

## Matthew Everingham

The Everingham descendants are very fortunate to have 3 particular books about Matthew, extensively researched and written by Valerie Ross; *“Matthew Everingham – A First Fleeter and his Times”*, *“A Hawkesbury Story”* and *“The Everingham Letterbook”*.

Matthew was thought to have been born in Yorkshire about 1769. By legend, he is thought to be the son of Earl William Everingham and Lady Alice, but birth records have never been positively authenticated.

Again there have been no records found of his schooling. (See P16 Book 1 re education at *“Blue Coat School”*.) Prior to his conviction, Matthew had been an attorney’s copy clerk (which suggests that he had a reasonable upbringing and education with no previous convictions). Due to a lack of work, he had lost his job and was desperate for money to survive and pay his rent. At his trial in 1784 (age 15) at the Old Bailey, he was “castigated as a profligate (*utterly and shamelessly immoral*) person for obtaining (and selling two law) books worth 10/-, under false pretences”. Matthew was sentenced to 7 years transportation to America even though Transportation to America had been suspended 8 years earlier (in 1776) due to the War of American Independence.

After his sentencing, he was held for 3 months in Newgate Prison before being “delivered” to the prison hulk ‘Censor’ on the Thames at Woolwich where he existed for the next 3 years. Accommodation on hulks was extremely cramped, with a space of only 6 feet long by 20 inches wide per person. Food was very poor and very little. Prisoners were employed to clear the river bank area and build new docks. One in three died of typhoid, dysentery, scurvy or VD. When a prisoner’s own clothes wore out, the hulk owner issued rough clothing to the prisoner who wore the garment “until it almost dropped off and the owner resembled a scarecrow”.

Finally 208 male convicts (no females) left Portsmouth on board the “Scarborough” on 13<sup>th</sup> May 1787, bound for Botany Bay, after being held on board for 10 weeks. They arrived at BB on 19<sup>th</sup> January 1788. Matt was part of a shore party from the Scarborough sent ashore at Sydney Cove on 27<sup>th</sup> January to clear land and trees for the erection of tents. He had a little over 3 years of his sentence to serve after arriving in Australia.

At Sydney Cove he was possibly employed as a clerk to the Assistant Commissary, Zachariah Clark. He also did work with a boat builder on the first boat to be built in Australia, called “The Rose Hill Packet”, otherwise known as ‘The Lump’, and worked on the Government farm at Rose Hill (Parramatta).

Three months before he became “free by servitude” in 1791, Matt married Elizabeth Rimes (Rymes) (2<sup>nd</sup> Fleet 1790 – *‘Neptune’*).

Elizabeth was 5 years younger than Matthew, born (1774) in the London slums. At age 15 she was convicted (1789) at the Old Bailey of thieving a sheet and a blanket (worth 7/-) to get money for rent. She was sentenced to 7 years transportation and sent on board the 'Hell Ship' "Neptune", which was reported to be the "worst ship in the worst fleet".

Also on this ship were convicts Molly Morgan (of Maitland fame) and Catherine Crowley, mother of William Charles Wentworth.

As a comparison, when the First Fleet arrived there had been no deaths among the 208 male convicts on the 'Scarborough'. When it arrived in 1790 with the Second Fleet, there had been 73 deaths on that ship alone, out of 261 convicts. A further 96 were landed sick, lean and emaciated. Convicts had not been allowed out on deck during the long passage from England as on the previous voyage. On this voyage, the ships' masters were paid for the number of convicts departing from England, not by the number delivered to Botany Bay.

The Court Convictions of the convicts had been left behind in England when the First Fleet sailed 1787 and did not arrive in the colony until 1790. Gov. Phillip did not know sentence expiry dates until that time.

Many convicts opted to return to England when their sentences expired. They had to work their passage and when home, try to find almost non-existent work. Many no doubt returned to a life of crime. Matthew opted to remain in the colony.

After his release (1791) Matthew was granted 50 acres of land at "The Ponds at Rydalmere", about 3km east of Parramatta, where he and Elizabeth struggled on for the next 12 years. Governor Phillip returned to England ill, in 1792, leaving the colony in the hands of the NSW Corps (the "Rum Corps").

A few months after Matt took up his land grant, (December 1791), Captain Watkin Tench visited the settlers and inspected the properties at The Ponds. As part of his report he began by stating the terms under which land was held.

