

## JOHN GOWEN

John Gowen (GG grandfather of Judy Pepper and Barbara Turner) was born in 1763 in England. According to his service record, he enlisted in the Marines in 1778. Nine years later, on 13<sup>th</sup> May 1787, he sailed from Portsmouth on aboard the flagship “*Sirius*” as a Corporal of Marines. After eight long months, covering over fifteen thousand miles, he arrived with the rest of the First Fleet in Sydney Cove. He was then twenty five years old.

The First Fleeters viewed the Colony and its progress with a sense of achievement, bearing in mind that when they had landed, there had been nothing, except a beautiful harbour. On shore all they could see was a heavily wooded forest, still in its virgin state. Using axes and saws, they had to cut and clear a section of this land to make room for a campsite, drag away fallen timber by hand and level the ground as much as possible for the tents to be erected.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1788 John sailed to Norfolk Island as a Corporal of a Marine Detachment with Lt Gidley King, along with a surgeon, 9 soldiers and 15 convicts to commence a settlement there. He stayed on Norfolk Is until 1792 when he departed for Sydney Cove and resigned from the Marines. He must have liked Norfolk Island as he returned the following year and was given a land grant of 60 acres on the Cascade Stream at Phillipsburg Town. How John liked Norfolk Is the second time around would be hard to judge as at that time unrest reigned and he returned to Sydney.

On his return from Norfolk Is to Sydney Town during November 1794 he joined the NSW Corps (the Rum Corps) or 102<sup>nd</sup> Regt with the rank of Sergeant, where he served for 5 years. During 1799 he resigned from the Army and was offered the position of Government Storekeeper with effect from Jan 1 1800 in Sydney. The Government Storekeeper of those days was a position of trust and ability. The Store controlled all kinds of supplies, which were needed to get the fledgling colony under way.

The Sydney Government Store was located near the waterfront as most supplies came by ship and the location of the store was said to be in the Rocks area.

Thirteen years had lapsed since the arrival of the First Fleet and the Colony had undergone tremendous changes. Many convicts who had arrived with the First Fleet had served their sentence and were free. One of these was Thomas Acres, who had sailed on the ‘*Charlotte*’ and who was in Sydney Town at the same time as John Gowen. Thomas had married and had a daughter Sophia, born in Sydney in 1795. Sophia was to play a major role in the future generations of the Gowen Clan. Sadly neither John Gowen nor Thomas Acres would live to see this event take place.

Governor Philip Gidley King took over as Governor of the Colony from Governor Hunter in September 1800. He was well known to John Gowen having served with him on the 'Sirius' when King was a Second Lt. They had also served together on Norfolk Is.

The 'Earl of Cornwallis', a convict transport arrived in Sydney Harbour in 1801 with a young convict girl aboard, Ordery Appleyard. Ordery was born in 1778 in England. At the age of 20 she was charged and convicted at Lincoln quarter sessions on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1798; she was sentenced to 7 years transportation on a charge which we cannot find evidence of whether it was committed or not. Happy though she was to be at last standing once again in 'terra firma' she would be very apprehensive as to what lay in store for her in this new land. It was here she was expected to serve her term of seven years. She was 22 years old, single, a convict, no friends, no family. In 1801 the population had increased from one thousand and thirty to six thousand persons, 1000 head of cattle 200 horses, 6000 sheep and 4000 pigs. Somewhere between 1801 and 1804 John Gowen and Ordery Appleyard became acquainted. This friendship led to marriage and on the 1<sup>st</sup> June 1805 at St Phillips Church, Sydney they were married. John was 42 years and Ordery 27 years. After their wedding John and Ordery set up house in Sydney Town. They lived on the corner of O'Connell St. A year later their first child, a daughter Mary was born in 1806, a first generation Australian for the Gowen Clan. A second daughter, Ann was born in 1807.

