



Sprig Of Heather



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Editors Quill

LITTLE BY LITTLE

Watching a recent edition of **'Who do you think you are'** on UK TV, it came home to me just how harsh life was for immigrant's to the 'new world of hope and opportunity' c1830-1900. Between 1788 and 1868, approximately 162,000 convicts were transported to Australian penal colonies by the British government. They began transporting criminals to overseas colonies in the 17th century. Australia was considered ideal for a penal colony, and in 1787 the First Fleet of eleven convict ships set sail for Botany Bay, arriving on 20 January 1788 founding the first European settlement in Australia which we now know as Sydney. Elsewhere other penal colonies were also established in Tasmania, Queensland and Western Australia. Penal transportation to Australia peaked in the 1830s and dropped off significantly in the following decade. The last convict ship arrived in Western Australia on 10 January 1868. Many convicts were transported for petty crimes; others were political prisoners. More serious crimes, such as rape and murder, were not transportable offences. After their prison terms were served most stayed in Australia and joined the other settlers, with some rising to prominent positions in Australian society. Approximately 20% of modern Australians are descended from transported convicts. Once deemed, the "convict stain", it is now considered by many to be a cause for celebration to have a convict in one's lineage. Official records show some **57** individuals named **Little** were transported as convicts....! The inhumanity of incarceration c1830 was frightening. **Today people are still being locked away on remote islands with demeaning provisions.** The question must be, whether we have learnt anything from penal history. Primitive conditions, poor sanitation, minimum nutrition and inclement weather often complicated the wellbeing of all immigrants. Is the immigrant experience evinced in the people we are today and is our heritage something to celebrate?

Allen Little Steward



Man who made it.... !

Gabriel READ (1824–94). was the son of Captain G. F. Read a settler in Tasmania 1816. Hearing news about gold strikes in Southland around Mataura enticed Gabriel to set off and he arrived in Otago in January 1861 on board the Don Pedro

II, and found in Dunedin a very lukewarm attitude with respect to Mataura gold. But he set off southwards. First at Tokomairiro, and then at the Clutha Ferry, he was warned that he was on a wild goose chase, and before crossing the Clutha he decided to retrace his steps. On his return he paused at Tokomairiro and hired himself out to a squatter named Hardy, who was also a member of the Otago Provincial Council. Hardy believed strongly in the possibilities of the Tuapeka area as a gold-bearing locality and did his best to persuade Read to go there. His representations were backed by the Superintendent of the Province, Major Richardson, who on behalf of the Council offered a reward for any discovery that might be made. Thus it was that Read turned his attention to Tuapeka, Waitahuna, and Wetherstones.

Despite a good deal of good-natured derision from the local inhabitants, Read disappeared into the hills and gullies, and on 23 May 1861 struck colour in a gully which has



borne his name ever since.

(1862 View of the settlement)

In May 1861 Gabriel Read found gold in Otago, and by early the following year, there were perhaps 14,000 miners on the field. Many were locals, but they were joined by numbers from Australia, and eventually from England, Scotland and Ireland. Today **Kae Lewis** is regarded as a specialist on Gabriel's Gully and has an extensive database at www.kaelewis.com.

Towards Family in early Scotland

In these modern times many of us fantasise around the romance of historic Scotland and its people. Some of us are attracted by the mystique of the distant past as we grapple to uncover our family histories. There are three things upon which most commentators are agreed:-

1. There was a huge gap between the Aristocracy and commoners.
2. Living was harsh for most who were subservient.
3. Learning and literacy kept commoners ignorant.

“Family” in early Scotland was built around the notion of kinship



and wellbeing of “The Family” as a whole particularly between the Renaissance and Reformation of the sixteenth century into the beginnings of industrialisation and the end of the Jacobite risings of the mid-eighteenth century. Kinship in this period was agnatic, with descent judged through a common ancestor, helping to create the surname system in the Borders and the clans in the Highlands. These systems began changing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

There was considerable concern over the safety of children. The abolition of godparents in the Reformation meant that baptism became a mechanism for emphasising the role and responsibilities of fathers. Wet-nurses were used for young children, but in most families mothers took the primary role in bringing up children, while the Kirk emphasised the role of the father for older children. After the Reformation there was an increasing emphasis on education, resulting in the growth of a parish school system, but its effects were limited for the children of the poor and most girls.



Most children left home for a period of life-cycle service, as domestic or agricultural servants or as apprentices before marriage. Marriages were often the subject of careful negotiations, particularly higher in society. Marriage lost its sacramental status at the Reformation and irregular marriage continued to be accepted as valid

throughout the period. Women managed the household but might work beside their husbands and, although obedience to husbands was stressed, this may have been limited in practice.

In the late Middle Ages and early modern era, women could marry from the age of 12 (while for boys it was from 14) and, while many girls from the social elite married in their teens, most in the Lowlands married only after a period of life-cycle service, in their twenties. Normally marriage followed handfasting, a period of betrothal, which in the Highlands may have effectively been a period of trial marriage, in which sexual activity may have been accepted as legitimate. Marriages, particularly higher in society, were often political in nature and the subject of complex negotiations over the tocher (dowry). Some mothers took a leading role in negotiating marriages, as Lady Glenorchy did for her children in the 1560s and 1570s, or as matchmakers, finding suitable and compatible partners for others.

In the Middle Ages, marriage was a sacrament and the key element in validity was consent. Weddings were often elaborate occasions for public celebration and feasting. Among the poor the tradition of the penny wedding developed, by which guests contributed to the costs of occasion, with a meal and dance after the ceremony.

The widespread belief in the limited intellectual and moral capacity of women, vied with a desire, intensified after the Reformation, for women to take personal moral responsibility, particularly as wives and mothers.



Most people tended to encourage the education of girls, thought they should not receive the same academic education as boys. In the lower ranks of society, they benefited from the expansion of the parish schools system that took place after the Reformation, but were usually outnumbered by boys, often taught separately, for a shorter time and to a lower level. They were frequently taught reading, sewing and knitting, but not writing. Female illiteracy rates based on signatures among female servants were around 90 percent, from the late seventeenth to the early eighteenth centuries and perhaps 85 percent for women of all ranks by 1750, compared with 35 per cent for men. []

