



# **CROKER PRIZE FOR BIOGRAPHY 2020**

## **2025 “Edie” Exposed**

### **by Margaret Dalkin**

## “Eddie” Exposed

When a second cousin offered this family history sleuth a transcript of an unpublished, undated autobiography, the first challenge was to discover the identity of the author Edie Farrar. Who was Edie Farrar? All I had was the manuscript itself. The autobiography was written circa 1900, the author was a schoolteacher, lived in New South Wales, was married to Claude, had five sons, and travelled overseas in retirement.<sup>1</sup>

Edie wrote that her prospective brother-in-law, “Mr Wilson” was headmaster of Fort Street National School. Fort Street’s history is well documented, but there was no such headmaster. Was she writing fiction or was she writing in code?

The latter thought was my ‘aha!’ moment. The headmaster of Fort Street in the relevant period (the 1850s) was William Wilkins who married Harriett Bartlett on 21 May 1852.<sup>2 3</sup> Could I find a sister for Harriet who married a man whose surname began with “F”?

I did! Her name was not Edie Farrar.

I found Eliza Bartlett who married Charles Friend,<sup>4</sup> and the key to Edie’s code was revealed. She used pseudonyms but always with the correct initials of the real person.<sup>5</sup>

I had discovered the code, but why write an autobiography and disguise the people? Did Eliza have something to hide?

Eliza Bartlett was born in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, England on 2 August 1837.<sup>6</sup> She was seven when she arrived in Sydney with her family on the *Parrock Hall* on 5 November 1844.<sup>7 8</sup> Eliza was a clever, musical girl.<sup>9</sup> At 14 she passed the entrance exam for Pupil Teachers and was appointed to Fort Street National School where William Wilkins was headmaster.<sup>10 11</sup>

Eliza did well, and at 18 became headmistress of the Girls Department at William Street School (Sydney), then headmistress at Fort Street at 19.

*as I had passed highest in the competitive exam a year before, I was appointed to the position vacated, and so became Mistress of the Model School, being the first lady teacher trained in the colony that attained to that position.... I remained only eight months.<sup>12</sup>*

Eliza’s young love was Walter William Friend<sup>13</sup> to whom she was unofficially engaged and whose sister was her best friend. However, she did not marry Walter. In 1857 Eliza married Walter’s cousin Charles Friend.<sup>14</sup> After the ceremony, Eliza was told that Charles had a serious drinking problem.<sup>15</sup> She was devastated.

The newly-weds travelled by steamer to Morpeth and tandem cart from Maitland to live with Charles’ family at *Bongeabong* station on Marthaguy Creek near Gilgandra.<sup>16</sup> After two years, Charles and Eliza moved to a new run, *New Marthaguy*, about six miles away.<sup>17 18</sup>

When Eliza wrote about this period some 45 years later, she painted a vivid picture of rural life in colonial Australia. There were bushrangers, snakes, accidents and massive floods, but also picnics, travelling musicians and country hospitality.<sup>19</sup> Typical of the time, she spent most of her early married life pregnant. Between 1858 and 1867, she gave birth to five sons. Eliza also wrote about Indigenous Australians, though she saw them with a European frame of reference:

*How well I remember seeing the King of the Castlereagh, his wife, mother, Queen Dowager Charlotte, and the children .....a princess of the Castlereagh, I afterwards trained to be useful in household matters.*<sup>20</sup>



Circa 1885

L-R Arthur William Friend (1862-1921), Robert Harry Friend (1859-1938), Edgar Charles Friend (1867-1956), Charles Wilkins (Eliza Friend's nephew, son of her sister Harriet), Eliza Friend née Bartlett (1837-1908), Richard Owen Friend (1865-1931)<sup>21</sup>

Eliza also recorded Charles' alcohol abuse. On one occasion she, a son, and 'Bobby', an Aboriginal stockman, rode 500 kilometres to Booligal to fetch her drunken husband home.<sup>22 23</sup> In 1869 at Bongeabong, Charles was involved in a drunken brawl with his step-brother Leonard Cheetham.<sup>24</sup> He was arrested, tried, and committed to Parramatta Lunatic Asylum. He spent his remaining 43 years in mental hospitals, dying at Parramatta in May 1914.<sup>25 26</sup> Eliza's visits were discouraged early in his admission and it is not clear when she stopped visiting.<sup>27</sup>

Did Eliza want to protect her family from the stigma of mental illness? Is this why she wrote in code?

Eliza's narrative reveals a deeply religious woman whose faith assisted her to cope with the physical and mental challenges she faced throughout her life.

