

U3A AUSTRALIAN HISTORY.

The Early Days.

Episode 1.

[Foreword:

As we are not yet out of the woods with our Virus Lockdown, I am back with my quill for a bit more Australian History.

I hope that you were able to fill in some of your spare time with reading about my Family History. It gave me great pleasure to write it down but I will be happy once we can return to our classes again.

Today I will talk about life for some of the people in the early days of our Colony.

Many of the stories were about how first Convicts were flogged and starved by their cruel jailers.

It is true that there were many examples of cruelty but that was not always the way it was.

As usual, those at the bottom of the heap suffered much more than those at the top of the heap.

Today I would like to tell you about how those who made the top of the heap lived in our new land.

You can be sure that if you are given free land and do not have to pay people to work for you, then you will get very wealthy indeed. You would be correct if you may think that this is happening today.

This is the story of one such rich family in the Colony of NSW and how they lived and the food that they ate in the early 1800's.

I will include a couple of recipes that you may like to use when you have guests once again.

(J.I.)]

The Early Days. Episode 1.

The Penal Colony of NSW was started in 1788 when Governor Phillip raised the Union Jack at Sydney Town and declared that the whole of the Eastern Coast of New Holland belonged to Mother England.

As a Penal Colony, it would take all the surplus Convicts who were rotting away in the foul English Prisons.

There were soon many children being born to couples who were Convicts and there were some born to parents who were Soldiers who were living with Convicts. Then there were children born to families of Free Settlers and to Free Settlers who married Convicts.

We were becoming a very mixed lot indeed.

All of these children were known as *Currency Lads* and *Lasses*.

They were all born as *Free Citizens* of the New Nation that would be named *Australia*.

Australians all, let us rejoice, for we are young and free.

By 1812, the New Colony was prospering and there were many families who were becoming *the newly rich*.

Today we will take a peek at one such family who were proud to say that they had no Convict Blood running in their veins.

These families were known as *the Exclusives*.

Maria was born on Norfolk Island in 1793 and was the second of four children of Phillip and Anna Gidley-King. Her father was the Captain of *HMS Supply* of the First Fleet.

Maria was six years old when her family moved to Sydney Town and her father became the second Governor of NSW. She was sent to England to be educated when she turned 18 and it was there that she met and married Hannibal Macarthur the nephew of John and Elizabeth Macarthur.

Hannibal had managed the Macarthur Merino flock in NSW and had made money by bringing shipments of sandalwood to the Colony.

In 1812 the newly-married couple set sail for NSW and would set up house on a new Land-Grant in an area west of Sydney Town, a few miles from Parramatta. Their new home would be named. *Vineyard*.

They would have a happy marriage and produce 11 children.

Their home had many visitors who were always made welcome and Maria was known as a fine hostess and a much adored centre of a very happy family. It was said that she was;

A delightful Lady, kind in the extreme.

Maria was well educated and had a great love of music from Mozart to Highland Reels.

Hannibal was also well respected by all who knew him and was said;

To be a man who was both resolute and kind.

He too was well educated and had a fine library. There were journals and newspapers from many countries to be found in his house.

Many well known people who came to NSW would visit the Macarthur family at the *Vineyard* and they would always be made most welcome.

Count Strzelecki, the famous explorer was a regular guest.

For such a wealthy family in NSW, life was very good indeed.

There were plenty of Convicts to work their fields and maintain their property with the Government paying for their board and keep.

Convicts were never allowed to enter the house so it was important to have servants who had no such background. These could be had as there were many young people arriving by boat who were seeking a better life in the Colony. They would work for a small wage and keep.

The Macarthur family only left their comfortable life at the *Vineyard* to go to Sydney Town to attend dinners and functions at Government House or to an occasional Ball. There were walks and picnics in the bush. Swimming and boating in the river. Shooting parties were also popular.

There was good food in abundance and music and singing in the evenings.

Sunday was a day of ritual. It was off to Church in Parramatta which was three miles by carriage or some would ride or walk. It was then back home for the evening meal and Papa would always read a sermon and the children *got the fidgets*.

In 1838 the house was enlarged to accommodate the children and house the many visitors. There were now, many fruit and olive trees bearing fruit and the fields were full of grain,

There was an Orangery, extensive vegetable gardens and a fine vineyard, producing grapes that were made into wine.

There were fine lawns reaching down to the river with a wharf where boats would come twice each day bringing mail, newspapers, goods and supplies from Sydney Town.

There was a convict woman who had to iron the newspapers and journals to be ready for the Master at breakfast each day.

The children would write that their life at *The Vineyard* was *idyllic*.

(John Imrie, May 2020)

[Postscript:

It would seem that all life was idyllic at the *Vineyard* and I will continue in the next episode.

Please contact me if you would like to ask any questions.

I have plenty of other subjects that I am happy to write about.

I don't know how long we will be unable to attend our U3A classes so I am pleased to keep in touch with you until they start again.

I am off to obtain a new quill as this one is wearing out. (J.I.)]