



## Chapter 7 - Wicklow at the Bay

(1801 – 1815)

With the death of her husband, Terence, Catherine McMahon was left with three infant children to raise on her own: Francis (born c1797), Elizabeth (born 1799), and John (born 1801). Catherine would have little option but to attempt to make ends meet for her young family, by using skills she had gained in Ireland. Women folk of Catherine's family were known for making shirts and fishing nets.<sup>181</sup>

Patrick Humphries, an Irishman, a private soldier, like Terence McMahon, was one of the South Head Guard.<sup>182</sup> According to family legend, Patrick took the initiative of encouraging the fisherman of Port Jackson to use nets instead of depending on catches from hand-lines. Clearly, this was only feasible if there was someone available to make and sell them.<sup>183</sup> When he took on this venture is uncertain. However, this time of need in Catherine's life seems a likely occasion, and is close the period ascribed by legend. Once nets were used, fishing became a more commercially viable. Such a liaison could not but foster potential matrimonial inclination.

### A New Husband

Six months after Terence's death, on 28 February 1802, Catherine married to Patrick Humphries. Patrick,<sup>184</sup> as well as being Irish, like Catherine, was also a Catholic; but at the time, he had little choice but to be married in the officially approved (Protestant) church. The marriage was officiated by the Reverend Samuel Marsden with the permission of his Excellency, Governor King, at St Phillip's, Church of England.

Patrick HUMPHRIES (sometimes written Humphry & Humphreys), son of John Humphries and Hellena Roark was born in Ireland in c1767. He was baptised in Dublin, Parish of St Paul's 4 May 1767 - His sponsors being Thomas Brogan and Margaret Fuller.<sup>185</sup> He was about the same age as Terence McMahon was said to be.

Patrick was tried in Dublin City, Ireland, in March 1791 and sentenced to 7 years transportation. At the time of his arrest and trial, Patrick gave his age as 17. He was closer to 24 years old.

Patrick's crime was that he had in his possession a piece of sheet lead which was suspected of being stolen. Patrick and it seems, an associate of his, John Ellard, had been charged with stealing two hundred weight of sheet lead (as used for flashing around chimneys), the property 'of a person unknown'. However, Patrick claimed that this was a 'trumped up' charge and that the real reason was to do with a dispute with an English garrison that had been set up near his family's farm. 'The English soldiers commandeered the Humphries' cow to satisfy their commanding officer's need for fresh milk for his morning oats. Patrick demanded the return of the cow, and when it was refused, he said, "If we can't have it, neither shall you", so he went home, got his hunting rifle and shot the cow.'<sup>186</sup> The English officer thus came to look upon Patrick as an Irish "troublemaker", and happy to find a reason to get rid of him.<sup>187</sup> Patrick's account gains considerable credibility with the officially stated fact that there was no known owner of the supposedly stolen property.

Patrick came to the New South Wales colony on the Convict Transport, 'Boddingtons', which was a 331 ton vessel, built in 1781. It sailed from Cork on 15 February 1793, and took 173 days to complete the journey.

<sup>181</sup> In addition to normal domestic duties the women of the Humphries household kept busy making by hand, strong twine nets to go '200 fathoms and more'. As well as nets, 'they fashioned pure linen Sunday-best shirts' to sell. Watsons Bay Sketch Book..

<sup>182</sup> NSW Corps records show Patrick having joined the corps in 1801. He was one of 14% of the corps recruited locally. *Per* 'A Colonial Regiment'.

<sup>183</sup> Patrick Humphries is listed as a convict on the CT Boddingtons, he was tried in Dublin, Ireland, in 1791 and sentenced to 7 years.

<sup>184</sup> Humphries Family Legend indicates that Patrick encouraged local fishermen and to use nets instead of lines and their catches improved dramatically.

<sup>185</sup> BDM registration V1802298 4 0, Patrick Humphry & Catherine Mc Main, Sydney St Phillip's refers

<sup>186</sup> IGI (microfiche) for Ireland. per Shirley Downes (nee Humphries), descended from Patrick's son George. Patrick's date of birth at the time of conviction was given as 1774, which is significantly at odds with the greater age attributed to the Patrick Humphries married to Catherine and when he died. Charles Humphreys, Saratoga, in Pioneer Families Brisbane Waters has Patrick 'Humphreys' born 1767 Dublin, Died 1848 South Kincumber at age 81.