Governor Bligh succeeded King as Governor and the 'stormy period' began in NSW history, climaxing in 1808. Up to this date John had served under four Governors, Phillip, Hunter, King and now Bligh. It must be remembered that John Gowen had not only watched the Colony grow from nothing but had contributed greatly to its growth. Without judging who was in the wrong it would seem that many members of the colony found Governor Bligh's leadership difficult to cope with, this included John Gowen. John's name is recorded as one of the signatories in support of the mutiny and the arrest of Governor Bligh.

In 1810 Governor Macquarie arrived to take over the governing of the Colony. Under Macquarie's leadership Australia started to settle down again, trade was revived, export of our wool was commenced, road-making began in earnest, bridges were constructed, new buildings were built with the use of sandstone from quarries at a nearby site of present day Paddington Hill and the old shabby lean-to type dwellings were demolished to make way for more substantial homes.

John and Ordery were once again blessed with a child, this time a son, John born in 1810, my Great grandfather.

Since John Gowen Senior had become Government Storekeeper in 1800, he had requested and received several grants of land in Sydney as well as near Parramatta and Liverpool.

12<sup>th</sup> March 1800 he was granted 200 acres at Liberty Plains by Governor Hunter;

1<sup>st</sup> January 1806, 100 acres near Bankstown and 100 acres each situated on the north bank and the south bank of Prospect Creek (this one is now the site of the Carramar railway station and these grants were granted by Governor Hunter. John also received the lease of a parcel of land, 31 roods in size in Sydney Town for a 14 year lease.

8<sup>th</sup> August 1809, John received 208 acres at Minto and 208 acres at Petersham Hill although the last was surrendered back to the Government in 1810.

Prior to 1810, John had submitted a request seeking permission to resign from his position as Storekeeper at Sydney and to take up his land at Liverpool. At the time of this request John stated that he had been in the settlement for 22 years. He wanted to retire to his farm with his wife and three children.

By 1810 the population of the colony had grown to 10,454 and included 1200 free settlers. Residents in Liverpool Town were individuals who were destined to make a lasting contribution to the history of Australia and amongst these was John, now the Government Storekeeper at Liverpool. He now lived at the corner of Elizabeth and George Streets, Liverpool. John's residence and farm were situated within walking distance from the Government Storehouse. His place of work was situated near the Georges River and a nearby wharf was the centre where barges and small watercraft called alongside to unload stores and supplies from Sydney to be sorted out and recorded by John, assisted by his assigned convicts and then deposited within the storehouse. It would have been a change of pace for John and Ordery after the hustle of life in Sydney Town with its never ending arrivals of transport ships bringing not only new convicts but also new settlers, delivering stores, assembling convicts who were then sorted, inspected by landholders and gentry and assigned to a place of work whether a farm or barracks or a campsite along a track in the bush. Building was now in great swing, roads were shaped all over the area, new highways were being explored outside townships into the countryside, and mail coaches ran from the Town to Parramatta and Liverpool and even further outlying communities.

In 1813 another daughter, Frances was born, John was 50 years old. The Sydney Gazette of March 1815 noted that John Gowen was the Government Storekeeper at Liverpool which by now had grown rapidly for it was located on the crossroads leading towards Camden, Airds, Campbelltown and Appin. In 1816 another daughter Elizabeth was born, so John and Ordery now had 4 daughters and one son. Ordery Gowen died of cancer at Liverpool in 1819 aged 41 years. She had been married for 14 years. She lies at rest in the Pioneer Memorial Cemetery at Liverpool. Ordery was one of the many unsung heroines of the early days of Australian History, never making the headlines, just quietly going about their every day duties, in a land that was still in its infancy...just one of the 'quiet pioneers'.

At the time of her mother's death Mary, the eldest, was 13 and the youngest Elizabeth, 3 years old. Mary married in 1821 at the age of 15 years and 3 months to Sergeant William Jones of the 48<sup>th</sup> Regiment. A few months after the marriage

of Mary, John Gowen married for the second time, to Mary Wood, Mary was 47 and John 58 years old. Although they had no children themselves Mary had an instant family of four.

