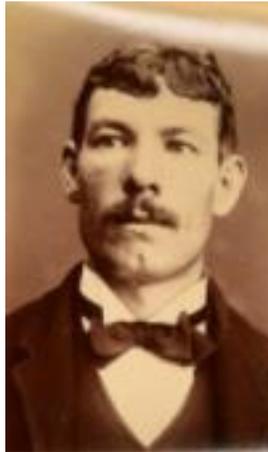# CROKER PRIZE FOR BIOGRAPHY 2022

2206 The Gadigal Hawker

by Jo Callaghan

The Gadigal Hawker

The land of the Gadigal people stretches from Burrawara (Sydney's South Head) through Warrane (Sydney Cove), across to Gomora (Cockle Bay, Darling Harbour) and south to Cook's River. [1] It encompasses what we know as Sydney's inner-city suburbs, and includes the suburb that we call 'Redfern'. [2]

In 1817, Governor Macquarie 'granted' 100 acres of pristine Gadigal land to former convict and surgeon Dr William Redfern. Waves of immigrants had begun arriving from all over the world and many made themselves at home in the new city of Sydney. A multicultural melting pot began bubbling on Dr Redfern's land, and from it, a working-class community emerged. By August 1859, Dr Redfern's land had become the Municipality of Redfern. In one part of Redfern a railway terminus was constructed and in another, a market garden sprang to life. [2]

My great grandfather was born into that Redfern melting pot on Christmas Eve 1875. He was born to Irish parents and was given the name Eugene on the day that he was born, but throughout his life he was known as Matthew.[4]

In adulthood, Matthew Callaghan was a 'hawker'. [5] He sold his wares on Gadigal land, in days when hawkers commonly sold rabbits. Legend has it that during the early days of Sydney's Rugby League, players from South Sydney hawked rabbits in the morning, before playing their match in the afternoon. They say the opposing players mockingly chanted "*Rabbitoh!*" at the South Sydney team, giving birth to the football club's nickname, the South Sydney Rabbitohs.[3]

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[1] Indigenous name of Cook's River has not been verified [2]
Website: *Gadigal People – Redfern Oral History*
http://redfernoralhistory.org/timeline/gadigalpeople/tabid/240/default.aspx/
[2] Website: *Redfern New South Wales*, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redfern,_New_South_Wales
[4] NSW Registry of Births Deaths & Marriages, Birth Record, *Eugene Callaghan*, 1876/004649. [5] New South Wales, Australia, Gaol Description and Entrance Books, 1818-1930, *Matthew Callaghan*, Ancestry.com.
[3] Website, *History of the South Sydney Rabbitohs*, Wikipedia,

The cry of "*Rabbitoh!*" also echoed through the narrow streets and lanes of the inner suburbs of Sydney, announcing Matthew's arrival. To be a Rabbitoh was a messy and malodorous affair. Rabbits were skinned and gutted as they were sold, and the blood and fur of the skinned rabbit would still be clinging to his hands and his clothing as he moved on to the next sale.

In the 1890s, Matthew became involved with a woman who was sometimes known as Sarah Scowen and sometimes as Sarah Goddard. Sarah's lengthy prison record shows she was commonly in trouble for indecent language, assault, and vagrancy. [45] Newspapers described the way she spoke as a "lingual performance… something painful to listen to…".[8]

In December 1897 Sarah and Matthew were arrested for stealing from a man named George Jones. [678] George had just arrived from Cobar with £25 in his pocket. He met Sarah in the Haymarket, and after a few drinks, he accompanied her home. During the night George discovered that his money was gone. He accused Sarah of theft, and when the police arrived, they found Sarah holding George down and Matthew hitting George with a bottle. Matthew claimed he was protecting Sarah from George's attack. The police found £10 in notes under the wood heap in the yard, and another note rolled up on the sofa. [10]

Sarah had been arrested in October 1895 in very similar circumstances, but on that occasion a charge of 'stealing in company from the person' was dismissed. [11] This time Sarah was found guilty of theft and in early February 1898 she was sentenced to twelve months in Darlinghurst prison. [9] Matthew's case was delayed to allow time for further investigation, and on 15 February 1898, Matthew was sentenced to three years in Darlinghurst prison for receiving stolen goods. [13] Matthew's only other recorded offence was in March 1895 when he spent seven days in Darlinghurst prison for 'riotous behaviour'.[10]

Out of prison and apparently behaving himself, Matthew married Lillian Dean in November 1903. They made their home at number 1 Boundary Street Redfern, where five children, including my grandfather, were born.[11] During this period of his life, Matthew was settled and busy. He ran a greengrocer's shop in Chippendale, and also hawked his wares at Coogee, Long Bay, Yarra and La Perouse.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_South_Sydney_Rabbitohs

[4] New South Wales, Australia, Gaol Description and Entrance Books, 1818-1930, *Sarah Scowen [Sarah Goddard],* Ancestry.com.

