

## Chapter 18 - Affairs of Consequence

(1847 – 1849)



Sometime during 1847 David became closely involved with Harriet D' Arcy, a resident of Pitt Town – Certainly in the spring of 1847. Harriet was recently widowed with several young children. It has been suggested that Harriet was the lady 'who did for him', that is, kept house for David in Pitt Town, and that a period of constant nearness got the better of them. Whether it was such propinquity, courtship, or a brief encounter, is uncertain. Whatever the circumstances, the consequences of their intimate association at the end of October 1847, had a major impact on David and his family!

Harriet D' Arcy was then in her 30<sup>th</sup> year, and she had been a former convict. She was the daughter of John Davies and Esther Goff, was born in Grovesend, Gloucestershire in late 1813. Harriet was twenty-one years old when she arrived in the colony as a convict on the ship 'Numa' on 13 June 1834. Harriet had been convicted of 'receiving stolen money' at the Gloucester Assizes on 10 August 1833, and was sentenced to 14 years. At the time, Harriet was described as single, a Protestant, and with no education. Her trade or calling was "Dairymaid - allwork country". Harriet's complexion was fair, ruddy and freckled, brown hair, brown eyes, and height 5ft 4 ½". She had a large scar on the back of her left wrist, and a scar on the back of her left thumb.<sup>619</sup>

The Sydney Morning Herald of Monday, 16 June 1834 read:

<i>"From London, same day, having sailed from thence, the 29<sup>th</sup> of January, the Barque "Numa" Captain Baker, with 138 female convicts, and</i>	<i>24children under the Superintendence of Dr. Bromley, R.N. Imports – June 14, Numa – (Ship) 323 tons, Baker, Master, from London, Dawes, Gore</i>	<i>and Co. Agents. Female prisoners, 18 tons Gunpowder and other Govt. Stores."</i> <sup>620</sup>
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Harriet Davis was married firstly, at the age of 22 years, to Thomas Taylor aged thirty, in the parish of Lower Hawkesbury, "with the consent of His Excellency the Governor" on 18 April 1835 by Thomas Sharpe, Chaplain. Harriet and Thomas signed the register with their mark.<sup>621</sup> The witnesses were W. Fenton and David Evans.

There was a Thomas Taylor who had been granted land at Pitt Town on 1 January 1827. This comprised 60 acres and 110 acres bounded on the north by the Hawkesbury, and adjacent to a Mr. Fleming on the east, and Mr. Booth on the west.<sup>622</sup>

<sup>619</sup> Index to Convicts, AONSW fiche No 711, p173.

<sup>620</sup> "From Armagh to Parkes" by Barry L Campbell, page 46.

<sup>621</sup> (AONSW COD12 p.220, Reel 5004 p215).

<sup>622</sup> Sydney Herald, Monday, 3 October 1831.

However, the most likely contender is Thomas Taylor (1805 - ?) arrived in Sydney Cove on 26 November 1826 per the ship 'Speke'. He is not likely to have been granted land as promptly as indicated above. This Thomas Taylor was twenty-one years old and was a native of Newcastle. His age is consistent with that given for marriage to Harriet. Thomas' trade is given as 'Farmers Man and Horse Breaker'. He had been tried at Gloucester Assizes on 29 March 1826 for horse stealing and had been sentenced to be transported for life. Thomas was 5 foot 9 inches tall, pale and freckled, dark brown hair, and hazel eyes. He could also be identified by a tattoo 'TT & MT' on his left arm, and large scar on his left leg.<sup>623</sup>

Harriet and Thomas Taylor had at least one child: Thomas G. (1836 –1883).<sup>624</sup>

The marriage was short lived, presumably because of Thomas dying in 1836-7, i.e. soon after the birth of Thomas junior in 1836?

The second marriage for Harriet<sup>625</sup> (of Wiseman's Ferry?) was to Thomas D'Arcy of Ten Mile Hollow at Lower Hawkesbury on 24 October 1837. Witnesses were George and Eliza Shirley. Typical of the time, Harriet with a young child to care for, of necessity, most probably married within a few months of Thomas Taylor's death. Application for the marriage was made on 29 May 1837<sup>626</sup> - Thomas Darcy was a convict from Dublin and thirty years of age. His trade or calling was 'Indoor Servant'<sup>627</sup>, and he was described as having a 'pale, freckled' complexion, brown hair, grey eyes, and being 5ft 2" in height, and in the 'Remarks' column: 'Indifferent'.<sup>628</sup>

Thomas D'Arcy arrived in Sydney on the Convict Transport ship 'Hooghley' on Saturday, 23 April 1825.<sup>629</sup> He was tried in his native place of Dublin on 16 June 1824. Thomas was sentenced to seven years for street robbery,<sup>630</sup> but had another three years added on 16 June 1828 by the 'Sydney Branch for Burglary'. Thomas became a licensed victualler at Pitt Town, possibly the only one, and one of several publicans of the village. He had been a convict, as was Harriet. Thomas is likely to have provided supplies to David Brown over the years at Pitt Town and the early years at Jerry's Plains. It was probably that connection that led to David's introduction to Harriet.