<sup>187</sup> This story of challenging authority may have been told by quite a few people from Ireland?

<sup>188</sup> See Appendix C.



The Boddingtons arrived in Sydney on 7 August 1793. Of the 125 male and 20 female convicts embarked, only one male convict died on the voyage. The master was Robert Chalmers and the surgeon Richard Kent. Patrick's age on the consignment list for the voyage is 19 years, which is consistent with the age given at the time of his conviction.

On arrival, Patrick was assigned to the prison farm at Toongabbie, two miles west of Parramatta.<sup>188</sup> Patrick's sentence ended in March of 1798.

NSW Corps records show Patrick having joined the corps on 14 March 1801 on detachment to Captain Prentice; two months after the McMahon's arrived in the Colony.<sup>189</sup> His service records show that Patrick was 5 feet 5 & 1/4 inches in height, had light brown hair, hazel eyes and fair complexion.<sup>190</sup> He was one of 14% of the Corps recruited in the colony. Soon after he joined, Patrick was stationed at the South Head Guard. Patrick remained a private soldier for all of his military service.

Patrick was on hand at the time of Catherine's loss and was able to give comfort and support (at a critical time). It may well be that he had befriended both Terence and his wife soon after their arrival at Toongabbie, when the guard from the Minerva marched the convicts to that location. In that case, Terence's demise may have been a personal loss to him.

Their previous association, isolation, and potentially hostile environment, propinquity, common faith and nationality, Catherine's grief and vulnerability, and Patrick's willing supportiveness, are likely to be factors in their choosing to face the remainder of their lives together.

Watson's Bay became home for them, though Patrick's activities with the military and later farming at Brisbane Water, over the years, tended to cause him to often be away from Catherine and the children. Catherine was to spend most of her life at Watson's Bay, and all of Patrick's children, four sons and two daughters, appear to have been born there. At this time, they lived in a very small cottage adjacent to Gibson's Beach, at the southern end of the Bay – Possibly the same quarters that were assigned to Catherine and her first husband, Terence. The site she chose to live for the remainder of her days, with Patrick, gave her constant opportunity to view the place where her first husband, Terence, met his end.

St Patrick's Day, 17 March 1802 was an opportunity for Irish folk of the colony to celebrate. Irish friends of Catherine and Patrick gathered on Gibson's Beach during late afternoon and that night. 'Guests arrived by small boat (sails and/or oars) and celebrated until the early hours of next morning'. Light was 'provided by massive driftwood fires set up on the sand.'<sup>191</sup> The occasion was only a few weeks after Catherine's and Patrick's marriage, and a likely additional incentive for celebration.

**I**n 1803, the authorities decided that the Guard at the South Head was to be 'withdrawn when other people can be sent in place'.<sup>192</sup> It is apparent from the baptism records of their children that Patrick was posted to Parramatta at that time. Catherine was probably still attending to the laundry of Patrick's colleagues'.

*#Catherine's first child with Patrick, Michael, was born on 19 December 1803 and baptised at St Johns' Church of England at Parramatta<sup>193</sup>*

**I**n 1804 a large number of Irish convicts at Castle Hill revolted. Many were political prisoners from the 1798 rebellion in their homeland. Troops were rushed from Sydney to confront the prisoners, on 5 March 1804 near Parramatta, NSW. Some of them were from County Wicklow (possibly personally known or related to Catherine). Fifteen rebels were shot in a brief affray, and nine were subsequently hanged. Many

<sup>188</sup> Humphries Legend. In the first few years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the farm came to be used as a facility for isolating Irish convicts. Unfinished Revolution p47.

<sup>189</sup> PRO Ref. WO 97/1141. A Colonial Regiment. 1789-1810.

<sup>190</sup> Per service records as conveyed by Shirley Downs e-mail of 14 July 2001.

