



## Chapter 3 - The Troubles of 1798

(1767 - 1801)

Unrest due to a variety of causes, finally led to open rebellion in Ireland in the late 1790s, and had its consequences for the Brown family. It posed a hazardous environment that caused many to leave the emerald isle. Terence McMahon (AKA Terence McMahan, Tarrance McMannan, Terence McManning, Francis McMahon) was one of those who took leave of 'the troubles' in County Wicklow to make his way to the Colony of New South Wales. With Terence went his wife, Catherine, and son, Francis. In the colony, Terence's family and the Brown's paths were ultimately to cross.

Terence was born in Ireland, most probably County Wicklow around 1767.<sup>39</sup> It is estimated that Terence and Catherine McMahon (nee Mooney) were married in County Wicklow c1796, when Terence was about 29 years and Catherine was 18 years old.<sup>40</sup> Catherine was born c 1778 in County Wicklow, Ireland, to John Mooney, a shoemaker, and Catherine Byrne (s?).<sup>41</sup>

County Wicklow was one of the most violent sectors in Ireland during the rebellion of 1798 *"and the most consistently disturbed county in its aftermath. The pro-government loyalist community suffered the second highest property losses of any in Ireland in 1798 and remained vulnerable to rebel activity until 1804. The great struggle of the United Irishmen claimed hundreds of lives in Wicklow and resulted in the exile of many more to New South Wales, the West Indies, Prussia and elsewhere - No county sent more of its natives to the harsh penal colony of New South Wales, Australia."*<sup>42</sup>

The two most successful Protestant settlements outside Ulster, were Wicklow and Wexford, and were closely linked. Both Protestant and Roman Catholic, were almost totally engaged in agriculture. There were few intermarriages between the two communities, and very few conversions to Protestantism. In such communities, sectarian disturbances in other counties could quickly lead to increased tension, fear and hatred.<sup>43</sup>

The United Irishmen was founded in late 1791 in order to unite Protestant, Roman Catholic and Dissenter (Presbyterian) in the cause of parliamentary reform. They wanted to replace the elite Dublin parliament at College Green with a democratic forum akin to those created by revolutions in America and France. Social, political, economic and religious discrimination against Catholics and Presbyterians was to be abolished and the British parliament prevented from interfering in Irish affairs.<sup>44</sup>

At least 14,000 Wicklow men swore the oath of the United Irishmen and a comparatively high number of them turned out to fight after the outbreak of the Rebellion in late May 1798. The vast majority had joined in the spring and early summer of 1797 when republican emissaries crossed into the country from Kildare and Dublin.<sup>45</sup>

In response to United Irish activity, dozens of loyalist yeomanry corps were raised in Wicklow after October 1796 and these civilian volunteers used their government arms, pay and uniforms to police their neighbours. Some yeomen were members of the Orange Order from late 1797, a new force in county politics that proved prone to extreme conduct. Parts of Wicklow were militarised early September 1797, and much of the west of the county was placed under martial law in November 1797. By then arms raiding and pike making, the

<sup>39</sup> Based on age given for Terence in the NSW Corps Pay records at time of death.

<sup>40</sup> Very much an estimate from Census and is consistent with Catherine's obituary which states that she was married at age 18. Catherine varied her age considerably as she felt like from time to time.

<sup>41</sup> Catherine Humphries' death certificate NSW reg No 1857- 01757.

<sup>42</sup> Ballads & Poems of the Wicklow Rebellion 1798, O'Donnell & Henry Cain (Published by Kestrel Books at Bray, 1998 ISBN 1 900 505 60 6).

<sup>43</sup> The Rebellion in Wicklow [http:// www.rtc.carlow.ie/united/98Wick.html](http://www.rtc.carlow.ie/united/98Wick.html) 08/9/99

<sup>44</sup> Ballads & Poems of the Wicklow Rebellion 1798.

<sup>45</sup> Ballads & Poems of the Wicklow Rebellion 1798.



assassination of informers and the holding of seditious meetings had transformed one of the most peaceable counties into a hotbed of republican activity.<sup>46</sup>

A dozen or more risings of badly organised groups of peasants, armed with pikes and some firearms, occurred in the counties surrounding Dublin between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> May 1798, often amounting to little more than demonstrations. The rebels were defeated with great slaughter, although they did succeed in inflicting some casualties. Their own losses were said to be enormous, as high as several hundred after each battle. Many of these deaths probably took place after the battles themselves were over. Anyone caught a few miles within the vicinity of a skirmish was likely to be shot on the spot. Houses were burnt and people were flogged and executed in greater numbers than ever before.<sup>47</sup>