*' ... The estates shall be fully ceded for ever to all who shall continue to cultivate for five years, or more ... they shall be free of all taxes for the first ten years; but after that period to pay an annual quit-rent of one shilling. The penalty for non-performance of any of these articles is forfeiture of the estate, and all labour which may have been bestowed upon it. These people are to receive provisions, (the same quantity as the working convicts) clothes, and medical assistance, for eighteen months from the day on which they settled. To clear and cultivate the land, a hatchet, a tomahawk, two hoes, a spade and a shovel are given to each person, whether man or woman; a certain number of cross-cut saws among the whole. To stock their farms, two sow pigs were promised to each settler; but they almost all say they have not yet received any, of which they complain loudly. They all received grain to sow and plant for the first year. They settled here in July and August last. Most of them were obliged to build their own houses; and wretched hovels three fourths of them are. Should any of them fall sick, the rest are bound to assist the sick person two days a month, provided the sickness*

*lasts not longer than two months; four days labour in each year, for every person being all that he is entitled to ...' [Matthew Everingham –A First Fleeter and his Times (Valery Ross) page 70]*

Matthew and Elizabeth's first child, Mary Everingham, was born in December 1791 and tragically died a month later, being one of 33 children who died in the Parramatta area in that same month, from a sudden unknown illness that killed them within 24 hours.

Over the next 12 years M & E had 5 more children.

The land around The Ponds was subject to sudden attacks by the hostile Parramatta natives and from swift plunder and pillage by escaped convicts. The little homes on adjoining properties were separated by thick bush making fast contact with a neighbour difficult so the settlers were therefore issued with muskets to provide them some protection.

Further information in Tench's report (early 1792) indicated that Matthew was finding farming very difficult. With very dry weather and a grub that destroyed the young maize plants, farmers in the area were obliged to plant up to three times in a season to get a crop. Despite this, Matt had managed to clear and cultivate 2 acres in the first 6 months, which was better than the average.

During the period known as "the hungry years" (from 1792 onwards), when food supplies grown in the Colony were just improving sufficiently to sustain the existing population, another fleet of convicts would arrive without adequate stores or clothing and rationing would again be introduced. Many workers were to be seen in the fields working naked.

Within 18 months (by the end of 1792) Matthew had 7 acres under cultivation, with the help of an assigned convict servant. But he faced many hardships over the next 10 years. The settlers endured winter frosts, severe bushfires (temps up to 114°F or 46°C), native attacks on the crops, grub plagues, snakes and marauding convicts (heading for China which was rumoured to be just north of the Hawkesbury). Also there was a lack of available convict labour, and the government was demanding that farmers provide their own labour or a man for three 8-hour days each week to build a road from Parramatta to the Hawkesbury (Green Hills, later changed to Windsor).

In October/November 1795 Matthew, with two other settlers (William Reed and John Ramsay) attempted to find a route across the Blue Mountains. They sighted two "chasms", supposing that the Hawkesbury flowed through one and through the other, a stream they called the Macarthur River, (now called BOWENS CREEK) which they reasoned flowed into Port Stephens. They reached a point where they could see good country to the west but did not proceed any further as food supplies were running short. In fact, by the time they reached Parramatta, they had been without food for three days and Matthew's shoes had worn out.

That, he said, was worse than the lack of food. They had started out each carrying a knap-sack with 40lbs of supplies, plus ropes, other equipment and a gun. Their hope of returning for a further attempt never eventuated. To help prevent the escape of convicts, the Government did not publicise the possibility of land to the west and discouraged exploration.

Working from Matthew's description of their journey, local experts have determined that they reached either Mt. Wilson, Mt. Tomah or Mt. Irvine. In any case, they were not more than one day's trek from crossing the Blue Mountains when they turned back. This was 18 years before Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth finally made their crossing in 1813. This journey is described in one of several letters that have survived, from Matthew to his mentor Samuel Shepherd, the man he defrauded and that resulted in Matthew's conviction and transportation. (*"The Everingham Letterbook"*.)

They moved to the Hawkesbury (Sackville Reach or Portland Head) onto a new 50 acre grant in 1803. In 1804 his homestead and out-buildings, including their storage shed, were burnt down by aborigines and Matthew and Elizabeth and servant (Larry) were speared (but fortunately, not seriously).