To support her family 35-year-old Eliza returned to Sydney and resumed teaching in 1873,<sup>28</sup> fulfilling her early aptitude. By January 1874, she was Infants Mistress at Cleveland Street (Girls) School, receiving pay rises in 1877 and 1880.<sup>29</sup>

In 1879 Eliza planned to visit friends on the South Coast of NSW. When the steamer *Monaro* hit rocks north of Moruya Heads she and son Richard were shipwrecked. Fortunately, all passengers were saved.<sup>30</sup>

Eliza retired in December 1884 due to failing health.<sup>31</sup> Travel and family were the focus of her remaining years. During her teaching career she was able to purchase several lots of land on which she built cottages. Despite the colony suffering a major depression, the rental income from the cottages helped finance a Thomas Cook tour with Richard in 1890-91 to England, Europe, the USA, Canada and New Zealand.

Eliza 's last recorded family visits were to sons Robert at Bingara, and Edgar near Scone in 1898.<sup>32</sup>

Eliza died on 14 April 1908 at her home *Holwood* in Livingstone Road, Marrickville and is buried in Rookwood Cemetery.<sup>33 34</sup>

Even after her death, mysteries remain. When providing details for her death certificate, son Robert noted she had a daughter who died.<sup>35</sup> Was this death too painful for her to record? Or was she responding to this all too-common event with private grief and public reticence?

Another posthumous mystery is why did she leave £10 to 'my little friend Stephanie Barton, daughter of Sir Edmund Barton'? Is it possible that Eliza taught the future first Prime Minister of Australia when he spent two years at Fort Street's Infants School?<sup>36</sup>

Eliza's story leaves us with more research challenges.<sup>37</sup> 120 years later we have a new eyewitness to colonial history from the perspective of a talented, resilient and inspirational woman.

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<sup>1</sup> A 160 A4 page typed transcript was provided to this author in 2016 by second-cousin Douglas Friend in Brisbane. This author digitised the document in 2018. The original autobiography was viewed at the home of the transcriber, the late Geoff Thompson in 2016 at Bowral.

<sup>2</sup> Turney, Cliff, "Wilkins, William (1827-1892)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu/biography/wilkins-william-4853/text8105>, published first in hardcopy 1976, accessed online 18 April 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Turney, *ibid*, William Wilkins married his second wife Harriett Bartlett on 21 May 1852.

<sup>4</sup> NSW Marriage, 781/1857, Charles Friend and Eliza Bartlett.

<sup>5</sup> From his father's estate, my cousin Douglas Walter Friend, Brisbane was custodian of the autobiography of his paternal second-great-grandmother Eliza Friend but did not recognise her identity because of the use of pseudonyms. Since the discovery, photograph albums, family notes and oral testimony from an elderly uncle have shed more light on this branch of Friend family history. This author is not related to Eliza Friend.

Information shared with this author in 2018. Verified by records from BDM NSW. The identities of the five sons were then confirmed.

1. Charles James Wilkins Friend (1858-1941) (*Claude J. W.*)
2. Robert Harry aka Henry Friend (1859-1938) (*Robert Horace*)
3. Arthur William Friend (1862-1921) (*Albert Weston*)
4. Richard Owen Friend (1865-1931) (*R. Oswy*)
5. Edgar Charles Friend (1867-1956) (*Eric Clarence*)

<sup>6</sup> Family notes written by Eliza's great-grandson Trevor Friend. "Eliza was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1837 in the Parish of St Mary Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, England". This author has searched for a registered birth (including variants) without success and no parish record for her baptism has been identified in England. The family were Wesleyan Methodists and no non-conformist record has been identified to date. The manuscript advises Eliza was three or four when she arrived in the colony. This is not correct her seventh birthday was celebrated on board ship.

<sup>7</sup> *The Weekly Register of Political Facts & General Literature*, Saturday 9 Nov 1844, p.234, Shipping. The barque *Parrock Hall* sailed from London on the 15<sup>th</sup>, and Portsmouth on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1844. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/228135984/22336719> accessed 21 May 2020.

<sup>8</sup> In the 1841 England Census the family were living in Keppel Mews South, St George Bloomsbury, Middlesex. John Bartlett 38 (a coach owner) wife Susan 38, George Robert 11, Harriet 7 and Eliza 4. John Bartlett was also known as Robert.

Class: *HO107*; Piece: 672; Book:6; Civil Parish: St George Bloomsbury; County: Middlesex; Enumeration District:7; Folio:57; Page:38; Line:8; GSU roll:438787. Ancestry.com.1841 England Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc, 2010. Accessed on 19 May 2020. On Eliza's death transcription it advises her father was Robert.

<sup>9</sup>.*Empire*, Saturday 4 Sept 1852, p.1. Eliza sang Haydn's "Creation" with the St Mary's Choral Society in 1852. Her brother-in-law William Wilkins was conductor. Eliza was also a proficient pianist.