At Dunlavin in west Wicklow, twenty-eight prisoners were taken from the local gaol by the government garrison and executed without trial, although they had played no part in the rebellion. In Camew, a further twenty-eight people suspected of rebel activities were shot without trial by a squad of local yeomen and militia. News of these shootings quickly spread and confirmed the local peasants' worst fears with regard to the treatment they could expect at the hands of the government forces.<sup>48</sup>

In his journal about his travels 1798 to 1801, the surgeon, John Washington Price,<sup>49</sup> provides some personal insight into those events and helps to link them with Terence McMahon and his family. The following entries are indicative of his observations and experience:

**Sunday May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1798** at 10 o'clock P.M, "I left Dublin, (having arrived at the summit of my profession, being then 21 years & 6 weeks of age,) on my way to Corke, to join my ship; all the horrors of a civil war were to be seen all along the road;"

"... On my way from Naas to Killcullen Bridge I was frequently stopped by different patrols of the Kings troops – but producing my warrant I was permitted to pass on..." (through County Wicklow)

**Monday, May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1798** "...many people were severely flogged there, & as it since appeared, many of them were innocent, but ... - it was impossible to discriminate with a clear judgement from the very unfortunate state of the country." "...it is true the peasants live entirely on potatoes and drink water or buttermilk ... but could the English peasantry (to whom they are often compared) live year round on this sort of diet, if any person proposed such a plan to the peasants in England, he would soon be left without workmen."

## Escaping the Troubles

This poverty and violence had its refugees. Joining the NSW Corps was one way of escaping. Terence was one of those who did. In doing so he was able to remove himself, Catherine, and young son, Frank, to a remote part of the world. Where Terence joined the Corps in Ireland is uncertain, but he seems to have signed up on 15 November 1798.<sup>50</sup> It is on this date when the first available account of his military service commences.

Regardless of where they were recruited in the United Kingdom, it was normal practice for individuals signing up to be sent to the Corps headquarters in England. There they were equipped, trained for six

<sup>46</sup> Ballads & Poems of the Wicklow Rebellion 1798.

<sup>47</sup> The Rebellion in Wicklow [http:// www.rtc.carlow.ie/united/98Wick.html](http://www.rtc.carlow.ie/united/98Wick.html) 08/9/99

<sup>48</sup> The Rebellion in Wicklow [http:// www.rtc.carlow.ie/united/98Wick.html](http://www.rtc.carlow.ie/united/98Wick.html) 08/9/99

<sup>49</sup> "In the beginning of the year 1790 I was apprenticed in the town of Clonmel, County Tipperary Ireland, to A Surgeon & Apothecary, with whom I continued, 'till June 1796 - at which period being much dissatisfied with my situation, and my inclination leading me to a strong, desire of traveling - I proceeded to Dublin the Metropolis of this Kingdom. - which I am certain is the only part in this Kingdom for a young man to get himself forward in the world, - yet not wishing, to proceed farther, 'till I made myself master of my Profession, I therefore immediately entered myself a pupil at the Royal College of Surgeons under Messrs. Hartigan, Deace, Lawless, & Creighton, Professors of Anatomy, Physiology - Surgery, & Midwifery. - Under these professors I continued (having attended most of the Dublin Hospitals) 'till May 1798, at which period I was offered my present appointment, and on the 15th day of May I went in for examination at the Royal College of Surgeons where after a severe examination I obtained a certificate as Surgeon to any Regiment in his Majestys Service - I was then 3 accordingly appointed by his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland Surgeon to the Minerva Transport engaged to convey convicts to New South Wales, at twelve shillings British per diem, my warrant being dated May 1st 1798 to continue two years from the time I sailed, or 'till I was :- returned to Ireland.". The Minerva Journal of John Washington Price.

<sup>50</sup> Monthly Pay Lists show that Terence McMahon was on the Pay Lists at least from 15 November 1798.



months, after which they were assigned to their unit, and escort duties on a Convict Transport to the Colony of New South Wales.

Thus it seems that Terence, having joined the Corps to escape Ireland's 'Troubles', found himself back in Ireland, aboard a vessel in close quarters with representatives of the rebellion he had escaped. What's more, he was one of their overseers!

Soldiers and their families lived on board the Convict Transport 'Minerva', for many months prior to departure on Saturday, 24 August 1799. Terence and family are likely to have joined the Minerva about mid May.

The Minerva was a 441 ton merchantman owned by Robert Charnock. She was launched in 1773 at the Bombay Dockyard in the East Indies. At the time of this voyage to New South Wales the Minerva was under charter to the East India Company.<sup>51</sup>

Dr Price listed the 21 members of the NSW Corps who lived on the ship, and travelled on it to NSW. He mentions 'Private Terence McMahon' as one of that contingent under the command of Captain William Cox. 'Catherine

McMahon' is listed on board as 'soldier's wife'. The Minerva was, for this voyage contracted to carry convicts, and the soldiers, as well as being in transit to join their regiment, provided the guard escort.

