

Tracing the steps of my most travelled ancestor**'I never really knew my father'**

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'I never really knew my father.' Those six words from my terminally ill mother sent me on a quest that I never realised would turn into an obsession.

I grew up with both grandparents on my father's side but did not really think much about not having grandparents on my mother's side until the day I began asking my mother about her life. As is quite simple, I located birth, marriage and death records for my grandfather William Edward Campbell MANNERS and sadly learned he was killed during the Second World War. Not long after locating these details, my mother also lost her battle. This only made me more determined to find out my roots, in particular for my Uncle Russell who grew up in an orphanage not knowing anything of his roots.

I took the advice of many genealogists and asked family members what they could tell me, but they were mostly also ignorant of the facts. And so my journey began. The first step was to find as many living relatives as possible but this also turned out to be very difficult. 'Just not interested', was the general reply so I had to go it alone. By trawling through birth, marriage and death indexes and obtaining certificates I was able to piece together a fairly accurate family tree, and by using electoral rolls, Post Office directories, Sands & McDougall directories and some trade directories, I was able to get an idea of where the various family members lived and worked. One ancestor stood out.

My great-great grandfather John MANNERS was privileged by poverty and prosperity to be the most travelled ancestor in my family. One generally associates travel with those who venture great distances over short or long periods of time, but sometimes travel from one local town to the next can also be an exciting, frightening or even debilitating experience. The adventure of a lifetime can sometimes turn out to be a blessing or a curse. Whatever my ancestor thought through his journeys over decades can only be guessed at, but his wanderings have provided many branches of communication and research.

John MANNERS was born in Greenock, Scotland in 1842 to John and Margaret (née CAMPBELL) MANNERS. My 3 x great-grandfather was a seaman/carpenter and returned immediately to sea after his marriage on 6 August 1841 and was never heard of again. The inscription in the *Dunbarton Memorial Inscriptions* book notes he was 'lost at sea'.

One day I was looking through a list of family history books at the State Library of Victoria and noticed one titled *So I headed West: Ballarat to Broken Hill to Kanowna to Kalgoorlie 1863-1924* by W G Manners, a goldfields pioneer. I wondered if there would prove to be a connection to my MANNERS family. I spent many hours at my computer trying to pinpoint just one fact that would lead me to the connection but I could not find it, mostly due to the lack of available detailed records. All I could do was compile a history of my great-great grandfather and hope that some day some piece of information would come to light.

After many years of fruitless research I tried a different tack. I sent an article to *Australian Family Tree Connections* magazine. Over time I almost forgot about the article when out of the blue I received a telephone call from a man named John McPHELLAMY. I realised immediately that the McPHELLAMY name was one on my list and was excited to hear from this man. Neither of us was sure that we were related but felt that it warranted a visit and comparison of information. John and his wife Carole were living in New South Wales but were travelling around Victoria and were stopping at Shepparton which is only a couple of hours' drive from my home so we arranged to meet.

I nearly fell over the moment I stepped out of the car. John McPHELLAMY was almost the spitting image of my uncle Allan MANNERS. Family resemblance was confirmed when we compared notes. For at least two more years we corresponded and exchanged information, then one day John, Carole, John's sister Joan and her husband Brian JORDAN, came to my home in Dunolly. When Joan handed me a box I was really excited to find inside many pages of letters. I did not have time to read through them during their visit but I could ascertain they were dated from 1866-1894 written by members of the MANNERS and CAMPBELL families. Needless to say I spent many hours scanning those delicate letters so Joan could take them home with her two days later. It then took me three months to transcribe and sort the pages into the right order. Now I had the

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connection to the earlier mentioned Manners family. The authors of the letters were John's uncle William MANNERS, uncle Archibald CAMPBELL and a number of cousins.

Archibald was a seaman/carpenter and his letters written to his nephew John recall some of Archibald's travels to places such as Bremen, Bombay, Falmouth and Wales. However it is my great-great grandfather John MANNER's adventures that are the main topic of this article.

One of the letters written by Archibald provided me with the evidence that my great-grandfather worked for the Scott's Shipyards in Greenock and through his many letters I pieced together family details. I knew by this time that my John MANNERS was in Australia in 1866 from the details on his marriage certificate, but did not know when he came to Australia. Following the trail of information I contacted the Renfrewshire Family History Society in Greenock and obtained a little more information about the MANNERS family.

It was just by luck that when I accompanied my husband on a business trip to England and Scotland, and insisted that we stop in Greenock for a couple of days, that I visited the Society. The volunteers were extremely helpful. Just prior to leaving I mentioned that I had located a John MANNERS aged about 14 on the steamship *European* but I had no idea if the person referred to was my great-great grandfather. I was naïve to think that no child orphan would have travelled on their own. I was wrong. John MANNERS was recorded on the *European* as a 'boy crew'.

