

LADY MACNAGHTEN

By Ken McNaughton

Letitia Dunkin (1769-1852) married Francis Macnaghten (1763-1843) who was knighted and became Chief of the Macnaghtan Clan in 1832. Lady Macnaghten had a ship named after her that carried convicts and emigrants to Australia (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. *Lady Macnaghten* (Captain William Faith) under reduced sail off the Eddystone Lighthouse (barely visible at left in the distance) oil painting on canvas 1828 by William John Huggins (1781-1841) who served with the East India Company and specialized in ship portraiture (image courtesy of Bonhams Ltd. London).



CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

The crime rate in a marginalized group is often higher than in the general population. As the Rom (Gypsies) migrated across Europe from India they were enslaved for 400 years in Romania. There were limited work opportunities; they continued as horse traders, metal workers, musicians, and fortune-tellers. The problem is the wealth gap. People with plenty of money have no problems with food, housing, education and life's other necessities and luxuries; they have access to power and often are not sympathetic to those who can't afford such things. In the United States wealth gaps and marginalized groups coexist with the largest incarcerated population of any country in the world AND the largest percentage incarcerated population. With 2.3 million people behind bars, the United States leaves far-more-populous China a distant second [1]. One in nine black men aged 20 to 34 is behind bars according to a study on the U.S. by the non-partisan Pew Center.

In Great Britain before the 20th century there were harsh laws for petty crimes and the jails were inadequate. Instead of hanging some poor soul for stealing a loaf of bread, transportation became a popular alternative and a good way to colonize the Americas. About 50,000 convicts were sent to the United States between 1714 and 1775. After the U. S. became independent this was no longer possible but a trade continued in English, Irish and Scottish indentured servants. The latter were thinly disguised slaves who sometimes had their period of indenture extended for a lifetime, were subject to physical abuse and could be sold and hung for trying to escape. Many Americans in the 21st century are descended from these white slaves. It has been estimated that there are now 27 million people enslaved around the world and up to 17,000 trafficked into the U.S. every year [2]. Slavery was practiced in Canada by the aboriginals, the French and the British, but there was not so much need for a large labor force because the economies were based on localized industries like fur and fisheries.

After 1776 Britain started transporting convicts to New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and Norfolk Island. In all, about 160,000 went to Australia—not a large number when compared to the current U.S. convict population of 2.3 million—but a high percentage for a new colony. In the district of Port Phillip where white people started settling in 1835 there was a disproportionate number of gentlemen in the early years and there were no significant convict settlements, although some freed convicts did migrate there. At the end of the 20th century it became fashionable in New South Wales to claim convict ancestry, but not so much in the states of Victoria and South Australia where it was less likely. I traced all my ancestors through the 19th century and did not find one convict, although I did find six Plantagenet kings [3]. But in the United States kings seem to be of less interest than convicts. In order to transport convicts thousands of miles across dangerous oceans it was necessary to have ships. The convicts who first arrived in Australia were mostly men and they provided a useful workforce for the new colony. The 1828 census of New South Wales revealed that there were 27,600 men and 9,000 women. As the need for convict transportation decreased, the need for transporting migrants increased. Subsequent

voyages brought women and families and there was an evolution of how the voyages were conducted. One ship that served the dual purpose in the transition period was the *Lady Macnaghten*.



CHIEFS OF THE CLAN

Some time after the death of the last Scottish chief of Clan Macnachtan [4], who died without issue, a search was made among the descendants of Shane Dhu (“Black John”), who is thought to have migrated to Ireland in 1580. Macnaghten [5] speculates that Shane Dhu may have been a younger son of Chief Gilbert Macnachtan who was living in 1473. Overtures were made to Edmund Macnaghten (1679-1781) of Beardville, which is near Coleraine, Londonderry, just south of the Giant’s Causeway, Antrim, in Northern Ireland. Edmund declined the invitation and the matter was left in abeyance until “on the attestation and at the desire of upwards of 400” of the Macnachtans in Scotland, Edmund’s son, Edmond Alexander (1762-1832), petitioned the Lyon Court, and the Arms of the chief were confirmed to him by decree on 13th January, 1818.