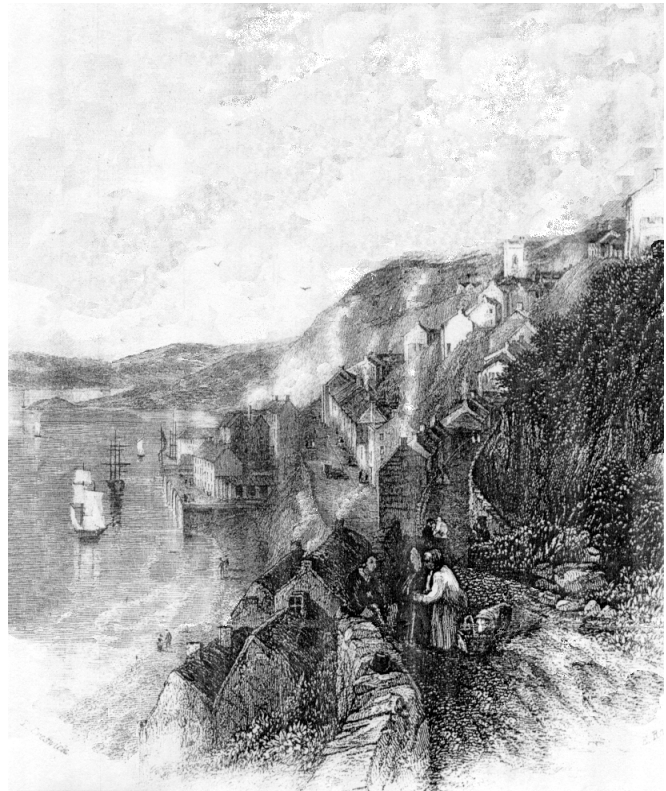
The Minerva had sailed into Cobh harbour near the city of Cork, on 10 August 1798. However, convicts were not embarked until 12 February 1799 due to bureaucratic tardiness, much to the disgust of Robert Charnock, the ship's owner.

There were 162 male and 126 female convicts aboard the Minerva. They had been arrested and tried for their part in the revolutionary uprising that caused great turmoil in Ireland during 1796 – 1798. Some were from County Wicklow, where Terence and family had connections. (*His wife Catherine declared that she was born there, and Terence was married to her there - It is also possible that Terence had been born in County Wicklow*).

Price's journal contains the following entries for the Minerva at anchor in Cobh:

**Thursday, 14 February 1799** - "Wind NW. Weather the same as yesterday a great many of the convicts since they came on board have got ill of fevers, colds etc. which must of course have been expected; the difference they must feel with their new situation, compared with their old one, must indeed be very great, as they now have good births fitted up, with five to each birth. A Bed, pillow, & a pair of blankets for each prisoner, with an exceeding clean, airy prison, being 8 feet high between decks, with a scuttle one foot square to each birth on each side of the ship, beside three large hatches to permit the free circulation of air."

**Sunday, 3 March 1799** - "Fresh breezes from S.S.W. to S.W. and thick cloudy weather. It is surprising the vast number of rats that are in the ship at this period, we cannot poison them for fear of accidents - but have taken many of them with traps yet they seem rather to increase than diminish - they are the largest I ever yet have seen, they have killed all our cats, and if they increase in size as they do in numbers, the prisoners must be under some apprehensions from them."



Drawing of Cobh Harbour early 19<sup>th</sup> century by T Creswick  
(Note: In search of a better copy)

<sup>51</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minerva\\_\(1773\\_ship\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minerva_(1773_ship))





Dr Price gave this brief account of his assisting the birth aboard the Minerva, of Elizabeth McMahon on 27 March 1799 while still at anchor in Cobh:

**Tuesday, 26 March 1799** - "Strong breezes from W.N.W. to W.S.W. and cloudy, squally, weather, with frequent showers of rain; this morning I was called to see Mrs. McMahon a soldiers wife, who, I was told, was in labour, but on visiting her, found no symptom of immediate labour, her pains being both weak & few..."; and

**Wednesday, 27 March 1799** - "Moderate breezes from W. to W.N.W. in the forenoon, but cloudy & squally at noon with heavy showers of rain, at 2 A.M. was called to see Mrs. McMahon, whom I found in strong labour & at 6 A.M. deliverd her of a daughter -- which is to be named Elizabeth, when I retired I left the mother & child in a tolerable state."<sup>52</sup>

Elizabeth McMahon was one of six soldier's children sail on the Minerva. There were also four children of Captain Cox the detachment Commanding Officer. Elizabeth was ultimately to marry into the Brown family.



An East Indiaman. (From an 1837 painting by William John Huggins).