Thomas D'Arcy died on 13 July 1846<sup>631</sup> and his will was probated on 16 December 1846. Harriet had had three children by Thomas Darcy: Thomas junior (1837- ), Daniel (1838- ), and James (1842 – 1842).<sup>632</sup>

After Thomas D'Arcy's death, Harriet is likely to have involved the limited assistance of her young sons: Thomas Taylor jnr (age 10 -11), and Thomas D'Arcy (age 9), and his brother Daniel (age 8) in the running of the victualling business. This is reflected in Thomas D'Arcy jnr, ten years later being a victualler at Wambo.

The ages of the children of David junior's first marriage, and where they were in the scheme of things at this time may be worth noting:

- Thomas Brown was 29-30 years old at the time, and married, with 5 young children and another on the way.
- About the same time, his son, John, 25-26 years old, when not at the Millie property, had his head in the clouds, and was courting Sarah Jane Alcorn, a daughter of long time family neighbour in Jerry's Plains, Richard Alcorn.
- James would have been 27-28 years old;
- Mary, 23 –24 years, was married with two infant children;

<sup>623</sup> Index to Convicts, AONSW fiche No 662, p140

<sup>624</sup> The informant for a death connected with her family in 1860 being 'Thomas Taylor', a "Splitter & Fencer", of Jerry's Plains – And who died near 'Lambton' NSW in 1883 per Reg No 10963;

<sup>625</sup> Children of the marriage were :Thomas D'Arcy (1837-?), Daniel D'Arcy (1838- ?,) James D'Arcy (1842|1842)

<sup>626</sup> (AONSW COD12 p.46, Marriage Applications, Convicts)

<sup>627</sup> My interpretation of the handwriting.

<sup>628</sup> Index to Convicts, AONSW fiche No 655, p162

<sup>629</sup> (AONSW Vol. 21 -164-5,'&'1 18.37. Reel 5005 No. 62, AONSW Reel 997, Butts of Certificates of Freedom No. 36/794).

<sup>630</sup> My interpretation of "Street Gobbey".

<sup>631</sup> (No. 1753, Series 1).

<sup>632</sup> "From Armagh to Parkes" by Barry L Campbell, page 46.

- Kate would have been 20 to 22 years old , and recently married with a baby son, and another birth imminent - She spent some of her teenage years in the Cattai and Pitt Town area, as well as her childhood;
- David (III), 17-19 years, was managing the Hawkesbury property for the family;
- George, 15 –16 years, who referred to his step mother as ‘ the widow D’ Arcy,’ and
- Alexander would have been 12 to 14 years.

At the time all but David (III) would have been living in the Jerry’ s Plain/ Hunter area. David (III), while managing the family’ s Cattai property, may well have had some inkling of events unfolding. They are all likely to have been aware of Thomas D’ Arcy as the provider of supplies to the family over the years at Pitt Town and Jerry’s Plains, and of Harriet being his wife; and that both of them had been convicts.

**The Jerry’ s Plains correspondent** vented his frustration, and it seemed of others in the community, about a perceived unfairness of drought and squatters (such as David and his sons, James and John):

*‘The continued dry weather is striking terror into all our hearts once more. The river is falling lower and lower every day, having long ceased to run, and every vestige of green vegetation has vanished everywhere.*

*What we are to do with our*

*cattle is a problem ..... We are precluded from going back by the Goshen beyond the boundaries being subject to leases in every direction,..... as to giving our stock to those leasehold proprietors on the halves of increase, without holding them responsible*

*for either old or young - the only terms offered by this lucky class of colonists - some of us prefer killing them for their hides, as the more profitable alternative, however South American and ugly in appearance it may be.’<sup>633</sup>*

17 November 1847.

## *An Eventful Year*

David’ sson, John, married Richard Alcorn’ s daughter, Sarah Jane Alcorn on 4 January 1848. Richard Alcorn was a long time settler of the Hunter and David’ s neighbour. Soon after the wedding, John and his bride, then some three to four months pregnant, moved to the Cattai Creek property – Ensuring a fresh start for the new family in a new location! While there, John managed the property for his father, as well as his property interests such as Millie, and arranged the transfer to market of cattle periodically arriving from Millie via Jerry’ s Plains and the ‘ Bulga’ track. It is likely any stock that John handled at Cattai was done so on behalf of several members of the family.