Figure 2. Sir Francis Workman Macnaghten, Bart.
(sketch by J. Kirkwood Sr., Ref. 5).

On the death of Edmond in 1832, the honors were conferred on his brother Francis Workman Macnaghten (Fig. 2), who claimed that Edmond had died unmarried. Francis inherited property from his cousin Caroline Workman on condition he assume the surname and arms of Workman. He had married Letitia Dunkin (Fig. 3) on 6 December 1787 and acquired some of the Dunkin property in Bushmills, County Antrim, two miles south of the Giant’s Causeway, including Bushmills House, which he rebuilt. In 1788 Francis became a barrister-at-law and in 1791 moved to India with his wife and three children. At the end of 1796 he was nominated High Sheriff of Calcutta. In 1803 he returned to Ireland but in 1809 was appointed a judge of the Supreme Court of Judicature at Madras, was knighted and matriculated his arms. In 1815 he was transferred to the Supreme Court of Bengal at Calcutta, a position he held until 1825 when he retired. He was created a baronet in 1836 and died in 1843.

The second oldest son of Francis and Letitia was William Hay Macnaghten (Fig. 4) who went to India after receiving a cadetship in the East India Company in 1809, the same year his father returned to Madras. William served in the bodyguard of the Governor of Madras and gained a reputation as a linguist and an expert in Hindu and Mohammedan law. His mother, Letitia, also must have been quite distinguished because, in 1824, the year before her husband Francis retired from the Supreme Court at Calcutta, work began on building a ship that was launched in 1825—the *Lady Macnaghten*.

LADY MACNAGHTEN

According to Reference 6: “*The Lady Macnaghten was named after Letitia (née Dunkin), wife of Sir Francis Macnaghten, a judge of the Supreme Courts of Madras and Calcutta who was also an Ulster patron of science and discovery. The ship was built at Howrah, near Calcutta, in 1824 during which time when their son, Sir William Hay Macnaghten (1793-1841) served as an Anglo-Indian diplomat with the Bengal Civil Service. Many variations of the spelling of the ship’s name appear in the official documentation, and it has been standardised in this book except in direct quotations. This first class ship of 588 tons was launched on 22 January 1825 with Certificate of Registry No. 20 granted at Calcutta on 6 April 1826. Built of Indian teak, it had a woman figurehead, three masts and was square-sterned. Carvel-built it was 122 ft 7 inches in length, with 6 ft 7 inches between the decks.*”

Figure 3. Lady Letitia Macnaghten [5].

Ten years later, on 23 June 1835, the *Lady Macnaghten* sailed from Dublin to Sydney with 300 convicts. It was not unusual for ships travelling between Great Britain and the Australian colonies in this period to alternate between convict





and emigrant cargoes, but some modifications were required to equip the ships for emigrant passengers. One major refit involved changing the sleeping arrangements. Convicts slept hammock-style whereas emigrants in the steerage compartments slept in purpose-built wooden berths fitted along the sides of the ships. The women and men were strictly segregated, to the extent that families were separated for the voyage. In the case of the *Lady Macnaghten* fifty wooden berths were constructed in the male quarters and 112 in the female quarters. While six of the berths in the female quarters were reserved for a hospital, no such provision was made in the male quarters. Two adults were usually allotted a space 6 ft long by 3 ft wide, but several berths were smaller than this. A wooden bench, approximately 5-1/2 ft wide, ran the length of the sleeping quarters in the space between the bunks; it was here that the emigrants ate their meals in messes of eight.

Figure 4. Sir William Hay Macnaghten, Bart. [5].

Eight cabins were constructed on the poop deck of the *Lady Macnaghten*. Four were state cabins and two were fitted out for eight women emigrants, who paid an additional £5 each. Two were occupied by the master George Hustwick and his wife Ellen. On 5 November 1836, the *Lady Macnaghten* set out from Cork, Ireland, on one of the most disastrous emigrant voyages in the history of assisted emigration to Australia. This was the last of the female emigrant ships administered by the London Emigration Committee for the British government, and carried 80 bounty women to the colony, 32 of whom travelled with at least one parent and it was the first ship to convey family emigrants from Ireland to New South Wales under the new British government regulations instigated by the colonists.

