

PREFACE

The aim of this book was to trace and record the names of ALL the descendants of Captain John Nicholson and his wife, Eliza (nee Streeter). They had a family of thirteen, - nine sons and four daughters.

Sections numbered 1 to 12 have been allotted one for each member and as far as is known the senior member of each family is listed first, followed by all his/her descendants. Other members of that family follow on in the same order.

Very little research to official records has been made as on my very rare visits to the Mitchell Library, it was found there were two Captain John Nicholsons in Sydney at the same period and some of their records became somewhat mixed up. However, when discovered by the Library staff, their records thereafter referred to our ancestor as Captain John Nicholson of "LORD MELVILLE", the ship on which he arrived in Australia in 1817. Also Eliza Streeter's mother, Mary Ann Streeter's only reference stated she and her daughter, Eliza were free settlers. Later, she was referred to as Mary Ann Hunter. Afterwards, all traces of her were lost.

Hence, practically all information herein, having come direct from members of the various branches of the family, though far from complete, should form a base for future research and are open for new additions, corrections of names, dates, etc., which we invite people to write in with any further details or corrections, thus enabling the records to be kept up to date.

For all additions, omissions, corrections etc. to the

HISTORICAL SECIION contact Capt. I.H.Nicholson, R.A.N.
102 Lewin Street, Lyneham. A.C.T. 2602 NI:3A5CFC^J

FAMILY RECORDS SECTION to W.E.Nicholson,
656 Macauley Street, Albury. N.S.W. 2640 NI:3A5CF

Kindly quote section and folio numbers with full names and appropriate details, please.

N.B. Additional copies of this booklet may be obtained from the above addresses at \$2 per copy.

Abbreviations:

- A - Adopted
- B - Date born
- BA - Where born
- BD - Where buried
- C - Cremated
- D - Date died
- DA - Where died
- I - Infant/cy
- M - Married
- N - No Issue
- U - Unmarried
- W - Widow/er

BRIEF DETAILS OF CAPTAIN JOHN NICHOLSON (MASTER RN)

AND HIS FAMILY

BORN 26.9.1787 NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE: ARRIVED NEW SOUTH WALES "LORD MELVILLE" 24.2.1817
MARRIED ELIZA STREETER AT ST.PHILIP'S, SYDNEY 1.3.1817
DIED 9.1.1863 AND BURIED ALL SAINT'S, SUTTON FOREST, NEW SOUTH WALES.

His father was Joseph Nicholson and mother, Susan, nee Mitchell.

Little is known or recorded of these or earlier members of their family. Believed to have been comprised of nine sons and four daughters.

Joseph was a merchant, possibly from Liverpool, U.K and later moved to Newcastle-on-Tyne, County Durham and eventually to the Hackney Road, London.

It is thought that besides John, born 1787 (probably the eldest son - full details later) that other members included Tenterden, James, Thomas, Charles (William possibly) and Renton (youngest son, married with two daughters). The three other sons' and four daughters' names, remain unknown. However, it is known that two of the girls conducted a school or seminary in Islington, London.

Tenterden probably worked with WICKES & SNAITH City Bankers.

A younger brother, James was a maritime captain and arrived in Sydney about January, 1823. Later commanded the cutter, "SNAPPER" on a voyage to Tahiti. In December 1825, he was appointed to command the new colonial government's brig, "MARY ELIZABETH" but did not remain in her very long. Thought to have been Superintendent of convicts at Norfolk Island from 1828 to 1833 and died soon after.

Thomas Nicholson probably a younger brother, or cousin of John Nicholson, arrived in New South Wales as a seaman aboard the convict ship, "SHIPLEY" on 18th November 1818 and was permitted to take his discharge from the ship. He joined the crew of the "ACTIVE" for a voyage to the Bay of Islands and Wahngarua, New Zealand. From 12th March to 30th July, 1819. On 16th October, 1819 when the brig, "DAPHNE" sailed for King Island, Kangaroo Island and the East (India), he was listed as a crew member. However, on 26th October 1819, the "DAPHNE" was wrecked in the Kent Group, Bass Strait. The entire crew was saved but most of them, including Thomas Nicholson were subsequently lost a little over a month later when the rescue vessel, "GOVERNOR SORRELL" disappeared without trace on the voyage from the Kent Group back to Hobart.