At the time I was searching, the shipping records were not then on the internet and a terrific librarian found the list on a card in the Genealogy section of the State Library of Victoria. The ship arrived in Sydney on 19 February 1857. On 24 April 1855 the *Greenock Advertiser* gave a full description of the launch of the *European* from the Scott Shipyard. The ship was originally built to carry passengers to the Californian goldfields (US) but due to the downturn in gold mining the vessel was re-assigned and altered to become a troop carrier for use in the Crimean War. The same newspaper reported on 27 July 1855 that the *European* was to be used to tow the ship *Titan* to Marseilles.

After John MANNERS arrived in Sydney he took a job as a 'boy crew' on the whaling ship *Queen of Perth* which plied the Tasman Sea calling at various ports in the Chatham Islands and New Zealand. Taking his discharge after returning to Sydney John then disappeared from the records (being too young to own property or vote). Armed with the name of his wife, from both his marriage certificate and confirmed in the letters, I knew John married Emma HICKOX on 17 December 1866 in Ulladulla, New South Wales. Emma was born on 16 August 1849 in the Parish of Braidwood, County of Vincent, New South Wales. At this time it can only be presumed that John may have gained work as an apprentice or labourer for a blacksmith travelling to or working in the Braidwood area to have had the opportunity to meet Emma. Travel to the Braidwood, Nelligan and district was by ship along the Clyde River.

In 1868 John, Emma and their baby daughter moved to the Manning River district in central northern New South Wales where John began his own business as a blacksmith. To get there they would have travelled by ship to Harrington and most likely boarded another vessel that plied the Manning River. John set up business in Cundletown which was not officially given town status until 1855. For a short time, after the death of Samuel WHITBREAD, John took over Samuel's blacksmith business in Wingham, being a larger and more established workshop. Later he moved his family and business to Taree where he manufactured agricultural implements and later added wagons etc. to his repertoire.

From the 47 letters, details have been gleaned about the trips John took to Sydney and Ballarat, Victoria. It is also possible he made a number of trips to Queensland and Fiji, but it is not possible to be sure because the shipping records only give the initial J after the surname. Travelling to Ballarat required going by ship to Melbourne and alighting to take the coach, most probably Cobb & Co, to reach Ballarat. He made at least six trips to Ballarat between 1868 and 1894.

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It would also have been necessary to travel to Sydney on regular occasions to obtain materials for his trade or to deliver items he had manufactured, a round trip of 600 miles. John and his wife and one child were travelling on the *Rosedale* on its return from Sydney to Taree when the ship ran into the wharf at Croki. *The Manning and Hastings Advocate* of 31 March and 11 August 1882 mentions the MANNERS family on the ship and that John MANNERS repaired the vessel.

The letters from John's uncle William MANNERS and corresponding evidence in newspapers indicate that John travelled to many towns in New South Wales and Victoria and had entries in various agricultural and ploughing shows and events. Shows mentioned are in Cundletown, Wingham, Ballarat, Bathurst, Sydney and possibly many others not yet located.

In 1893 John moved his family from Taree to Sydney where he continued a business in blacksmithing and coach building at 272 Sussex Street, and lived at 6 William Henry Street. Photographs of the business premises taken during the cleansing operations undertaken in 1900 due to the plague are held by the State Library of New South Wales.

From this brief introduction to the life of John MANNERS, it can be seen that he was a seasoned traveller by the time he died in 1909. Many of his trips involved sea going vessels and horse-drawn vehicles, but it must also be noted that he made a number of trips by train to Ballarat, though details of these can only be discovered by reading between the lines of the letters which indicate the faster service, as no records exist showing passengers on trains.

References

47 letters addressed to John Manners from his uncles William MANNERS and Archibald CAMPBELL, cousin

John MANNERS and other cousins in Scotland, Victoria and New South Wales (privately held)

Birth, death and marriage certificates from Victoria and New South Wales

Census records

Centennial International Exhibition, Melbourne 1888-89, Official Record, Sands & McDougall, Collins Street, Melbourne, 1890

Electoral rolls

Extensive detailed biography available from the author

History of the Scott's Shipyards from Inverclyde Council, held at the McLean Museum & Fine Art Gallery, Greenock, produced 2009 for online text

Intercolonial Exhibition of Australasia, Melbourne, 1866-67, Authority of Commissioners 1867, Melbourne

Johnston Fraser Robb, *Scotts of Greenock: Shipbuilders and Engineers 1820-1920: A Family Enterprise*, presented to the University of Glasgow for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 1993, available through British Library EthOS – Beta, Electronic Online Thesis Service www.ethos.bl.uk

Newspaper articles

Parish registers Greenock and Dunbarton, Scotland

Post Office directories

Shipping records

State Library of Victoria

Trade directories