

# **CROKER PRIZE FOR BIOGRAPHY 2020**

## **2023 The Sad Tale of Lieutenant Philip Connor**

**by Bill Dudley**

## The Sad Tale of Lieutenant Philip Connor

In the early 1800s, there was a brief time in the fledgling colony of Sydney, when the name Lieutenant Philip Connor evoked strong emotions. Until recently, I was blissfully unaware of my ancestor's existence and notoriety, but I uncovered his story after finally breaking through the most stubborn brick wall in my family tree.

My path to Philip Connor was through his elusive granddaughter, Elizabeth Jane Carr, my great grandmother. I had struggled for years trying to make sense of the misinformation I had about her origins. She was said to have been born in England in the early 1830s, the daughter of a soldier named William Carr, and his wife Elizabeth. I finally tracked down her true origins with the aid of DNA test results. Elizabeth Jane Carr was in fact born in Sydney<sup>1</sup>, to William Carr, an Irish convict, and his Sydney-born wife Elizabeth, maiden name Connor. Shared DNA then led me to Elizabeth Jane Carr's grandparents – Eleanor Holland and Philip Connor.

Eleanor and Philip arrived in Sydney on 16 February 1813<sup>2</sup> – both of them on the *Archduke Charles* convict transport, but on opposite sides of the ledger, as it were. The *Archduke Charles* carried a mixture of male and female convicts from Cork, Ireland, on a journey of 277 days – much longer than average for the time<sup>3</sup>. Amongst the female convicts was Eleanor Holland, tried at the City of Cork in August 1810, and sentenced to 7 years transportation<sup>4</sup>. Also aboard was Lieutenant Philip Connor of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 73<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, and a detachment of 30 non-commissioned officers and privates<sup>5</sup>.

We don't know how well Eleanor and Philip knew each other on the *Archduke Charles*, but once they were ashore it seems that romance blossomed between the convict and the soldier. Just over 9 months after arriving in Sydney, on 9 December 1813, Eleanor Holland gave birth to a baby girl. Her name was Elizabeth Conner - baptised by the Reverend Samuel Marsden at St John's Church of England, Parramatta, on 16 January 1814 – parents recorded as Philip Connor and Eleanor Holland<sup>6</sup>. However, Eleanor's relationship with Connor was destined to not last.

Some four months after his arrival in Sydney, Philip Connor was involved in an unfortunate incident which led to the death of a man in Pitt Street, Sydney<sup>7</sup>. On the evening of Wednesday 30 June 1813, at around 7 pm, Lieutenants Philip Connor and Archibald McNaughton, were walking in Pitt Street, apparently intoxicated, and in plain clothes. They took an unwelcome interest in a young lady who sought refuge in the home of her employer. The situation escalated and an altercation ensued, resulting in the owner of the home, Mr William Holness, lying dead on the footpath as a result of blows inflicted. A coroner's inquest was held the next morning and McNaughton and Connor were committed for trial<sup>8</sup>.

The trial was a high-profile affair and brought to a head some simmering tensions between Governor Macquarie and soldiers of the 73<sup>rd</sup> regiment. McNaughton and Connor were found guilty of manslaughter (but not murder) by a panel made up largely of military men. They were given what was considered to be a light sentence – six months imprisonment in the gaol at Parramatta, and a one shilling fine.

Details of the incident and the trial were reported at length in the press<sup>9</sup>. The account included eye-witness testimony that, immediately following the incident, Connor was heard to exclaim "What have I done!".

On the day following the trial, Macquarie made his displeasure known through a harshly worded General Order which was published in the *Sydney Gazette*<sup>10</sup>, and which was to be read out to all of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, and not once, but twice. The order addressed the death of Holness and referred to the Governor's "indignation at an occurrence so disgraceful to the Military Character". The incident prompted Macquarie to write to Lord Bathurst in London to recommend the removal of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Regiment from NSW, suggesting that in future no regiment should remain for more than three years<sup>11</sup>.

Connor and McNaughton must have barely served their prison sentences before they were removed from the colony of NSW. They were shipped off in mid-January 1814<sup>12</sup> with many of their fellow soldiers of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Regiment to begin a tour of duty in Ceylon<sup>13</sup>. Perhaps before Connor left Sydney he was able to see Eleanor Holland and their new-born baby girl.

Connor and McNaughton were both court-marshalled from the 73<sup>rd</sup> Regiment in August 1814<sup>14</sup>. In April 1816 Philip Connor returned to Sydney "for the purpose of carrying into effect a marriage engagement", but on instructions from Macquarie he was "refused permission to stay in (the) Colony having committed a 'foul and infamous' crime in (the) Colony previously"<sup>15</sup>. Indeed, Macquarie forbade Connor to even leave the ship on which he had arrived. Supreme Court Justice Jeffery Bent wrote to Macquarie to plead Connor's case, and to point out the illegality of refusing a British subject entry to the Colony<sup>16</sup>. However, Macquarie would not be moved, and Connor was once again banished from the colony, apparently never to return. According to Justice Bent, Connor was "forcibly compelled to quit the Colony ... under circumstances of considerable hardship"<sup>17</sup>. Later that year, in December 1816, Philip Connor died "on the coast of France"<sup>18</sup>.