Family notes state John Nicholson was born 26.9.1787 at Newcastle-on-Tyne. One of a family of 13 children. Moss Vale Scrutineer - report on death of Capt. John Nicholson RN states that wife Eliza Streeter (7.8.1799 - 28.10.1865) was also born there. But Berrima registrar of Eliza Nicholson's death states she was born in London. She was a daughter of a George Streeter (Artist) and Mary Ann Streeter, the latter being a free settler in Australia.

Later in his Naval Service, in about 1812, when qualifying for Master, John Nicholson was unable to produce an official Birth Certificate. Instead, he made a witnessed declaration that to the best of his knowledge he was born in approx. 1786/1787. He added that prior to joining the RN he had spent 7 years at sea in Merchant ships, i.e. he first went to sea at age of 10 or 11. No details of this early sea service are known except:-

There is no doubt that John Nicholson joined the frigate HMS "ARIADNE" at sea in the English Channel - in wartime, on 1st April, 1804. The frigate had stopped a convoy of homeward bound whalers and a merchant ship (the East Indiaman, "UNION") from the 'South Seas' in order to impress seamen for the Navy. It is known that John Nicholson volunteered for service but had he not done so he would possibly have been pressed anyway. It is very likely that he was in the South Sea Whaler, "AURORA" which ship, on sailing from England in 1803, had listed in the crew a "John Nicholson, Line-manager". - i.e. the harpoon line handler in one of the whaler's boats.

John Nicholson's service in the Navy has been very closely studied and recorded from papers and ship's logs. All these old Admiralty records are in the Public Record Office in London. He served in the following ships:-

HMS "ARIADNE" - 1st April 1804 until October 1807 -
In the Channel, North Sea and Baltic - after the capture of Copenhagen by the British in August/September 1807. John Nicholson, still an Able Seaman, was placed in charge of a captured Dutch Galliot (a coaster) for passage in convoy back to England. The Galliot was separated from the convoy in a storm and wrecked near the Texel late in October 1807. John Nicholson was imprisoned at BREDA by the Dutch. In April, 1809 he escaped with three seamen from Holland aboard the American ship, "MONTICELLO" bound for New York. A few days later this ship was stopped by -

The Sloop, HMS "DRAKE" and John Nicholson rejoined the RN, again at sea;

Transferred to HMS "VENERABLE" temporarily and then spent the rest of 1809 in HMS "ST.DOMINGO", flagship in the North Sea and engaged in blockade and bombardment. John Nicholson was promoted to Master's Mate and then Midshipman during this period.

In June 1810 he joined HMS "CRACKER", Gunbrig, as Acting Master and spent the year on channel blockade.

In March 1811 he transferred to HMS "ROYALIST" sloop on similar duty and they captured several French privateers and smugglers.

On 2nd May 1812 he became Master of the frigate "NEMESIS" having qualified at a Trinity House examination. The ship served in the Mediterranean and off Portugal on escort and patrol duties.

At the end of 1812 he transferred to HMS "PIQUE", a large frigate, as Master and served on the West Indies Station.

In mid 1814 he transferred to HMS "VENERABLE", ship of the line and flagship in the Leeward Islands, West Indies (c. in C. was Rear-Admiral, Sir P.C. Durham). John Nicholson was present at the capture of Guadeloupe in 1815 and surveyed harbours in that area. At the end of the Napoleonic War the ship paid off at Portsmouth (in April 1816) and John Nicholson was placed on half pay as a Master RN.

Within a few months of paying off he was appointed Chief Officer of the convict transport "LORD MELVILLE" under orders in the Thames to sail to New South Wales with 99 female convicts, some wives of convicts and some free settlers. One of the passengers being Mr. Justice Barron Field. John Nicholson was recommended for either the post in "LORD MELVILLE", or for command of a missionary trading vessel being built on Tahiti by Capt. Geo. Pringle RN, under whom he had served in HMS "VENERABLE".