It seems that David Humphries, David’ s wife’ s halfbrother, who described his quality or profession as ‘ Farmer’ , and gave his address as ‘ Pitt Town’ , was still working for the Brown family on their Cattai Creek property – In 1862 he had become a resident of Jerry’ s Plains.

*#Ann Emma, Thomas and Ann’ s sixth child, was born on 27 March, and baptised on 23 April 1848 at St James Church in Jerry’ s Plains At the baptism ceremony, performed by Rev. Joseph Cooper, Thomas is described as ‘ Settler’.<sup>634</sup>*

## *The Maitland Link*

In 1848 about the time David sent John and his bride to the Cattai property, he sent his 19 year old son, David (III), from Cattai, where he had been managing the property, to Maitland to help run another arm of his business. He had acquired allotments in Bourke Street, Maitland, which may have been part of a larger holding of property there?<sup>635</sup> The property is likely to have provided family members a place for stopover accommodation to await arrival or departure at nearby Morpeth, of what had become a regular boat service (steam packet), to Balmain, and Sydney?

David’ s Will suggests that he had considerable association with a George Huntley of Balmain. His daughter-in-law, Ann Shepherd, became established in the Balmain area.

<sup>633</sup> Goshen was the land promised to the Israelites while in Egypt i.e. ‘ the promised land’ , a well favoured region suited to flocks and herds. The New Bible Dictionary.

<sup>634</sup> NSWRS Reel 5010, BDM registration V1848 2812 33A.

<sup>635</sup> David Brown’ s will of 15 December 1856 refers to his allotments in Bourke Street in the town of Maitland which were to go ultimately to son, Henry Brown, if he had survived to his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. Perhaps the allotments were where his son, David, ultimately ran his butchery? Obituary for David III in the Maitland Mercury in 1886 refers to David at 19 leaving Cattai and going to Maitland

David continued to make trips between Jerry's Plains and his property at Cattai, and nearby Pitt Town, 130 kilometres to the south.

*'The river has been up during the whole month, scarcely been fordable for a day.'*

*'Even our most sanguine anticipations have been exceeded by the splendid growth of grass consequent upon the rains. In some places it reaches the knee.'*

*'A considerable quantity of Cobbet corn has been planted in this quarter, and looks very flourishing. It is planting in some places up the present moment, but it is the impression that it can only be considered safe from frosts when up*

*and out of the ground by the middle of January.'*<sup>636</sup>

29 January 1848

*Horse stealing has become alarmingly frequent, insomuch that no one in middling circumstances considers it safe to retain a slightly animal in his possession. .... Knots of infamous characters have established themselves, here, there, and everywhere throughout the bush, and they prey upon the fruits of their neighbours' industry. A saleable horse is passed from hand to hand amongst them*

*with a cunning and slight of hand that almost renders detection impossible. A fat bullock or cow, as soon as it becomes prime meat, is doomed, if not immediately disposed of, to fill their larders, which, by the bye, are always full of the best of beef, let the season be ever so bad or the price ever so high. ....*

*The old system of stationing district constables (as they were called) every ten, or fifteen miles on a line of road, and in every little settlement, had many advantages. ....*<sup>637</sup>

Jerry's Plains Correspondent MM  
28 March 1848

Licensing Day, 18 April 1848 saw the licence for innkeeper of David's 'Robin Hood' granted to his son-in-law, Charles Capp.<sup>638</sup>

### A Picture of Jerry's Plains in 1848

*Another public house is about to be open on Jerry's Plains, a license having been granted to Mr Simpson, an old and much respected resident in*

*this quarter. We shall then have three public houses and as many blacksmith's shops. .... two churches, - one, finished in wood, and the other,*

*in the course of building, in stone. ....*<sup>639</sup>

Jerry's Plains correspondent MM  
19 April 1848

Simpson had purchased lots 5 and 6 of Richard Alcorn's sub division for £60 from him (Alcorn) on 27 October 1843. "There were presumably already considerable improvements on those two blocks, probably a store which he ran for a few years before securing a licence"<sup>640</sup>