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/60135908?searchTerm=oratorio%20st%20marys%20choral%20society%20sydney&searchLimits=l-state=New+South+Wales|||sortby=dateAsc> accessed 21 May 2020.

<sup>10</sup> NSW Death, 547/1852 V1852547 ,110, Eliza's father John Bartlett died in January 1852 when she was 14. Eliza had been a Pupil Teacher for three months.

<sup>11</sup> NSWSL, *Wilkins Family Correspondence*, 24 January 1847-23 March 1882, Microfilm CY1630, frames 1-195.

<sup>12</sup> Connolly, George, "Catherine Heydon, 1858 to 1868: from Subiaco to Carcoar", [online].*Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 25, 2004: 32-46. Availability: <https://search.informit-com-au.ezproxy.sl.nsw.gov.au/documentSummary;dn=200411912,res=IELPA>. ISSN: 0084-7259. [cited 22 May 20].

No supporting reference for Eliza's claim has been discovered but Connolly advised on page 33 that in 1859 when Catherine became principal teacher at Fort Street Model School "There had been no headmistress for two years because there had been no-one with sufficient talent". As Eliza left to be married in 1857, this timeframe coincides with Eliza's claim for her departure as Mistress in that year.

<sup>13</sup> Autobiography pseudonym, "Wilmot Farrar." For Walter William Friend (1836-1895). This family were prominent hardware merchants in York St, Sydney. Walter's mother was Ann ne'e Bunker, the sister of Charles Friend's mother Elizabeth. Elizabeth's deceased husband Robert was Ann's husband's brother. Two sisters had married two brothers.

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<sup>14</sup> NSW Marriage, 781/1857 *ibid*, Charles Friend and Eliza Bartlett were married at the home of Charles' sister Elizabeth Brownlow. Autobiography pseudonym, "Bessie Birtley".

<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Brownlow Charles' sister informed Eliza about Charles drinking problem.

<sup>16</sup> James Leonard Cheetham ("Mr Castles") a former convict, his son Leonard ("Donald Castles"), and Charles' widowed mother Elizabeth Ann Cheetham (formerly Friend ne'e Bunker), were settlers at *Bongeabong*. Station ("Billarr Station") on Marthaguy Creek in western N.S.W near where it flows into the Castlereagh River. Charles had been raised at *Bongeabong*.

<sup>17</sup> Autobiography pseudonym, "Marsden".

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.rahs.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Book1\\_Section-5-The-Squatters-Act.pdf](https://www.rahs.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Book1_Section-5-The-Squatters-Act.pdf) *An Act for Regulating the Waste Lands In the Australian Colonies* was enacted in 1846 and came into effect on 1 May 1847. Known as The Squatters Act, James Leonard Cheetham was granted 5 square miles of land bordering Martigay (sic) Creek in Bligh Pastoral District No.4. Gazetted in 1849, the run was known as *Bongegalong* (sic) or *Bongeabong*. In 1851 James Cheetham also occupied *Mobala* Run between Merri Merri and Marthaguy Creeks and *New Marthaguy* was acquired later.

<sup>19</sup> Autobiography, p. 24,

"we were thrown into great consternation one day by a report that we received to the effect that the Bushrangers, then such a terror to that and the surrounding districts, were near and might pay us a visit any time", "a huge brown snake came up from underneath and was most vicious".

p.57, son Richard sustained a serious leg fracture when he fell from a horse.

p.21, the Buckingham family a group of seven travelling musicians were in the area in 1858. Eliza used the correct name for these entertainers. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/64375618?searchTerm=&searchLimits=1-publihtag=Buckingham+Family>

<sup>20</sup> Autobiography quote and Marion Dormer and Joan Starr, *Settlers on the Marthaguy in Western New South Wales*, Macquarie Publications, Dubbo, NSW, 1979, p.11. The indigenous people of the Marthaguy are the Kawambarai people.

<sup>21</sup> Photograph provided to this author by Douglas Walter Friend, Brisbane. Published with permission. The subjects were named on the back of the photograph.

<sup>22</sup> Autobiography, p. 30,

"Not long after the second drought had taken place my husband made up his mind to buy some cattle from neighbouring Stations & collect as many of his own as possible, and take them overland to dispose of them at Deniliquin where there was a good market."

<sup>23</sup> "Bobby" had tied the rope of the tarpaulin between two trees where he told her bushranger Ben Hall had been shot. He told her the noise they heard in the night was Ben Hall's ghost. It is not known if "Bobby" was a pseudonym.