"LORD MELVILLE" departed Thames 15th September 1816 (Master Tackray Wetherell) and arrived Port Jackson via Rio de Janeiro on 24th February 1817. John Nicholson left the ship, and on 1st March 1817 married Eliza Streeter at St. Philip's, Sydney by special licence - Witnesses Mary Davis and Dan Macnamara (ships surgeon of "Lord Melville")

Eliza Streeter (a daughter of George and Mary Ann Streeter of London) was a free settler but does not appear on passenger lists on board "Lord Melville" for the trip out but their marriage licence and the 1828 census indicates she and her mother, Mary Ann Streeter were passengers. While waiting for passage to Tahiti, John Nicholson was possibly employed as a gaoler at Parramatta (Marsden mentions previous gaoler a J.N. in a letter of November, 1817).

On 4th September 1817, both sailed for the Bay of Islands, New Zealand and Tahiti aboard the brig, "ACTIVE" - owned by Samuel Marsden and Robert Campbell as Agent. Some records indicate that John Nicholson was Captain of the "ACTIVE" but he was a passenger, the regular Captain being Joseph Thompson. However, John Nicholson could well have been placed in charge of the overall expedition to proceed with further missionaries to Tahiti and commission the vessel "HAWEIS" being built there. The famous missionary John Williams was also on board the "ACTIVE" on his way to the islands for the first time.

"ACTIVE" arrived at Eimeo (now Moorea) Tahiti about 17th November 1817 to find that the brig under construction was not ready for launching. All missionaries and the crew of the "ACTIVE" turned to to complete her and she was launched in December 1817 and named "HAWEIS" (after Rev. Dr. Thomas Haweis, a founder and Director of the London Missionary Society). At the first launching the vessel actually collapsed on the stocks due to the excitement of the natives hauling her into the water. She was jacked up, repaired and successfully launched a few days later. John Nicholson was then left with a small crew to rig the ship and prepare for sea.

John and Eliza Nicholson must have lived ashore at Eimeo (Moorea) for several months at least until the "HAWEIS" was sufficiently fitted out for them to live on board. She was a small brig, - only 73 tons, but the largest built in the islands at that time.

Their first child - John Renton - was born at Eimeo on 7th April, 1818. As well as fitting out the ship, John Nicholson was engaged in surveying suitable harbours for use around the island. The "HAWEIS" underwent trials in mid 1818 and was then employed transferring missionaries and their belongings to other islands in the Society Group. He transported the first permanent missionaries, including John Williams, to Huahina during this time. "HAWEIS" was then engaged in collecting a cargo - mainly of salted pork, and coconut oil for Sydney.

The ship did not leave the Society Islands until late in the year 1818 - during her return passage to Port Jackson, John Nicholson discovered two important reefs in mid Pacific. The first of these is now referred to as Beveridge Reef rather than Nicholson Reef but Capt. Beveridge of the "KING GEORGE" did not 'discover' it until some months after the "HAWEIS" had passed that way. The second discovery was the now well-known Minerva Reefs south of Tonga. They were known as Nicholson's Shoals for some years until the whaler, "MINERVA" was wrecked on them about 1829. "HAWEIS" arrived at Port Jackson about 18th January 1819 with her cargo of pork. She was heavily damaged by a storm in the Tasman Sea, - much to Marsden's annoyance - latter was also upset that John Nicholson had enlisted some 6 Tahitians in the crew. He only had about 3 Europeans anyway.

After repairs "HAWEIS" sailed again for the islands about 1st May calling at Norfolk Island for coffee plants (to be transplanted in Tahiti) and at the Bay of Islands as well. She returned from Tahiti on 30th October 1819. It is not known if Eliza and John (Junior) accompanied John Nicholson on the second voyage, but on 24th Nov., 1819 William Henry Nicholson was born at Port Jackson.

Before the third voyage began, John Nicholson gave evidence before a Commissioner J.T. Bigge concerning maritime matters and Pacific Island trade.

"HAWEIS" sailed for Bay of Islands, N.Z., and Eimeo in February 1820 and returned from that voyage on 26th September 1820. This was John Nicholson's final voyage in her.

At Bigge's suggestion Governor Macquarie appointed John Nicholson Master Attendant and Harbour Master Port Jackson in January 1821 with effect from 1.2.1821 and he held this post until his retirement on 1.2.1842.