[5] , Australian Star (Sydney, NSW: 1887 - 1909), *REDFERN POLICE COURT*, 20 August, Trove.nla.gov.au.

[6] New South Wales, Australia, Police Gazettes, 1854-1930, 29 December 1897, Ancestry.com.

[7] , The Sydney Morning Herald (Sydney NSW: 1842 - 1954), *A LABORER AND HIS MONEY*, 4 February, Trove.nla.gov.au.

[8] , '*Water Police Court*.', Evening News (Sydney, NSW: 1869 - 1931), 24 October, p. 6. Trove.nla.gov.au.

[9] New South Wales, Australia, Criminal Court Records, 1830-1945, 27 December 1897, Ancestry.com. [13] 1898, The Sydney Morning Herald (Sydney NSW: 1842 - 1954), '*METROPOLITAN QUARTER SESSIONS*.', 15 February, Trove.nla.gov.au.

[10] New South Wales, Australia, Gaol Description and Entrance Books, 1818-1930, *Matthew Callaghan*, 4 February 1898, Ancestry.com.

[11] Sydney, Australia, Anglican Parish Registers, 1818-2011, 18 November 1903. New South Wales, Australia, marriage record *Matthew Callaghan/Lillian Dean*, 1903/00776. Ancestry.com.

On Monday 9 February 1914, life for Matthew and his family took a dramatic turn. He was taken into custody on the corner of Hay and George Streets because he was behaving strangely. The police report stated that he was *'dragging several shirts that were tied together… said he was going fishing… states that he can fly through the air without any aid but his arms'*.[12]

Matthew was admitted to the Callan Park Institute for the Insane. He was delusional, believing that *'he has lost his nose and ears and is rapidly shrinking away… Wonders what he'll be like in the morning. Very amused over it.'* Matthew's condition rapidly deteriorated. The final entry in the record was on 22 June 1914, stating that he was restless, noisy, dirty, and covered with scabs. That evening he *'gradually declined and died'*. [13]

The cause of Matthew's death was 'General Paralysis of Insane' [14], the fatal consequence of an untreated social disease. It was characterised by grandiose delusions, a staggering gait, and muscular weakness. [15][16][17] Today, it is commonly referred to as tertiary or neurosyphilis.

Matthew's funeral left from his Redfern home. Nine funeral notices tell a story of the deeply felt loss of a husband, a father, a son and a brother.

> *…the loved husband of Lillian, and son of Timothy…, and brother of Cis., Julia, Dan, Nellie, and Agnes, aged 36 years, after short and painful illness. R.I.P.* [20]
>
> *In loving memory of our dear father… who departed this life June 22 1914… inserted by Lily, Frank, Jack, Bob…* [21]

Perhaps in deference to Matthew, my family always was and always will be avid followers of the South Sydney Rabbitohs. Whenever I hear "*Rabbitohs!*", I think of Matthew Callaghan, the Gadigal Hawker, selling his wares on the lands of the Gadigal people. That's where I come from.

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[12] New South Wales State Archives and Records, Admission notes and case papers, Callan Park Institute for the Insane, 1914, *Matthew Callaghan*.

[13] Ibid.

[14] NSW Registry of Births Deaths & Marriages, death record *Matthew Callaghan*, 1914/007008.

[15] Website: *Looking back: This fascinating and fatal disease* https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/volume-25/edition-10/looking-back-fascinating-and-fatal-disease

[16] *'Family Notices'*, The Sydney Morning Herald (Sydney NSW: 1842 - 1954), 24 June, Trove.nla.gov.au.

[17] *'Family Notices'*, The Sydney Morning Herald (Sydney NSW: 1842 - 1954), 23 June, Trove.nla.gov.au.