<sup>24</sup> *The Manaro Mercury and Cooma and Bombala Advertiser*, Fri 26 March 1869, p.7 "Shooting with Intent", <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/113958726?searchTerm=%22Charles%20Friend%22&searchLimits=last> accessed 16 May 2020 . The event took place on 3 March 1869 when Eliza was on a visit to Sydney.

<sup>25</sup> Charles Friend is buried at Rookwood Cemetery with his mother Elizabeth Cheetham who died on 24 October 1873. Charles was buried on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1914. The gravesite is Plot C, Zone B/#/202, Rookwood Cemetery, Rookwood NSW. <https://www.google.com/maps/place/33%C2%B052'03.9%22S+151%C2%B003'07.0%22E/@-33.8692513,151.0533889,17z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x0:0x0!8m2!3d-33.8677547!4d151.0519298>, accessed on 23 May 2020.

<sup>26</sup> NSW SAR, Archives Office of the NSW Health Commission, *Parramatta Hospital Medical Case Book, 4 February 1865 to 25 July 1870*, 4/8257, reviewed by this author in April 2017. Charles Friend was admitted on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1869 as a criminal lunatic. On 14 July 1870 he was transferred to The Hospital for Insane at Gladesville by order of the Colonial Secretary. As he had been found not guilty, he had incorrectly been classified as criminally insane. Over the years Charles was moved between the institutions.

<sup>27</sup> Authorities advised her to reduce her visits to quarterly. Sometimes she refers to "my poor husband" but does not indicate he was still living.

<sup>28</sup> NSW SAR, *School Teachers' Rolls 1869-1908*, NRS 4073, Reel No. 1991, for Eliza Friend. Married women were not permitted to work in the Government Service at that time, but as her husband was institutionalised and, (possibly) her connection with William Wilkins, leniency was shown.

<sup>29</sup> NSW SAR, *School Teachers' Rolls 1869-1908*, *ibid*. The pseudonym used for Cleveland Street School was "Charlton".

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<sup>30</sup> Autobiography pseudonym, “Monatto”. “Mrs Friend and son” were named as passengers on the *Monaro*, Eliza described “one woman who was screaming dreadfully” while the report mentions the calmness of the women and only a child cried.

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/135687286?searchTerm=wreck%20monaro&searchLimits=l-state=New+South+Wales> accessed on 15 May 2020.

<sup>31</sup> NSW SAR, *School Teachers’ Rolls 1869-1908*, *ibid*, P.350, reveal Eliza Friend was awarded a retiring allowance of £492/7/6 on 23 December 1884.

<sup>32</sup> The chronology at the end of the autobiography does not always correspond with research findings. NSW SAR, *The School Teachers’ Rolls 1869-1908*, Roll 5, pp 0901 & 671, Reel 1994, reveal Edgar Charles Friend was at “Kaynga” School (autobiography pseudonym, “Kingston” near Scone) from 30 May 1893 to 29 June 1894. The school was likely at Kayunga near Muswellbrook. In 1898 when Eliza made her last documented country trip, Edgar Friend was a teacher at West Marrickville School (19 July 1897-7 July 1899). She wrote that she left the train at Scone where “Eric” was waiting on the platform to take her to his home. He was then at West Marrickville School so Eliza’s country trip was earlier than she documented.

<sup>33</sup> NSW Death, 06111, Transcription Agent Joy Murrin, Eliza Friend aged 70 years 8 months, born Wisbeach (sic) Cambridgeshire England, father Robert (sic) Bartlett, mother Susan Russell, Congregationalist, about 63 years in the colony, five sons (named) and one female deceased. Informant, her son Robert Harry Friend, “Coberg”, Calvert Street Marrickville.

<sup>34</sup> Eliza’s headstone reads;

“Sacred to the memory of Eliza Friend. Died 14<sup>th</sup> April 1908. Aged 70 years. At Rest”

The grave with headstone is in Section B, Row 24 Methodist Section, Rookwood Cemetery, Rookwood NSW. Photographed by this author on 28 September 2016.

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/33%C2%B052'38.7%22S+151%C2%B003'15.9%22E/@-33.8771316,151.053612,17z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x0:0x0!8m2!3d-33.8774058!4d151.0544172> accessed on 23 May 2020

<sup>35</sup> NSW Death, 06111, *ibid*.

<sup>36</sup> Martha Rutledge, “Barton, Sir Edmund (Toby) 1849-1920”, ADB, Vol 7 (MUP), 1979, accessed on 24 May 2020. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/barton-sir-edmund-toby-71>

Edmund Barton was seven when he enrolled at Fort Street Model School in 1856. Eliza Bartlett was Mistress of the Infant’s Department for eight months.

<sup>37</sup> This author is preparing Eliza Friend’s Autobiography for publication to incorporate additional research findings.