<sup>191</sup> The Humphrey's Story, as passed down by granddaughter and great granddaughter to authors sister.

<sup>192</sup> Historical Records of Australia, Series I, Vol IV, p337. Military Detachments

<sup>193</sup> BDM registration V1803 574 148 0 & V1803 1814 1A 0 Michael Humphrey refers.



others were flogged, 34 were sent to the Hunter River as the basis of the ‘Coal River’ penal settlement (Newcastle). It was estimated that more than a third of the colony sympathised with the rebels, and had it not been for the prompt action of the NSW Corps (especially the contingent led by Major George Johnston) the revolt may have proved successful.<sup>194</sup>

*#In 1805, Catherine and Patrick's second child, Thomas, was born 22 December 1805 and baptised at St John's Parramatta.<sup>195</sup>*

The 1806 Muster tells of Catherine Humphries having arrived on the Minerva, her condition being FBS (‘Free By Servitude’ versus her true status CF [Came Free]). FBS may have been Catherine’s way saying that she had completed her stint of having to do laundry for the regiment - Circumstances that would have in many respects been akin to the ‘Female Factory’. Under the heading ‘With Whom Lives’ her response is: “Soldier Parramatta”, which fits with Pte Patrick Humphries’ posting at the time. In Reverend Marsden's “Survey of Females in the Colony”, which was conducted simultaneously, aside from acknowledging having arrived on the Minerva, Catherine is listed as: “C” (concubine) under marital status; nothing for “Where Married” or “Legitimate Children”; but under “Natural Children” four males and one female (*which is consistent with the children she recorded elsewhere to have at the time*); and “Came free” is omitted.

Marsden’s active role in suppressing the 1804 revolt and harsh treatment of Irishmen showing any signs of republican tendencies was well known at the time. There are more than a few accounts of the Reverend displaying a less than loving and tolerant regard for his fellow man. His attitude to Catherine and Patrick, as apparent Irish Catholics having to marry in his church, may well have been antagonistic and apparent, and a source of a continuing annoyance to Catherine. Either or both of these events were likely to cause a person like Catherine to be perverse in responding to these particular ‘establishment’ enquiries. It is her way of giving Marsden a ‘backhander’. In effect, she said, that because Marsden, was not a Catholic Priest when he married her and Patrick, she is not properly married, i.e. Marsden’s fitness as a priest of God is questionable!<sup>196</sup> The clerk asking the questions had little interest in other than recording the information as answered by Catherine and others. However, Catherine’s answers suggest an independent spirit.

*#On 22 December 1807, Catherine gave birth her third child to Patrick, Catherine and was baptised at St John's, Parramatta in 1808<sup>197</sup>*

**O**n 26 January 1808, soldiers of the NSW Corps led by Major George Johnston, in what is known as the “Rum Rebellion”, deposed Governor Bligh. The corps’ commanders governed New South Wales from the time of the rebellion until the arrival of Governor Macquarie and the 73<sup>rd</sup> Regiment in December 1809. Patrick as a private soldier was but a very small cog in that large machine.

*#On 11 February 1810, Catherine and Patrick's fourth child, George was born at Watson's Bay and baptised at St Phillip's Sydney<sup>198</sup>.*

## **A Land Link to Sydney Town**

Patrick, still a private soldier, on 25 March 1810 transferred to the 73<sup>rd</sup> Regiment.<sup>199</sup> He was one of 447 of the NSW Corps who chose to stay in the colony when the regiment was recalled, and one of 265 who transferred to the 73<sup>rd</sup> Regiment. Pay Roll sheets on transfer show Patrick to be 40 years old at the time and having served 9 years and 10 days.

<sup>194</sup> Colonial government’s concern about Irish convicts had been rising since 1796. In 1807 nervousness about planned insurrection by assigned servants, led to eight (mainly Irish) men being arrested and tried before a military jury. Rev. Samuel Marsden was an active inquisitor who set in train initiatives for official harsh treatment of suspected revolutionaries during this period. It is doubtful that Marsden was favourably disposed to Irishmen and ‘Papists’ in particular.