Catherine McMahon was one of seven soldiers' wives listed, not including the Mrs Cox, the wife of detachment's commanding officer.

Frank and "Elizah" (Elizabeth) McMahon are listed each as 'soldiers child'.<sup>53</sup>

The Minerva was an East Indiaman of 558 tons, built in Bombay, and had a crew of forty-two men. Ships built for the East India trade, as was the Minerva, tended to be three masted, and well armed so as to defend themselves against pirates – The Minerva carried twelve guns.

When the Minerva left Cobh on 24 August 1799, it sailed in a small convoy

that included: HM Ships 'Dryad' and 'Revolutionnaire', the transport Friendship, and a small schooner bound for Sierra Leone. The convoy's escort turned back on 14 September. The day after, the Minerva's master (Joseph Salkeld) signalled that the Minerva could not keep the Friendship company any longer, "as the latter sailed so badly". The Minerva proceeded ahead alone, and succeeded in sailing on to Port Jackson via Rio de Janeiro in record time.

During the voyage Joseph Salkeld records *"The Minerva was alone on 1 October 1799 when chased and fired on by two ships flying Portuguese colours. Logging 3-4 knots she soon left them behind"* and anchored at Rio de Janeiro on 20 October. The Minerva remained there until 8 November, and then set sail for Sydney.<sup>54</sup>

Dr Price's journal describes the event this way:

*Monday, 30 September 1799. Wind s. by w. ½ w. with moderate breezes and clear pleasant weather, at 10 A.M. we saw two strange sail at a great distance but standing from the Northward to the Eastward, At ½ past ten*

<sup>52</sup> The Minerva Journal of John Washington Price. P13

<sup>53</sup> The Minerva Journal of John Washington Price. p60

<sup>54</sup> The Convict Ships, The Voyages, 1789-1900.



*we could plainly see them to be very large ships, and supposed them to be frigates, on which we beat to arms, cleared ship and prepared for action, made more sail after them, and at 11 not knowing what they might be, hoisted Danish colours, and fired a gun to leeward, and at the same time squared our yards, and bore down on them. They then hauled up their courses, hove to, and we could see them, with our glasses preparing for action, they then hoisted English colours, and each fired a gun.'*

*'At half past one we came within gun and a half shot, and taking down the Danish colours, we hoisted an English ensign and pennant and fired a gun to windward; they then took down their English colours, and hoisted Portuguese, each firing a shot at us; - we now came near enough to plainly see they were either Spanish or Portuguese well armed and manned; the commodore appearing to carry about 30 guns and the other 14. We at first supposed them to be extra ships from the East Indies, and intended sending letters by them to Europe, but now perceiving they were either Spaniards or Portuguese, and if Spaniards too powerful for us, and if Portuguese we had nothing to do with them; we therefore, hauled our wind to the westward, to run our former course, and made all sail; they both tacked, and stood after us firing shots which fell half a mile short.*

*They however continued the chase, & at 5 P.m. they were 4 leagues behind us, at sun set 6 leagues, and night coming on we never saw them again, and thus this business ended, in which we shewed more courage than wisdom, in coming so near two ships of so much superior force, beside if they were inferior to us, we should have nothing by it, but glory, if we took them, having no Letter of Marque;*

*I cannot indeed but regret that we did not send a few shots into their cabins, as a recompense for the trouble they gave me, in pulling down my cabin, and removing my furniture to give room for a gun being placed in my port, it will be some time, before I get it in the same order again."*

'Eight days out of Rio, on 16 November, the Minerva sighted a Spanish frigate. Running at nine knots she had no trouble outdistancing the potential attacker. Three days later two more Spaniards were sighted, a prison ship and a galleon.' 'The ship's captain decided to get the guns ready in case of attack,...' 'Cartridges and powder were issued and the guns readied to fire.' One of the guns was manned by trusted prisoners.<sup>55</sup> Terence McMahon and the 19 other soldiers were lined up on the poop deck by Captain Cox.<sup>56</sup> The

<sup>55</sup> The Bosun, Henry Harrison, asked one of the political prisoners, Joseph Holt, 'if he was prepared to fight. Holt, a General for the United Irish in 1798, consented, and was put in charge of one of the ship's guns. Given permission to choose his own gun crew, Holt nominated fellow Wicklowmen; Thomas Brady and Richard Byrne; Joseph Davis from Belfast; John Kinhead from Tyrone; and Dubliners, Martin Short and Patrick Whelan. The first four were voluntary exiles like Holt, while Short and Whelan had been convicted of political offences. Holt described his team as 'six proper resolute men'. Unfinished Revolution.

<sup>56</sup> The 19 other soldiers include: Sergeants Henry Harrison, and William Howe; Drummer William Huggett, and seventeen privates.