Over the next couple of years (1804-5), similar attacks and murders were carried out by the aborigines, on the ever-expanding settlers and their properties. The natives were being squeezed out of their fishing and hunting grounds, despite promises from Governor King, so were retaliating.

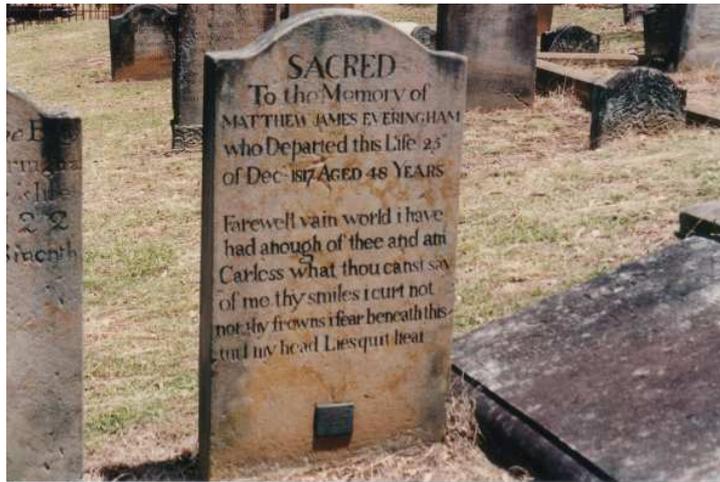
In the 1806 flood, the river rose 45' (15m) and covered a huge area along the Hawkesbury. Over 200 wheat stacks and countless stock and crops were washed away. One man who took refuge on a stack of mowed barley was washed 7 miles downstream before being rescued. Others clung to roof tops and trees waiting to be rescued.

For the next 10 years (from 1806 to 1816) they appear to have lived quite well although they still had serious financial difficulties and even gave up farming for a period of time, being involved in a brewery in Windsor.

By 1814 Elizabeth had delivered 10 children. All but the first survived to adulthood.

In 1816 Matt acquired 180 acres at Richmond Hill (Kurrajong) but this property was farmed by his son William.

During 1817 Matthew was appointed a District Constable. On Christmas Day 1817 he drowned in the Hawkesbury while on duty. (Age 48) He was buried at St. John's Church, Wilberforce.



In 1827, 10 years after Matthew's death, Elizabeth obtained permission from the Governor to re-marry (as required by Law) at the age of 53. Her new husband (Patrick McGahy) was age 25.

She outlived Matthew by 24 years and was buried at Sackville Reach. At the time of her death (age 67), she had 58 grandchildren. There were ultimately 85 grandchildren.

Further floods were even higher than in 1806 – in 1867 the river rose 63' (almost 19m), inundating later Everingham properties. Around this time, many of the grandchildren of Matthew 1<sup>st</sup> saw no future on the Hawkesbury and headed north to the Clarence and Richmond rivers.

Five days prior to the June 1867 flood, two of Matthew's grandsons, George (18 year old son of Matthew 3<sup>rd</sup>, with his 14 year old brother Abel and a friend Henry Turnbull, set out overland with the family's stock to move them north. They travelled up the Great North Road to Singleton, on to Armidale and down the mountain to Grafton. Their father, with the rest of the family, travelled by steamer to the Clarence River. The boys struck severe drought along the Northern Tablelands route. Although bushrangers were numerous at that time (Thunderbolt's heyday), they were fortunate not to be molested during the journey.

Their uncle, George Everingham (Matthew & Elizabeth's 5<sup>th</sup> child) and his wife Keturah (Kitty), nee Stubbs, had also moved to the Clarence following the 1867 flood. George is said to have been the first Australian born Local Preacher of the Wesleyan missionary movement. He was also a farmer. As a preacher for nearly 30 years on the Hawkesbury, he either walked or rowed (never on horseback) to his Sunday appointments from Sackville, south to Windsor and north, further than Wisemans Ferry. He was never known to miss an appointment or to be late. There were 6 or 7 appointments each quarter, sometimes twice a day, as well as Quarterly meetings, local preacher meetings and bible study groups. Kitty gave birth to their last (11<sup>th</sup>) child when she was 46.