In 1836 the cost of conveying a married couple to Australia colonies was £34; for children between 1 and 7 years the charge was £5; for those between 7 and 15 it was £10; and for non-bounty females above 15 years, the cost was £15 (at the time of writing an Australian pound would equal 1.33 USD). Family emigrants on the *Lady Macnaghten* paid only £4 which was the difference between the cost of their passage and the £30 government bounty allowed to each married couple. The bounty for eligible single women covered the full cost of their fares, granting them free passage. Emigrants still had considerable expenses; they had to outfit themselves and their families for the voyage and get to their destinations.

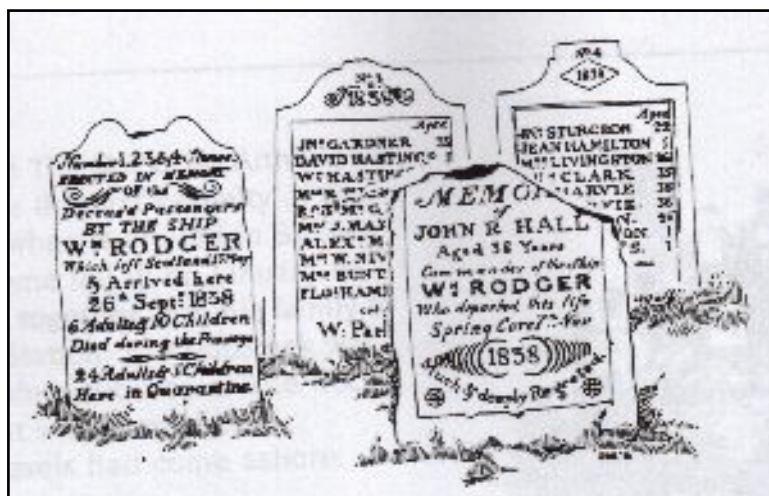
Surgeon-superintendent John Alfred Hawkins, aged just 26, kept a meticulous journal of the voyage until he became too debilitated to continue. When the ship left Cork harbor after several weeks' delay, the scarlet and typhoid fevers that had raged on shore were part of the freight that sailed for Australia on this crowded ship. He spoke of the Irish immigrants' lack of clothing and them being of a class so poor they were likely shortly to become a burden instead of a boon to the colony. Ninety percent were Irish; nearly 10% were from England and Scotland. A quarter of the passengers stated they had a relative already in the colony.

The *Lady Macnaghten*, which departed Ireland with 414 emigrants, also carried a cargo (and provisions)—a superabundance of potatoes. Their quantity was so large that they filled the hold of the ship, leaving little space for anything else, not even the passengers' luggage. In consequence, their belongings were left on deck, making it impossible to clean and scrub the ship as required under health regulations. The subsequent unsanitary conditions triggered the fatal epidemic that prevailed on this ship and resulted in 73 deaths. The migration of families with young children required much more stringent health checks—but these simply were not in place for the departure of the *Lady Macnaghten*. She arrived in Port Jackson (Sydney Harbor) on 26 February 1837 and was immediately directed into quarantine on a point of land above Spring Cove at North Head on Governor Bourke's orders and remained in quarantine until 10 May. Of the 444 passengers and crew, 56 emigrants had perished while 17 others, including the surgeon superintendent, died at the quarantine station. There were 111 children under the age of 7, of whom 49 died; of the 39 children aged 7-14 only 6 died. Eighteen adults died; 11 were female, many the mothers of sick children.

This was the first time that a large number of children had undertaken the long voyage on board an emigrant ship to Australia. One telling comment on the numbers of young children allowed to emigrate was made by Surgeon-Superintendent Hawkins following the death of six-week-old Cornelius Lynch on 24 November 1836. He wrote in

his log that: “it might be worthy [for] the consideration of those interested in collecting passengers for emigration, whether it would not be practicable to select families with children not under 3 years, as below that age the powers of life are scarcely sufficiently strong to enable them to endure with impunity, the change of diet, living and variety of temperatures they are necessarily subjected to.” This suggestion was one which was recommended by the subsequent Inquiry into the voyage of the *Lady Macnaghten*.