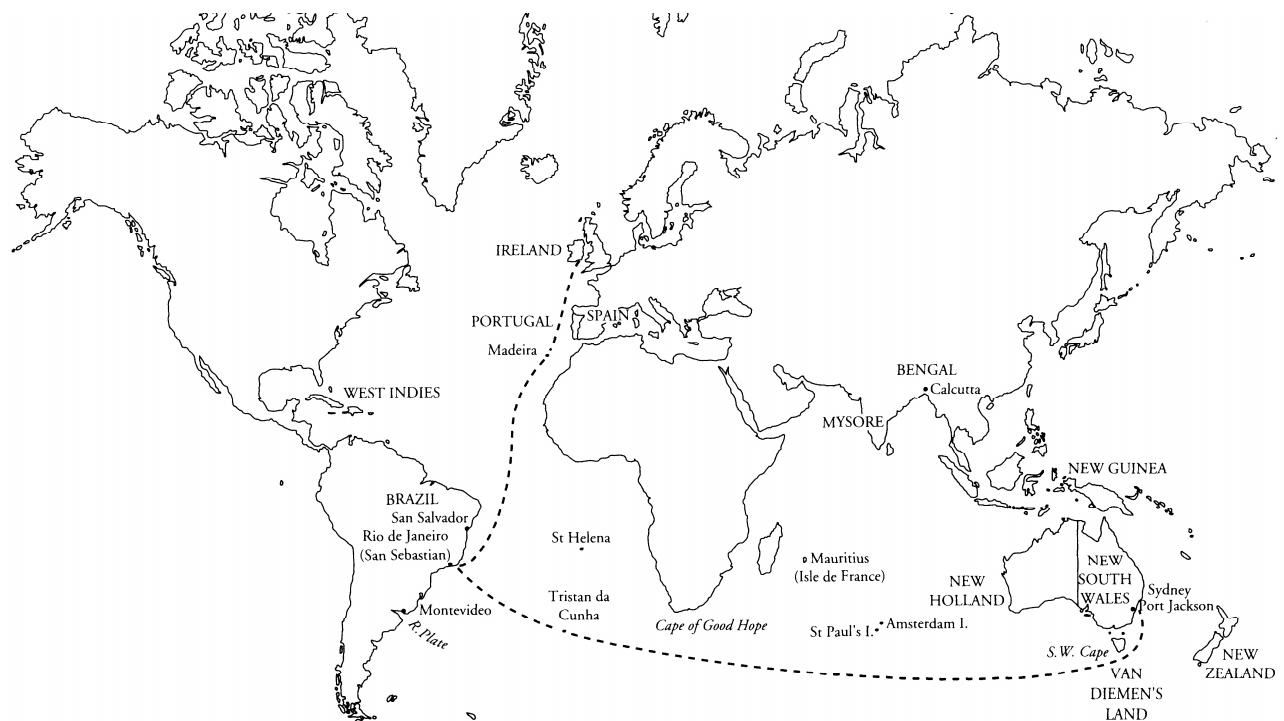


Minerva advanced on the Spaniards, 'and the supposed prison ship opened its ports and fired a volley that scored a broadside.' The Minerva then tacked swiftly and fled, losing sight of its pursuers within 12 hours. The ship's bosun held a party in his cabin to celebrate the event.<sup>57</sup>

### Place of Refuge

At 11.30am Saturday, 11 January 1800, the entrance to Sydney harbour was sighted, and a shot fired for a pilot. Dr Price observed that *'on the South Head of the harbour there is a light house and a flagstaff, and there we saw two men come from the light house & hoist a flag'*.<sup>58</sup>

The Minerva entered the harbour and a Pilot came on board at 1pm and guided the ship to Sydney Cove - 64 days after having left Rio, and 139 days since Cobh. "three weeks of which was spent in Rio de Janeiro".<sup>59</sup> As the ship made its way towards Sydney Cove and passed Pinchgut Island, many on board sighted a skeleton hanging in chains on a gibbet - It was the remains of Francis Morgan, an Irish convict hanged for murder in November 1796.<sup>60</sup>



*The route of Minerva from Cobh to Sydney 1799-1800<sup>61</sup>*

General cargo brought into Sydney for disposal by the Minerva is described as:

*'25 pipes of spirits, 6 tons sugar, 20 cases glass, 4 casks ironware, 5 casks molasses, 60 pieces Irish linen, 4 boxes coffee, 150 bales Rio tobacco, 2 trunks shoes, 1 hogshead hatts (sic), 20 casks provisions, 15 furkins butter, 1 box hair powder, 4 pipes port wine.'*<sup>62</sup>

Of the nearly three hundred souls on board the Minerva, two hundred were prisoners, *'...of all these 3 only died on the voyage two of whom being very old men, would most probably have died,..... had they been ashore.'*

<sup>57</sup> Unfinished Revolution.