<sup>195</sup> BDM registration V1805 1815 1A & 1806 V1806 575 148 ‘Thomas Humphrey’, ‘Thomas Humphey’ refers.

<sup>196</sup> There numerous others responded to the Marsden survey in such a way that a ‘C’s was entered against their name. Whether the any of the other responses are as invalid as Catherine’s has not been investigated.

<sup>197</sup> BDM registration V1807 1816 1a 0 refers.

<sup>198</sup> BDM registration V1810 2787 1A 0 Mother ‘Catharine’ refers.

<sup>199</sup> AJCP Reel 418, WO 17 2295. Transfer date of 25 March 1810 to the Veteran Corps of the Regiment - PRO Ref WO 97/1141. Per Shirley Downs e-mail of 14 July 2001.



During 1810, the new Governor, Lachlan Macquarie, approved the construction of a semaphore station at the Lookout Post at South Head. It was intended to more efficiently alert Sydney Cove of the arrival of shipping, in place of the flagstaff arrangement that had long been in use. A suitable road to South Head from Sydney Town, to service the facility became more necessary. Also, the needs of an increasing population in that region had to be considered.

A public way to South Head had been begun in 1803 by a Captain Taylor under the direction of Surgeon John Harris.<sup>200</sup> But he had abandoned it after he decided that he was not being paid enough.<sup>201</sup> Harris' 15 feet (4.5 m.) wide, rough track approximates the line of present-day Old South Head Road/Oxford Street. Harris' track was improved and extended by Macquarie's 73<sup>rd</sup> Regiment to South Head in 1811. In addition, a link road down the hillside from the Lookout Post, connecting the isolated and sparsely populated village of Watson's Bay to South Head Road was made. Officers of the Regiment were recollecting as having 'clubbed together to make a road'. The extension was paid for by public subscription, and was completed in ten weeks. Watson's Bay community now had a land route of some seven miles (11.3 km) to Sydney Town; albeit, little more than a rough track, especially the link road. The erection of the stone monument at the 'Bay' by an appreciative populace, suggests there were many more people residing there than was warranted by the manning of the Pilot Station, and nearby Signals Station - Perhaps some fisherman?

A stone cottage was built for the officers at Watson's Bay to house them for this project. It was erected at the southern end of the Bay, close to Catherine's tiny cottage at Gibson's Beach. This was so the officers wouldn't need to travel daily between South Head and the barracks, then located in Kent Street, Sydney Town. When the link road was completed and formally opened by the then Governor, Lachlan Macquarie, on 9 April 1811 the cottage was no longer needed by the officers. Catherine and Patrick were allowed to move their expanding family into it. The family legend of Patrick taking Catherine by cart to their new home at Watson's Bay, if true, is likely to apply at this time. Aside from the gesture being made possible due to the construction of a road, animals suitable for harnessing to cart were more easily come by in 1811 than they had been ten years earlier. Even then, the reality is that South Head 'Road' was not suitable for wheeled traffic for another nine years.

The staff at the Pilot Station, and the slightly more remote Lighthouse and Signal Station could use the official and dependable water transport to Sydney Cove. It seems more than likely, in that isolated community, the Humphries could also make occasional use of the service. Fisherman who had occasion to call in at Watson's Bay or make a temporary home there, may also have provided useful transport. It is very unlikely, due to their location; the family was ever without a rowing boat or small sailing skiff. The need for independent harbour transport and fishing for food would have been an incentive.

The naming of their new abode 'Wicklow' as a reminder of Catherine's place of place of origin reflect Catherine's attachment to the Bay more than Patrick's. Though, Patrick may well have suggested the name to please Catherine.

Catherine is said to have known 'personally all the early governors and could accurately describe the personality of each, since they always called at her house' when coming to the end of the South Head road.

That stone cottage of Catherine's was 'shaded by a huge mulberry tree'. In addition to normal household duties, the women of the house were reputed to have kept busy making 'by hand, strong twine nets to go "200 fathoms and more". Fishermen from all around the harbour are likely to have sought the results of their handiwork. As well as nets, 'they fashioned pure linen Sunday-best shirts and sold them for five shillings each'<sup>202</sup> to town folk. Catherine is likely to have brought these skills with her from Ireland. The making of linen shirts may well be a skill that would be found among the women of an Irish household, and not out of place in the household of a shoemaker such as her father. The making of 'strong twine fishing

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<sup>200</sup> Of Ultimo fame.