Figure 5. Grave stones at Spring Cove quarantine station of people who died in 1838 from the *William Rodger* (image from Ref. 7).



WILLIAM RODGER

Bounty ships gave assisted passage to 4,000 Scots between 1837 and 1840 under the Bounty Scheme of Rev. John Dunmore Lang. Lang was born near Greenock, migrated to Australia in 1823 and became the first Presbyterian minister in the colony. He was also a writer, politician and activist and was the first prominent advocate of an independent Australian nation and of Australian republicanism. He agitated for the end of transportation and for the separation of the Port Philip District (later Victoria) from New South Wales. The bounty ship’s owner was paid per passenger by the government but ultimately Lang’s schemes were not considered successful.

In 1832 T. F. Eliot was appointed to the Colonial Office to promote and extend bounty emigration. In 1834 he appointed Scottish agents at Leith and Greenock to see to the chartering, surveying, and provisioning of ships and helping with the embarkations. In 1836 the Governor of New South Wales appointed Dr. Boyter as Colonial Emigration Agent in Scotland to supervise the selection of candidates. Boyter targeted shepherds, farm laborers, country mechanics and cartwrights. He showed remarkable enthusiasm and energy in the performance of his duties and the success of the large-scale Scottish bounty emigration of 1837-40 owed much to his keenness. By 1837 the system was extended to married couples. James Macarthur, one of the most prominent and influential men in New South Wales, regarded the Scottish bounty emigrants selected in 1837 as a valuable accession to the colony and commended their religious disposition, good sense and orderly habits. He also thought the Scottish Highlanders most likely to furnish the description of families most urgently required in New South Wales.

And so my great great grandfather, John Ross McNaughton, his wife, Agnes and one-year-old daughter Jane sailed out of Greenock on 17 May 1838 aboard the seventh of these bounty vessels, the *William Rodger*, with 296 emigrants [8]. Did the McNaughtons know what had happened to the *Lady Macnaghten*, which had arrived in Port Jackson only fifteen months earlier? Did they know how dangerous it would be for their one-year old daughter Jane? Had conditions been improved? Apparently not. The *William Rodger* stopped only at the Cape of Good Hope and arrived in Port Jackson on 26 September 1838 after more than four months at sea. Riddled with typhus of the most virulent kind, it was directed to quarantine at Spring Cove. On 20 January 1839 the Governor of New South Wales, Sir George Gipps, wrote that the number of deaths in quarantine of the passengers was 26 adults and 18 children [9]. The quarantine station reports that more than 60 passengers died, 29 of them at the station [7].

The son of John Ross McNaughton, my great grandfather John McNaughton, wrote in notes for a speech many years later: “My father and mother, being a hardy Scotch couple, escaped!” Indeed they thrived, and had a total of eleven children. Today, many of their descendants still live in Melbourne, where the family settled. John Ross McNaughton was instrumental in building the West Melbourne Presbyterian Church, became a Justice of the Peace, and was lauded on his death by the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church [10]. Young Jane also survived, thrived and started a dynasty of her own. In 1858 she married a Welsh gold miner, Hugh Charles Hughes and they had four children. He died in 1862 and in 1869 at Ballarat, Jane married another Welshman, John Thomas, who had been widowed in 1867; they also had four children.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Toward the end of 2007 I asked Neville Bergmeier if he would consider giving the book "Quarantined!" [6] to his wife Diane, who is my second cousin, since it had recently become available in Victoria. Diane very kindly transcribed some relevant portions of the book and sent them to me in 2008 and I am grateful to them both. For Figures 2-4 I am indebted to Angus Derek Iain Jacques Macnaghten with whom I enjoyed some correspondence in 1965. Angus was a great grandson of Sir Francis Macnaghten and wrote some valuable books about the Macnachtan Clan.

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