<sup>58</sup> The Minerva Journal of John Washington Price".p141

<sup>59</sup> The Minerva Journal of John Washington Price".p141

<sup>60</sup> Unfinished Revolution

<sup>61</sup> The Minerva Journal of John Washington Price". p72

<sup>62</sup> Historical Records of Australia. Volume 2, p571.



Price observed that:

*'numbers of boats were all afternoon plying round the ship, the people in which were either relations or acquaintance of most of our convicts,*

*'Some natives have been both alongside and on board, and appear to me to be more civilized than I could have supposed from the last accounts I heard in Europe'.*

The next day, Sunday, 12 January 1800, Price describes events Terence and his wife couldn't help but be aware of:

*"Moderate breezes from S.E. and clear and pleasant weather, but exceeding warm, the thermometer being 81, the sailors were employed in clearing the booms and getting the boats out; the most of the convicts being on deck, the few who were in irons were released from them, the entire of this day as well as yesterday afternoon we were annoyed by the number of boats coming alongside and the number of people coming on board in spite of the centinels to see acquaintances amongst the convicts, to enquire for letters, packages, etc."*

*"At 11 A.M. I went ashore, & waited on the Governor, to whom I made my reports, delivered letters etc. He received me very graciously and was extremely happy to find, we had so lucky and so prosperous a voyage."*

*"At 2 P.M. walking with some gentlemen ashore, we heard the report of a gun, & saw the smoke come from alongside the Minerva, seeing a number of boats push off from the ship in apparent confusion, we waited till one of them came to the shore, and understood from her, that the centinel on board the Minerva had fired into a boat, and shot a man in her, who was then carrying to the hospital; I immediately went to the hospital with Mr. Thompson the attending surgeon, and found the unfortunate man dead..."<sup>63</sup>*

*"the Soldier who shot the man was a wild, foolish young fellow of the name of Lalor, who I believe found a pleasure in sporting, with the lives of his fellow creatures."*

*"The vessels beside the Minerva that are now in this Harbour are, viz, His Majesty's ships Reliance, Captain Waterhouse, and the Supply, The Swallow packet (Indiaman) Captain Leeward, a Danish brig from Bengal, a Spanish*

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<sup>63</sup>The young man shot had been a little tardy in obeying an order to withdraw from the ship and had not moved as fast as Laylor had wished 'The Battle of Vinegar Hill' p24.





*prize consigned to Mr. Balmain, Surgeon General, .... and a small schooner."*

*Monday, 13 January, 1800 - "...the inquest having sat on the body brought in a verdict of Wilful Murder by John Lalor a private of the N.S.W. Corps.*

On that day some of the convicts were sent ashore and assigned to various duties, including the Government farm at Toongabbie, where there were many former citizens of Ireland doing penal servitude. However, '...the reputation that accompanied the United Irishmen was such that many were sent, soon after, to join other recalcitrants on Norfolk Island, where they could expect very harsh treatment.'<sup>64</sup> Dr Price described the event:

*"At 10 A.M. Captain Johnson; Mr. Williamson .. Commissary and many of the civil and military officers came on board to examine and muster the prisoners, after which they took a few of them ashore for servants etc. and left. The rest on board who are to go to Norfolk Island in this ship; they likewise took the guard ashore amongst whom, Lalor went a prisoner, they sent another guard on board consisting of a Sergeant and fourteen men to guard the remainder of the prisoners." "Thermometer at noon 79"<sup>65</sup>*

### **What Sydney Town Looked Like**

On that same day, as part of the guard, that Terence and his family finally went ashore to their new home.

*"Sidney contains about 460 to 500 houses, and 2000 inhabitants but the entire population is about 6000, amongst which are 700 settlers exclusive of the number on Norfolk Island. These are divided amongst the different settlements, which are, Sidney, Paramatta, Prospect, Town Gabby, Field of Mars, Northern boundaries, Kissing Point, Concord, Liberty Plains, Dundass, Bullinaming, Ponds, Hawkesborough and Richmond Hill."<sup>66</sup>*

More directly effecting Terence and family was:

*"The Barracks are built in a large square surrounded with a pallings in which each officer has a house, but most of the soldiers live out of them. The Regiment is about 800 strong, but there is not more than 500 at Sidney, being detachments at Norfolk Island, Paramatta, Hawksbury etc."<sup>67</sup>*

<sup>64</sup> 'The Battle of Vinegar Hill' p25.

