daughter and four English emigrants.

In 1847, after they failed to obtain a lease of the Island from the N.S.W. Government, the settlement on the Island was abandoned by Poole, Dawson and Foulis. Their employees were given the choice of returning to the mainland or continuing on the Island as independent settlers. Three families stayed.

Thomas and Margaret Andrews eventually took over the Foulis home to the north of Windy Point (now Pinetrees' Lodge). Their daughter, Mary, born in 1846, later married Captain Thomas Gore Charles Nichols, master of a Tasmanian sailing vessel and they had ten children, four boys and six girls. Descendants of Tom and Mary Nichols still live on the Island today.



Captain Tom Nichols



Mary Nichols

Moseleys settled to the south of Transit Hill (now the site of the aerodrome) where they remained until their deaths. They had no children. The Wrights remained where they were at the foot of Mt. Lidgbird until the early 1860's when Charles Thorngrave and Edward (Ned) King, from London, arrived in the vessel 'Gleaner' to take over their residence. Thorngrave later left, but Ned King stayed on, later married and had six children, four girls and two boys, including two sets of twins. Descendants are still living on the Island today.



In 1853, Nathan Chase Thompson (left), born in Massachusetts, U.S.A., and rigger of the whaling vessel 'Belle', arrived at the Island and settled. With him were two partners, George Campbell and Jack Brian, and two women and a girl from the Gilbert Islands (Kiribati). Thompson married one of the women, Boranga, and they had one child, who died in 1864 aged 11 years. Boranga died shortly after her son's death, and Thompson later married Bogue who by then was 24 years of age. They had five children, two boys and three girls. Jack Brian left the Island in 1854, Campbell died in 1856 and Bogaroo, the third Gilbert Island woman, died on the island in 1880.

During the 1850's Captain Field settled with his wife, Mary, near Signal Point. Captain Field became a part owner of the trading vessel 'Sylph' and tragically lost his life when the vessel foundered during a voyage to Sydney in 1873.

In 1853 Perry Johnson, a member of the crew of the 'Will o' the Wisp', and who had been a slave in America, along with Captain Stevens and his son Campbell, settled at North Bay. About 1860 Johnson visited Sydney and brought back with him a Cape negress. They were married shortly after by Captain Field and settled at the southern end of the Island, but once again, years after, on being told their marriage was illegal, they, were remarried on February 12th 1915. They had no children.



Mr & Mrs Johnson, (a former slave and his wife from Cape Colony), early settlers in a multicultural island society.

William Nichols, a half brother of Thomas, arrived from Tasmania on the 'Aladdin' in 1862 and eventually settled to the east of Old Settlement where a descendant still lives today.

From 1862 David Lloyd lived with his wife, Mary, and daughter, Alice, to the south of Thompson's. Alice married an American sailor named John Leonard who had deserted the whaler 'Gayhead' in 1864. In 1869 he quarrelled with his father-in-law and was fatally wounded. Water Police magistrate, P J Cloete, was sent to the Island to investigate and found the act was one of self-defence and not murder. In 1870 David and Mary Lloyd left the Island and Alice married Campbell Stevens. They had no children.

1867 saw the arrival of Thomas and Mary Mooney in the vessel 'Blue Bell'. Mooney was another who lost his life on the 'Sylph' and his widow later married John Robbins who arrived on the 'Ephemey' in 1880. There were two children from the Mooney marriage, Patrick and Ellen, the latter becoming the second wife of Alec Fenton whose descendants are still residing on the Island today.

Another, Henry Wainwright and his wife and two children, settled at the south end near Johnson's Point in 1868. Wainwright, along with Captain Field and Nathan Thompson, owned the ill-fated 'Sylph' and when she foundered his wife and children were lost with her. Wainwright did not long survive his loss.

In 1878, Captain R.R. Armstrong, RN, was appointed by the N.S.W. Government as resident Government administrator. Shortly after his arrival the 'Esperanza' arrived with Thomas Bryant Wilson on board. On hearing that a Captain Armstrong was the Resident magistrate and, remembering a Captain Armstrong who had been attached to her Majesty's 14th Regiment in New Zealand, Wilson made enquiries. The matter came to Armstrong's ears and on boarding the vessel he informed Wilson that he was indeed the said Captain's brother. He invited Wilson ashore and induced him to remain on the Island, which he did. In 1879 Wilson was appointed the Island's first school teacher and later he married his eldest pupil, Mary Thompson, (daughter of Nathan and Bogue), and together they had six children, three boys and three girls. Needless to say there are very few families on the Island today who are not direct descendants or connected by marriage to the Thompson and Wilson unions.

During the first four decades of settlement, many others came to Lord Howe, most of whom stayed for only a few years or less. Despite this turnover, by 1880 the Island had become a stable, multicultural community with its full share of romance, mystery and tragedy.

When Water Police Magistrate, P.J. Cloete, visited the Island in 1869, he brought with him an aboriginal tracker from the Shoalhaven district of New South Wales. 'Shoalhaven

Billy', as he was known, astounded everyone with his many remarkable talents in a totally unfamiliar environment, which prompted R.G. Fitzgerald to write of him.

If honour is due to the native guide in Australia, 'tis doubly due to Billy from Shoalhaven, in a strange land.

In a profound way, this epithet rings true for those other determined men and women who settled the Island, living in rough, palm-thatched huts, growing all their own food, and bartering the few necessities of life with passing ships. They, too, were outsiders who strove to succeed in a strange land, and we should surely marvel at their feat of survival in an unknown environment and give them the honour that is their due.