John was still wishing to retire and petitioned to the Governor with references from Rev Samuel Marsden, the Senior Chaplain in the Colony and he states: *'has known John Gowen for nearly 30 years in every situation he has held under the crown and that his conduct has been that of an honest, faithful servant to the public and merits any indulgence he may receive...'*

John McArthur was also most generous in his praise about John. He wrote: *"the memorialist has been known to me upwards of 32 years. At the commencement of that period as a Non Commissioned Officer in the marines and later in the NSW Corps, and since his discharge from the Army, as a Storekeeper in His Majesty's Stores. In both conditions of Life I have always considered him an honest and deserving character..."*

After such noteworthy references and after consideration of the very great length of public service he was allowed to retire on a Colonial pension of two thirds of his present pay.

John Gowen retired late 1822/early 1823 at long last after 40 years in the service of this country, now aged 60 he could enjoy the pleasure of a relaxed and peaceful life. In 1824 John's second daughter Ann married George Taber and in 1825 a daughter was born, grand daughter for John. In 1827 John's second wife Mary died. John Jnr, my great grandfather was then 18 years old. In 1829 wedding bells were ringing once more in the Gowen household, and this time it was for Frances who married William Sutherland, a Minister of Religion. It was expected that he would be moved to an area where there was a need for his services in far away districts along the south coast. Later we find that they settled in Braidwood where they stayed until their deaths.

John Gowen Snr, now 65 was still living in Liverpool with his youngest daughter Elizabeth aged 13 and his son John aged 19. In 1830 the population was still on the increase and convicts were still arriving in great numbers. However moves were afoot to put a stop to this and instead promote the influx of immigrants. Of course not all inhabitants of the new colony were in favour of this as many landholders saw their cheap or free convict labour come to an end. Also they were anxious that these new immigrants would take up land they had considered theirs by right of occupancy – even if that land was not granted to them. In other words they were afraid squatters would take over their territory.

Since John Gowen came to the colony so much progress had been made – new areas had been discovered and settled upon, newspapers were now being printed. The Sydney Gazette became a daily in 1827. Cattle and sheep had been driven inland across mountains and rivers, explorers were looking for new territories further inland towards outback NSW, not only inland but also overland

they went – they travelled towards the present day borders of Queensland, Victoria and South Australia.

Hospitals and schools were erected, country areas were being populated and built on, small townships were created along the main roads and bridle tracks - all this in just 40 years from 1788 to 1831. None of this was accomplished easily and much hardship was experienced by the explorers and settlers alike. There were dreadful tragedies such as floods, droughts, bushfires and awful windstorms. During 1827 – 28 a terrible drought caused much distress and financial loss to many.

Governor Bourke came to the colony in 1831 and served until 1837. He was the last Governor that John Gowen would know and he had served under a few already – namely Phillip, Hunter, King, Bligh, Macquarie, Brisbane, Darling and now Bourke.

Scores of free settlers had been arriving as well as convicts. John Gowen was now considered to be an old established pioneer – in 1837 he had been here approximately 49 years and in his 74<sup>th</sup> year. Life was a challenge to John and he accepted it as such. On 28<sup>th</sup> April 1837 he died, but it was not at Liverpool in his home, but down south in the Kiama area. He was buried in the grounds of Christ Church of England overlooking the beautiful Pacific Ocean, a place of peace and beauty on the Australian coastline which John had grown to love.

John had just finalised the purchase of land at Bong Bong and the fact that he was at Kiama when he died leaves a lot of questions unanswered. He was not a young man and to make a journey to Kiama at that age and with the mode of transport available would have been a challenge for any man. If he did in fact make the trip by ship the type of vessel he sailed in and how close to Kiama it came would still mean a man of seventy four years was not lacking in courage and determination.

It doesn't matter how John came to be at Kiama, it will always remain a family mystery and seems to be a perfect place for John to be buried. Kiama with the sparkling blue ocean and beautiful green mountains is a place to be happy in and also a place of peace – a fitting place for John Gowen one of the first Pioneers of Australia sharing the distinction of being one of the Free First Fleeters.

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Reference: "A Story of a Free First Fleeter" by Patricia Vandyke