<sup>65</sup> It had been the Governor's intention to send most of the prisoners to Norfolk Island on the Minerva but he decided it would be too costly and to await the arrival of more prisoners. Historical Records of Australia

<sup>66</sup> The Minerva Journal of John Washington Price, p160,

<sup>67</sup> The Minerva Journal of John Washington Price, p158





## Paradise Now

South Head was the location of another detachment. It is likely that soon after the family arrived in Sydney (11 January 1800), Terence was posted to the small South Head Guard<sup>68</sup> and the family with him.

It is possible that Terence was part of the escort for those prisoners that were sent to Toongabbie. It may be that he was based there for a brief time before the posting to South Head - The Humphries legend suggests he had been there. It was not for long,

Adjacent to South Head and just inside Sydney harbour is Watson's Bay. It had been the site of a small fishing 'village' that was established in May of 1792 to provide food for the colony's hospital. The program did not last long. There was no fishing village when Catherine and Terence arrived.

Those that undertook any serious fishing activity appeared to have been scattered around the harbour. Until the introduction of nets, the fisherman of Port Jackson used hand lines, and had difficulty catching much more than met the needs of the hospital and their own needs.



Uniform of a soldier of the NSW Corps

## Lighthouse and Signal Station

There was a lighthouse and a signal station located at South Head. The Signal Station was established on 20 January 1790 by Capt. John Hunter as a 'Lookout Post' with huts and a flagstaff to signal to the Governor of approached shipping – About whether it was from north or south, and the type of vessel.<sup>69</sup> Also, the pilot station was located at Watson's Bay<sup>70</sup> because of its proximity to the harbour entrance.

By 1 March 1802, a purpose built structure was erected under the public works program to hold the South Head guard.<sup>71</sup> However, South Head and Watson's Bay were isolated. *'The water route to Watson's Bay was the only civilised' and 'the most practical way of getting there even after the construction of New South Head Road'*<sup>72</sup> a good many years later. The area remained sparsely populated until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Except for the brief program of 1792, there is no evidence that there was much of a fishing industry in operation at Watson's Bay until well into the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when it also gained popularity as a holiday venue.

Aside from her own domestic duties, Catherine is likely to have been required to have done the washing for unmarried soldiers and the Non Commissioned Officers, and Officers who belonged to the South Head Guard.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>68</sup>Specific evidence for Terence's posting to South Head yet to be found – Evidence so far is circumstantial.

<sup>69</sup> In 1810 a semaphore station was built to replace the flagpole - Several structures were erected for the purpose over the years.

<sup>70</sup>Watson's Bay was named after the quartermaster of HMS Sirius for her first entry into Port Jackson. In 1811 the unofficial name for the Bay was formally adopted. *Gazetteer of Sydney Shipping 1788-1840*.

<sup>71</sup> Governor's Despatches, Historical Records of Australia, Series I, Vol. III, p439.

<sup>72</sup> Philip Geeves' SYDNEY' 1981. p 130. There is a marker in Clovelly St, Watson's Bay, adjacent to Robinson Park commemorating the construction of the first road to Sydney Town. It states: 'VIII Miles from Sydney' and 'This road made by subscription was completed in ten weeks from the ..... by 21 Soldiers of His Majesty's 73<sup>rd</sup> Regiment' but does not mention the number of convicts that would have been involved. The 73<sup>rd</sup> Regiment didn't arrive in the colony until well into 1809.

<sup>73</sup>When visiting the former penal colony of Port Arthur, visitors are told that it was the lot of soldiers posted there, and in the British army generally, for soldiers wives to assist in doing the washing for unmarried soldiers, NCOs, and Officers. A woman's right to accompany her husband was conditional to her providing this service.



For Terence, the posting must have seemed idyllic. He was reputed to have been a keen fisherman, who spent most of his days there fishing from a rowboat in harbour waters adjacent to Watson's Bay and South Head.

*The 1800 Muster of people off stores, merely lists Catherine as "C. McMahon", Sydney, Number of Ticket "180", and "Free".<sup>74</sup>*



A view of Watson's Bay (in the foreground) and the Heads, at the entrance to Port Jackson, c. 1800 extracted from a painting by Joseph Lycett. The cliff promontory at the extreme left is Middle Head. Next to Watson's Bay, is Camp Cove, with a sailing ship passing by towards Sydney Cove. At the extreme right is the flagstaff being used to signal the arrival of shipping. Sow and Pigs Reef would be close to the middle extreme left of the picture.

An obituary (many years later) for Catherine said: *"for the first few years of her residence she lived with her husband who was the first fisherman on the beach"*, that is Gibson's Beach at Watson's Bay. This recollection of Terence's activities may well be a pointer to his profession in Ireland before joining the military.

Perhaps adding to this sense of prosperity was the arrival of another son, John, who was born to Terence and Catherine on 1 February 1801, a little over a year after arriving in the colony. John was baptised at St Phillip's (a Protestant church) on 15 February 1801.