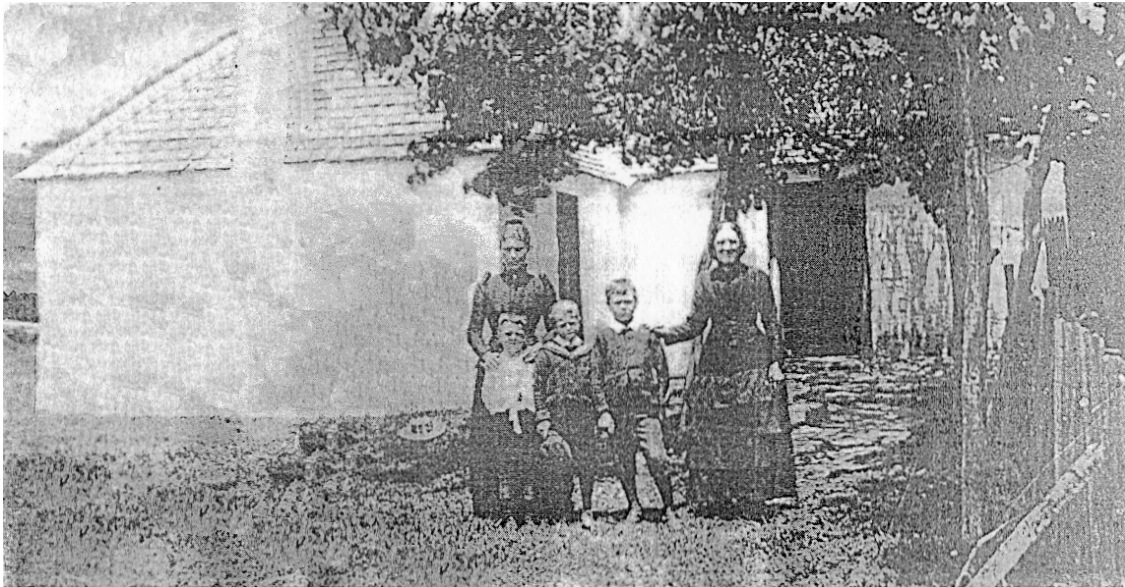
<sup>201</sup> Watsons Bay Sketch Book.

<sup>202</sup> "Watson's Bay Sketchbook". The official record shows the 4 acres being granted much later by Sir Richard Bourke on 7 July 1835, apparently much delayed.





nets’ you would expect to find practised by the wife of a professional fisherman, which suggests that may have been the trade of her first husband Terence, who died whilst fishing. Patrick’s own story of the ‘commandeered cow’ points to a farming background.



*‘Wicklow’ cottage built in 1811 for officers of Macquarie’s 73<sup>d</sup> regiment. Photo taken c1894 with various members of the Humphries family on the north side of the house. Sarah Humphries nee Hence is on the right – She married Catherine’s son, Michael, in 1829 at age 15 years. (See F.C. Terry’s Sketch at the Chapter on ‘Catherine & Family’)*

The 1811 Muster overlooked Patrick and other soldiers but recognised Catherine’s existence, and it noticeably omits the name of the ship on which she came.

*#On 6 July 1812, Catherine and Patrick’s fifth child, Ann, was born.*

The new cottage was crowded at the start and got more so. The 1814 general muster states the following for Catherine Humphreys: free, Minerva, veteran’s wife, 8 children and “On” government stores. The number of children accords with Catherine’s three children by Terence McMahon and five by Patrick Humphries:

Francis	aged 16 - 17	Michael	aged 11
Elizabeth	aged 15	Thomas	aged 9
John	aged 13	Catherine	aged 6
		George	aged 4
		Ann	aged 2

Early in 1815, Catherine was pregnant again, and no doubt, all too aware of the impact that would have on the family in their modest size stone cottage of ‘Wicklow’ at ‘the Bay’.