

## **Notes: Diana Mudgee**

### **Settlement of the Piambong district**

Looking at the various family trees in the *Pioneer Register of the Dubbo and Western Region (Volume II)*, the births of Diana's children indicate how mobile Cox employees were, and I understand that all of her husbands/partners were long-term Cox employees. George Cox and his younger brother Henry were European settlers of the Mudgee district (explored from Bathurst in November 1821 and settled in February 1822). They subsequently acquired (by payment, not gift) numerous and sizeable strategic land grants in different parts of the Mudgee district, always on the Cudgegong River or its tributary creeks. Macdonald's Creek is another important tributary of the Cudgegong which flows through the Grattai district where Diana's family was established as early as 1845 (birth of Emma Phillips). Grattai, incidentally, is due south and not far from Piambong. By 1855 (birth of Shadrack Robert Rayner) the family appears to be domiciled at Piambong. At that time the only other residents of the district would have been Cox employees on the Piambong Estate. It wasn't until after the Robertson Land Act of the early 1860s, which saw smaller 40 acre allotments made available for selection and the introduction of the Torrens Title system, that the Piambong district was taken up. The early 1860s saw the settlement at Piambong of Jacob Rohr and family; Rohr descendants remain in the district in 2006. There are few early Old System Title grants in the Piambong district, with the bulk of land being under Torrens Title or originally under various Conditional Leases. The chain of title under Torrens Title is relatively easy to track, unless complicated by later subdivision, but individual details of subsequent land transactions (eg price etc) have to be requested (and paid for). It would be possible to obtain copies (expensive) and photocopies (cheaper) of the original grants for Diana's (family's) lands.

### **Diana Rayner and George Henry Cox**

One can only speculate on the precise nature of any relationship between the two; George Henry was only two years older than Diana, and would have known her when she first came to Mulgoa. He was also regularly in Mudgee from 1845, when he was sent by his father to manage his Burrundulla estate; by this time Diana and James Knight were at Grattai. However, after his father's death in 1868, George Henry was more frequently at Winbourne at Mulgoa, which he inherited, or in Sydney or Mt Wilson. The Cox family seemed to instill considerable loyalty in their servants and tenants, some of them who were assisted in establishing themselves on the land. If Diana and members of her family were in fact dummy selectors for George Henry, he evidently must have trusted them implicitly. An examination of maps of the Parish of Wiadere reveals that the portions of Diana and Robert in the southern part of the parish are almost completely encircled by portions in the name of George Henry Cox or Alan Mackenzie Cox and Vincent Dowling Cox, his fourth and fifth sons.

### **Reginald Belmore Cox**

It is interesting to note that in 1896 Diana's lands passed into the ownership of Reginald Belmore Cox. He was the third son of George Henry Cox, and this 'third party' purchase may well have been a shield to ward off any government investigation into dummy selecting, which I strongly suspect is what happened. The unfortunate Reginald died of fever in Adelaide, aged 35, unmarried and without issue, while en route to the Boer War in 1900; any of his assets would have passed to his father who was one of the most substantial landholders in the Mudgee district.

### **Edward Cover**

Edward Cover, associated with Robert Rayner, was a pioneer settler of the Grattai district and his descendants still live in the locality. His early grants at Grattai in the Parish of Grattai (dating from 1860) largely adjoined the Reeves family's Grattai Station landholding and the Reeves and Cover family became related by marriage. Edward Cover had married Susan Christie at Montefiores (now Wellington) in 1842 and settled in Mudgee by 1848 (baptism of their son David).

### **James and William Rayner**

Interestingly and perhaps confusingly, there were two Rayner brothers – William and James – who, like Robert Raynor/Rayner, also came from Suffolk. William and James Rayner came to the colony in 1837 per *Resource* and settled in the Mudgee district (an ancestor of mine, Nathan Hollingworth, was a passenger on the same voyage). The two brothers came to Mudgee in the employ of the Cox family at Broombee, south-east of George Cox's Burrundulla estate and the site of the town of Mudgee and upstream on the Cudgegong River. Both William and James had large families – some of whom were born in England and some here – and their descendants remained very much entrenched in the Mudgee/Gulgong district today, especially on the land. It is possible that Robert Rayner was related to them, perhaps a brother, nephew or cousin. I shall follow up that lead, as an extensive family tree of the descendants of these two brothers, in book form, was compiled in the 1980s.

### **James Knight and Eliza Rayner**

An interesting twist is that James Knight, by whom Diana had a daughter, Sarah, in late 1839, subsequently married Eliza Rayner in Mulgoa in 1840. Eliza was born in Suffolk in 1825, a daughter of William Rayner (see above). James Knight was accidentally killed in 1847 at Winbourne, Mulgoa, where he was an overseer for George Cox. His gun discharged while he was getting through a fence, fatally wounding him. His death greatly distressed George Cox and the event is mentioned in his published correspondence. James Knight and Eliza had three

children: Eliza (m Hardy, 6 children), Martha (m Holmes, 9 children) and James (no issue); Eliza remarried to John Neal in 1857 and had a further five children.

### **Samuel Rayner**

Yet another interesting twist is that James and William Rayner had an older brother, Samuel, who was transported in 1817 for highway robbery. In the 1828 Census he was listed as in the employ of William Cox, father of George Cox, at Windsor. He later moved to the Mudgee district, but had no issue.

### **William Reeves and Grattai**

It is interesting to note that, like James Knight, Robert Rayner died tragically, albeit in an accident with a dray. Coincidentally, William Reeves, who was also an old and trusted employee of George Cox and who constantly transported goods for the Cox family between Mudgee and Mulgoa, was killed in 1848 in an accident on Lapstone Hill, not far from Mulgoa when he slipped under a large waggon and his head was crushed by the wheels. William Reeves was also a pioneer settler of the Grattai district, establishing the core of historic Grattai Station, once a substantial property but now reduced to circa 2500 acres. William Reeves would have known both William Phillips and Robert Rayner. Robert Rayner may well have worked for William Reeves on Grattai Station, although I have no idea where Robert and Diana and family lived; until the gold rushes of the 1860s the Grattai district was sparsely populated.

### **Thomas Raynor/Rayner, father of Robert Rayner?**

I notice in the *Dubbo Register* (see above) that Robert Raynor (sic) is listed as the son of Thomas Raynor. James, William and Samuel had a brother Thomas, born/baptized in 1795, who may have been Robert's father. At this stage, such a link is pure supposition.

### **H. Lewis**

It is interesting to note that James Knight was an employee of H. Lewis in 1841. This is possibly Henry Lewis who had a sizeable land grant on the Meroo Creek west of Grattai, towards the village of Hargraves. Henry Lewis was a son of Richard Lewis, convict superintendent for William Cox during the construction of the first road over the Blue Mountains in 1815 and a key figure in the early government settlement at Bathurst. Richard Lewis and his family were closely associated with George and Henry Cox. Richard was a pioneer explorer of Mudgee and the districts to the north, while Henry's brother William was an important pioneer settler of the Mudgee district and overseer at Broombee, south-east of Mudgee. Coincidentally, both Richard and William Lewis drowned crossing flooded streams, in 1828 and 1870 respectively.

## **1884/85 Agricultural Census for NSW**

Both Shadric (sic) and Diana are listed for Piambone (sic), both with the spelling Raynor; it should be noted that all others of the same name in the Mudgee district are listed under this variant, rather than the now-accepted form of Rayner.

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