### **Earl Cornwallis' Arrival**

10 June 1801 - Earl Cornwallis arrived in Port Jackson that included among its passengers David Brown and family. Seventeen months after the *Minerva* had arrived. Its presence would not have gone unnoticed by anyone residing in the South Head area at time such as the McMahons. The arrival of any boat was still something of a novelty and inevitably the subject of much interest, particularly if it was a convict ship as happened with the *Minerva*. The Earl Cornwallis was only one of five convict boats that arrived in 1801. It is not improbable that Terence was out fishing in his boat near the Pig and Sow reef when any of those vessels anchored in the harbour adjacent to Watsons Bay or one of a crowd of small boats that had turned up for a closer look in the two days it was anchored there.

### **An ill Wind**

While in pursuit of his fishing interest near the 'Sow and Pigs' reef,<sup>75</sup> on the afternoon of September the 7<sup>th</sup> 1801, a southerly buster blew causing Terence's rowboat to be swamped, and Terence to be drowned.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup> 1800 Muster entry AE185. Believed compiled in 1801

<sup>75</sup> SOW AND PIGS reef is a submerged group of rocks that separates the Harbour's eastern and western channels and is the location of rounding markers. The configuration of the rocks suggests a large sow with her litter.

<sup>76</sup> The Humphries Legend (see Appendix C). It is likely that Terence, typical of his time, could not swim..

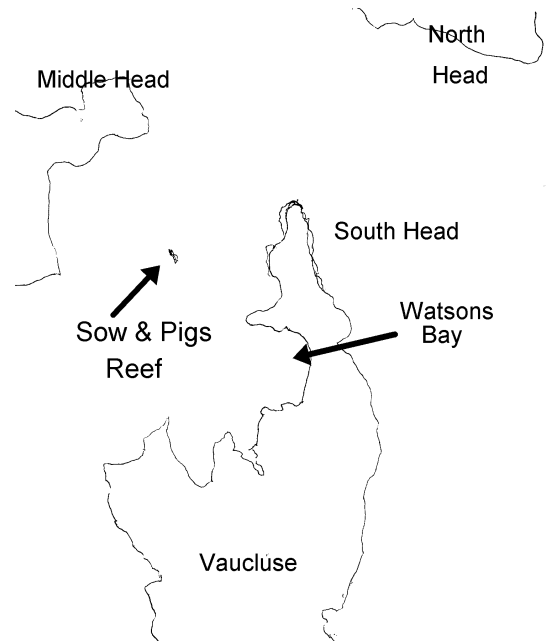


*The next day a burial service was conducted at St Phillip's Anglican Church<sup>77</sup> and he was interred at was now described as the 'Old Sydney Burial Ground'.<sup>78</sup>*

The monthly Pay List of the NSW Corps in February 1800 shows that Terence McMahon was in service for 467 days back to 15 November 1798.

Terence's pay, as was the case for other private soldiers, was £1-1-0 per 30 day pay period, commencing 25<sup>th</sup> of month through to 24<sup>th</sup> of the next month. The last pay for which Terence or his estate was entitled August 24<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> September 1801 is shown as 14 shillings.<sup>79</sup> At the time of his death an amount of 6 shillings and 3 pence was in question as owing by or to Captain Prentice.<sup>80</sup>

Terence's age is given as being 34 years.



*'Sow and Pigs' reef, where Terence drowned on the afternoon of September 7, 1801, due to a southerly buster causing his rowboat to be swamped. (JIG)*

Life in the colony was difficult enough. With Terence's death, Catherine, as a young widow with two infants and a baby, and only a few shillings, prospects must have seemed especially bleak.

**Terence and Catherine's three children were: -**

1. Francis MCMAHON ( c17 97 - ? )
2. **Elizabeth Mary MCMAHON** (27 Mar 1799 - 21 Nov 1837) - Married in 1815 to David Brown junior.
3. John MCMAHON (1 Feb 1801 – 30 Nov 1850).

<sup>77</sup> "A Colonial Regiment" indicated that Private Terence McMahon of the NSW Corps (later in 1808 incorporated into the 102 Regiment) drowned on 7 September 1802 in Sydney, NSW. The same source indicates that he came out on the Minerva, which coincides with the consistent references to the ship for Catherine McMahon and daughter Elizabeth Mary. Register of burial at St Phillip's Church on 8 September 1801 refers to him as 'Tarrance McManning' and states him to be a 'souldier' and having 'drowned' in 'Sydney'.

<sup>78</sup> Terence is listed as entry 1338 Terence McManning in the old Sydney Burial Ground. The cemetery was in use from 1792 to 1820, but was exhumed in 1869 to make way for the Sydney Town Hall.

<sup>79</sup> AJCP PRO 3906 WO12/9900 332 and 367 entry 33.

<sup>80</sup> To be verified?