Six years later, in County Kerry, Ireland, his mother, Ann Connor, signed a paper in the administration of her son's estate, declaring that Philip Connor died a bachelor, and that she was his next of kin<sup>19</sup>. It seems that the memory of Lieutenant Philip Connor's time in Australia, and the daughter he left behind, were soon consigned to history and, for me, he became an elusive ancestor.

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<sup>1</sup> NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (NSW BDM), Birth records: V1823/2116 125; V1828/2063 127; V1832/2056 128 (3 records all for the same baptism).

See also: St Mary's Cathedral Sydney, Roman Catholic Baptisms, images from original registers, on SAG reel 0006, page 393, (entry 2116) and SAG reel 0007, page 189, (entry 2063).

<sup>2</sup> *Ancestry*. New South Wales, Australia, Convict Indents, 1788-1842, Bound Indentures 1801-1814. Ship Archduke Charles; arrival of Ellinor Holland, and, *Sydney Gazette*, Sat 20 Feb 1813 p2 – arrival of Lieutenant Connor.

<sup>3</sup> *The Convict Ships 1787-1868*, Charles Bateson, Library of Australian History, Sydney 2004, pp.340-341. (Note: Bateson lists the length of the journey as 227 days, but this should read 277 days, based on the dates of departure and arrival.)

<sup>4</sup> *Ancestry*. New South Wales, Australia, Settler and Convict Lists, 1787-1834, Female; 1816, 1817, 1818, 1819 and 1820 (same information in each record): Ellen Holland, Feb 1813, A.D. Charles, Jeffries, Cork, Aug 1810, 7 (years).

See also: *Ancestry*. New South Wales, Australia, Convict Indents, 1788-1842, Bound Indentures 1801-1814. Ship Archduke Charles; Jeffries, Master; Pawson, Surgeon; Sailed from Ireland; Arrived at Sydney, 16th February, 1813. Ellinor Holland, tried at City of Cork, 1811, sentence 7 years.

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- <sup>5</sup> The story of the *Archduke Charles* is reported in various sources, including a brief account of the journey in *The Sydney Gazette*, Sat 20 Feb 1813, p.2.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ancestry*. New South Wales, Australia, St. John's Parramatta, Baptisms, 1790-1916; Vol 01, Baptisms, 1790-1825.
- <sup>7</sup> Historical Records of Australia. Series I. Governors' despatches to and from England. Volume VIII, July, 1813—December, 1815, edited by Frederick Watson, published by Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, 1916, Sydney, pp.2-26. See: <http://arrow.latrobe.edu.au/store/3/4/9/0/2/public/B13858427S1V8Frontcover,%20prelim&pages1-232.pdf>. Accessed 28 May 2020.
- <sup>8</sup> *Sydney Gazette*, 3 July 1813, p.3.
- <sup>9</sup> *Sydney Gazette*, pp.2-4, COURT of CRIMINAL JURISDICTION.
- <sup>10</sup> *Sydney Gazette*, 17 July 1813, p.4.
- <sup>11</sup> M.H. Ellis, *Lachlan Macquarie, His Life, Adventures and Times*, Dymocks Book Arcade, Sydney, 1947, p.296.
- <sup>12</sup> *Sydney Gazette*, 22 January 1814, p.2 – three companies of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Regiment boarded the Earl Spencer; *Sydney Gazette*, 5 February 1814, p.2 – Earl Spencer sailed for Ceylon.
- <sup>13</sup> Commissioned Officers of the 73rd Regiment Who Served in Ceylon 1814-1821, <https://www.mq.edu.au/macquarie-archive/under/research/officers73rd.html>. Accessed 28 May 2020.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ancestry*. New South Wales, Australia, Colonial Secretary's Papers, 1788-1856. 27 April 1816, Reel 6004; 4/3494 p.472.
- <sup>16</sup> Historical records of Australia. Series IV. Legal papers. Section A, Volume I, 1786-1827, edited by Frederick Watson, published by Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, 1916, Sydney, pages 205-208. <http://arrow.latrobe.edu.au/store/3/4/6/0/7/public/B13858427S4V1Frontcover,prelim,pages1-218.pdf>. Accessed 28 May 2020.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ancestry*, All London, England, Wills and Probate, 1507-1858; Probate Date:14 Nov 1822; see page 3 of 7-page document.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid*.