

## Cock Family.

The economic conditions in England after the Napoleonic wars, the famine following the outbreak of blight in the potato crops accentuated the plight of the yeomen in the mid-nineteenth century.

Enticements were offered in the form of reasonable fares for a family and the discovery of gold in 1851<sup>in NSW</sup> was a further strong incentive <sup>to migrate.</sup> Connections, relatives and friends had already ventured to Australia, the new land of promise. The trickle of migrants became a steady stream and Cornwall provided a high proportion of hardy settlers.

Cock or Cocke is not an unusual name in Cornwall and appears in widespread parishes. My particular forbears of that name were listed in the 1851 Census <sup>living</sup> on an 80 acre property called NEWNEY at Altarnun near Launceston (Cornwall)

Robert Cock 55

Kitty or Catherine (Phillips) 47

[Harriet 23 already married to Richard Oats  
• living in South Australia]

Robert Peter 20

Edwin (died in infancy)

\* Edwin 17 (my grandfather)

Catherine 15

Mary 13

Matilda 11

Fredrick 9

Louisa 7

Miss M. Phillips

There were floods on the Hawkesbury River June 1852, June 1855, November 1856. 1857-59 brought serious drought. 1860 floods in April, July, November & again in 1864. 1867 was the highest flood on record and caused great destruction of property in the Nepean Hawkesbury basins. It would have covered the highest spot in the town of Richmond.

During those troublesome years, four members of the Cock family <sup>were</sup> married according to Wesleyan rites by Rev Richard Amos an erstwhile missionary in Sierra Leone & Tonga.

- Mary Cock & Joseph Hill 26<sup>th</sup> Nov 1860
- Robert Peter Cock & Sophia Starr 5<sup>th</sup> Aug 1862
- Edwin Cock & Susannah Stephens 30<sup>th</sup> Sept, 1863
- Matilda Cock & William Chalker 5<sup>th</sup> Jan 1864.

The two daughters were married <sup>from "Fleets"</sup> the home <sup>where</sup> of Robert Cock. <sup>his family were</sup> Edwin & Susannah were married at the home of her sister Mary <sup>Mullice</sup> Mullis & her husband Jonathan who had been at St Mary's since 1850. A brother Joseph Stephens had come in his teens, some years earlier (1846)

They all brought with them enthusiasm and dedication stemming from the preaching of John Wesley & the Methodist revival. No doubt they participated in the establishment of the Wesleyan Church at St Marys (1861)

The letter from Robert Senr to Edwin dated 1868 writes of a van driven by a younger son Fred carrying potatoes, three tons of sugar in casks and 14 or 15 cwt of weatherboard. Because of the heavy rain

at the time and the state of the roads, his progress was slow and he had to reload at Barseby.

Crops he mentions planting are turnips, pumpkins and barley, & that half a year's rent was £5. Names he mentions are Mr Yorke & Mrs Whately who may have been his landlady.

I have managed to find out some facts about "Fleuss" but not who was owner in the 1860s. The old people seemed to be leaving a house without bars or locks and were worried about security. Edwin & Susannah had gone ahead by waggon with their young family.

The only members of the family to remain in the district were Matilda & William Charker whose elaborate memorial is in the churchyard of St Mary Magdalene's.

In the Methodist section of the General Cemetery at Emu Plains near St Paul's Anglican Church is grave 2073 where is interred the youngest child of Robert & Catherine who was epileptic.

Hugh Phillips Cook  
Formerly of Cornwall  
England

Born April 25<sup>th</sup> 1846

died May 13<sup>th</sup> 1865

It is a very short grave with HPC on the footstone & the inscription

"Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what the day may bring forth."

The precise time of their arrival as yet I have not discovered, nor the name of the ship <sup>on which</sup> they travelled. A letter dated July 1855 from John Smith of "Gamboola" and later "Llanarth Bathurst", refers to the previous January and indicates that Robert Cock had been through a period of difficulty. Financial assistance was offered until the family found their feet again. (John Smith later the Honorable John Smith's mother Elizabeth was Robert Cock Senr's half-sister) At that time, the eldest son Robert Peter appears to have gone to the Victorian goldfields to spend several months with his sister Harriet Oats, taking the youngest brother Hugh Phillips with him. Edwin, my grandfather, then 21 had the responsibility of assisting his ageing parents at St Mary's.

A later letter in my possession ~~is~~ dated Jan 30th 1868 is headed "South Creek", a name well-known at St Mary's. It is from Robert Senr to Edwin about the time they were planning to move to Bathurst. Edwin's 4<sup>th</sup> son was born at Mt Pleasant where land 3200 acres had been granted to Major General Stewart by Governor Darling years earlier & was now run by his widow. (The letter refers to Mrs Stewart.) Edwin was probably a property overseer and earned £50 a year + housing.

It would appear that they lived in the St Mary's area for about 14 years before moving first to Bathurst, then Newcastle or No 1 Swamp or Mt Macquarie then Wellington in later years - about 1890.