Josiah, (George's son and 8<sup>th</sup> child) moved to the Clarence with the rest of the family in 1867. He returned to Sackville to marry Martha Turnbull 1868, before they settled at Ulmarra near Grafton. They later moved further north to Coraki on the Richmond River. Josiah spent some time around the NSW goldfields, leaving the family at home on their Coraki farm.

Between 1929 and 1933 many Everingham family members, joined what became known as "The Millions Club". Rumours had been circulating from early in the twentieth century about the existence of money and estates awaiting claim by the Everingham family in Australia.

A descendant by the name of Alfred Darcy offered to travel to England on behalf of the Everingham family to track down the millions of pounds of family inheritance supposedly owed to her great grandfather Matthew Everingham and reportedly held in the English Chancery. (As the Great Depression took effect, rumours varied between 11 and 33 million pounds).

All Darcy asked for was a "small" donation from family members to finance the voyage so he could begin his search. However, no fortune was ever found!! It is a certainty that the millions never existed.

A photocopy of the signatories of the hundreds of family members who participated in the scheme reveals that Darcy did very well financially and probably had a great old time (along with his family) in Britain.

## **Significant Dates for Matthew and Elizabeth Everingham**

C. 1769	Matthew Everingham born.
C. 1774	Elizabeth Rimes (Rymes) born.
1784	Matthew tried at London's Old Bailey and sentenced to 7 years transportation to America (age 15) and spent the next 3 years on a hulk on the Thames.
13 May 1787	Departed Portsmouth on board 'Scarborough' bound for Botany Bay.
19 Jan 1788	First Fleet arrived Botany Bay.
27 Jan 1788	Matthew sent ashore with a working detail of convicts from the Scarborough, at Sydney Cove to clear trees and land to erect tents for the colonists. Over the next 3 years Matt worked at various tasks including overseer at the boat-yard where the first Australian-built boat the "Rose Hill Packet" ("The Lump") was constructed and at the Rose Hill government farm.
Dec 1789	Elizabeth tried at Old Bailey and sentenced to 7 years transportation (age 15 or 16).
June 1790	Elizabeth arrived at Sydney Cove aboard 'Neptune' (2 <sup>nd</sup> Fleet).
1791	Matt was overseer of pit sawers and "women at their needle" at Rose Hill farm for 6 months after the supervisor died.
13 Mar 1791	Matthew (22) married Elizabeth (18) at Parramatta.
June 1791	Matthew's sentence expired – granted 50 acres at The Ponds.
Dec1791/Jan 92	First child, Mary Everingham, born / died. Over the next 12 years at The Ponds, they had another 5 children.
1792	Gov. Arthur Phillip returned to England in poor health. NSW Corp, and ultimately John Macarthur, left in charge. The years of the Rum Corp. 'The hungry years'.
Nov 1795	Matthew and friends (Reed and Ramsay) attempted crossing of the Blue Mountains (apparently turned back one day short of their goal) due to shortage of food. 18 years before Blaxland, Lawson & Wentworth's successful crossing.

- 1803 Moved to a 50 acre farm at Sackville Reach on the Hawkesbury.
- 1804 Everingham's homestead and out-buildings burnt down by aborigines. Matthew, his wife and servant were speared (but not fatally). By 1814 they had 10 children.
- 1806 Hawkesbury flood 45' (15m)
- 1811 Moved to Red House Farm opposite Green Hills (Windsor) and leased. Sackville farm advertised for sale.
- 1813 – 1816 Severe droughts and floods caused great financial difficulties for the Everingham families along the Hawkesbury.
- 1816 Matthew acquired 180 acres at Richmond Hill (Kurrajong) - probably farmed by son William.
- 1817 Matthew and Elizabeth moved back to Portland Head (near Sackville Reach) to a property that became known as 'Elizabeth Everingham Farm'. Matthew appointed a District Constable at Portland Head.
- 25 Dec 1817 Matt drowned in the Hawkesbury whilst on duty. Buried at Wilberforce (now St John's Church yard). Elizabeth remained on the farm for a further 20 years.
- 1838 Sold farm to son George. Elizabeth (now married to Patrick McGahy since 1837), moved into Windsor.
- 1841 Elizabeth died (age 67), leaving 58 grandchildren. Buried at Sackville Reach.
- 1924-1933 Search for the "Everingham Millions".