In the latter part of 1821 John Nicholson accompanied Governor Macquarie on a visit to the convict settlement formed earlier that year, at Port Macquarie. The Governor was on a farewell tour before handing over to Sir Thomas Brisbane, but John Nicholson's task was to salvage the brig, "LADY NELSON" which had been wrecked on the bar of the Hastings River at Port Macquarie. He succeeded in refloating the ship and for this he received Macquarie's thanks and an initial grant of 700 acres of land at Sutton Forest (Newbury). He also saved the ship "MIDAS" with Governor Macquarie on board from being driven ashore near Middle Head on another occasion.

In 1826 the first unsuccessful attempt was made to colonise New Zealand (in the Cook Strait area) the only other Europeans to date being missionaries, whalers, and traders in the north and south of New Zealand. The expedition consisted of the "ROSANNA" (Capt. Herd) and the "LAMBTON" (Capt. T. Barnett). Although it was a failure, both Captains surveyed the Harbour there, the entrance of which had been sighted by Captain Cook, but never entered or named. For some unknown reason Herd and Barnett called the Harbour Port Nicholson and when they finally got to Sydney in 1827 the latter drew up and presented a fair copy of the chart to John Nicholson for transmission to the Admiralty.

Had John Nicholson been to Port Nicholson before 1826? If so, there is no record of this or any other European having done so, except a claim by whaling captain, George Thoms. Perhaps, having read Cook's journals, John Nicholson was aware of the unexplored harbour and suggested it for the first settlement.

(Port Nicholson was finally settled permanently in 1839 and the township became known as Wellington. The former name is now rarely used and even the port is generally called Wellington Harbour).

There are few detailed records of John Nicholson's long term as harbour master, although there were many developments in the port and dockyard during this time. (See "Cadman's Cottage", by J. Selkirk Provis & K.A. Johnson). In the early days he lived in Cambridge Street near the dockyard off Lower George Street, near Circular Quay. Later, about 1826, it is thought that he moved over to Balmain or Cockle Bay (now Darling Harbour) where there is still a Nicholson Street, and a Little Nicholson Street. In the 1830's, he moved to Durham Cottage in the Rocks area, the address being variously described as Bunker's Hill and Dawes Point.

It is noted that most of the Nicholson children were born at Fort Street, Sydney, probably the hospital. In the 1820's, John Nicholson and Captain John Bingle jointly designed the first proposed flag for the colony of New South Wales. Although it was never officially adopted (as far as I can ascertain) it embodied stars and was very similar to part of the present New South Wales flag. I believe he also was an organiser of early regattas on Port Jackson although this would be a natural duty for the Harbour Master.

An additional grant of 500 acres of land at Newbury, Sutton Forest was made by Governor Brisbane to John Nicholson. How often he got up to his property while he was Harbour Master is not known. It must have been a long and arduous journey in those days, - 85 miles. Later, it is understood he was granted 640 acres for each of his children and this may account for property at Ditterley and the Upper Shoalhaven and in the Monaro. Besides Balmain and Durham Cottage, he possibly owned property at Concord.

Ill health forced his retirement from the post of Master Attendant and Harbour Master in 1842. He had had a long term there anyway and was still on the books of the R.N. as a Master on half pay after his retirement. He was given a presentation by the citizens of Sydney on his departure and appears to have sold most of his Sydney property then.

Little is known of his later life except that for fifteen years he was Coroner of the Berrima District Court and for twenty years served as a Magistrate on the Berrima Bench, at one time being chairman. On retirement, he was given a handsome silver service (photo held but no date). Now is in the possession of his eldest son's eldest married daughter's eldest son.

Both John and Eliza Nicholson are buried in the grounds of All Saint's Church of England, Sutton Forest, N.S.W., he having donated the land (part of Newbury) for church purposes during his lifetime.

A memorial tablet to him in the Church reads:

"Sacred to the Memory of

John Nicholson - RN

of Newbury

who died

On the 9th January 1863

in his 76th year.

'The Hoary Head is a Crown of Glory
If it be found in the way of Righteousness'.

Proverbs XVI - 31"

A brass plaque erected on his grave by local residents reads:

In Memory of

Captain John Nicholson RN.

of Newbury - Sutton Forest

Died 1863

Also his Wife

Eliza

Died 1865