A report on the County of Hunter in 1848 described Jerry's Plains as an area of 2056 square miles with 'wild and savage looking' mountains; and the population as 1190, houses 222, and stock of county record at 1160 horses, 4885 head of horned cattle, 800 pigs, and 7168 sheep. In addition to stating that 'Jerry's Town is the capital' of the county of Hunter, 'a village... situated at Jerry's Plains 'on the Hunter River, 122 miles from Sydney' 'With the counties of Brisbane and Bligh, Hunter returns one member to the Australian senate'.<sup>641</sup>

The Maitland Mercury's had this insight about his community to offer:

*'...we have the lethargy of the barbarian without his fraternity, - we are always quarrelling amongst each other, and very fond of law without caring much for justice .... but to*

*balance these, we are hospitable etc.... all our faults may be ascribed to ... living at the rag end of the civilised world, .... all that is bad in civilization*

*operating upon us, without counteraction, by its ennobling influences. ....'*<sup>642</sup>

Jerry's Plains Correspondent MM  
1 July 1848

As a reflection of the prosperity and 'settled' nature of the Jerry's Plains community in 1848, the headquarters of the Hunter River division of the Mounted Police was relocated to Murrurundi.<sup>643</sup>

<sup>636</sup> The Maitland Mercury, Hunter River District News, Wednesday, 2 February 1848.

<sup>637</sup> The Maitland Mercury, Hunter River District News, 29 March 1848.

<sup>638</sup> The Maitland Mercury, Hunter River District News, 26 April 1848.

<sup>639</sup> The Maitland Mercury, Hunter River District News, 22 April 1848. NLA, mfm NX27. Roll No3.

<sup>640</sup> Simpson Opens' Plough Inn, by Ian Ellis, Hunter Valley News 21 October 1992. Ellis says licence secured on 1 July 1848?

<sup>641</sup> A Geographical Dictionary Gazetteer of the Australian Colonies 1848 by William Henry Wells

<sup>642</sup> The Maitland Mercury, Hunter River District News, 5 July April 1848. NLA, mfm NX27.

<sup>643</sup> In 1862 Jerry's Plains became a one man police station.

## *Pitt Town and a Second Marriage*

Pitt Town to the south, in 1848, was described ‘...as a village possessing a few cottages and tradespeople. There is a school-house and chapel there, also a burial ground. It contains 48 houses, and a population of 229.’<sup>644</sup>

It was in Pitt Town that David junior married for a second time to a very pregnant Harriet Darcy (aka Darcy) on 16 May 1848. He was then somewhere between 58 to 65 years old. Witnesses were Richard George Evans and Susan Farreth/Tumeth? Minister T.B. Irving. For Harriet Darcy, aged thirty-five, it was her third marriage. David was registered as being of the Parish of Nelson, Caddai. They were married in the Caddai School House by banns "this sixteenth day of May in the year 1848".<sup>645</sup> The marriage could have been arranged more quickly if David had purchased a marriage licence. It has been suggested that a marriage at this late stage, points to David conforming to a trend for men in these pressing circumstances, to wait till the last possible moment, in the event there was a miscarriage.

Son, John, expecting the imminent arrival of his first child, and being in the area would no doubt been well aware of events. Of David's other children at the time: Thomas, approaching his 31<sup>st</sup> birthday, wife and six young children (one only a few months old); James was in his 29<sup>th</sup> year; Mary, 26<sup>th</sup> year; Kate, 22<sup>nd</sup> year; David 20<sup>th</sup> year, George, 16<sup>th</sup> year, and Alick in his 14<sup>th</sup> year.

David was blessed with another grandson when David's son, John and his wife, Sarah, gave birth to a child at Pitt Town on 3 June 1848. The lad was subsequently baptised in the Church of England at Wilberforce in 1848.<sup>646</sup>

During that same month of June 1848, David junior's eldest son, Thomas, aged 31, died. On 25 June 1848, he was buried at what is now known as the ‘old Wambo cemetery’ in Jerry's Plains. The funeral was conducted by Joseph Cooper, and Thomas' occupation given as ‘Farmer’.<sup>647</sup>

David is likely to have ridden home to Jerry's Plains soon after the wedding with the impending new addition on his mind and in time for Thomas' funeral on the 25 June 1848. He was confronted with the additional challenge of what was to be done for his widowed daughter-in-law, and his six young grandchildren: David 12, Mary Elizabeth 11, Sarah Jane 8, Thomas Edward 5, John James 21 months, and Ann Emma 3 months. He would have had Harriet's sons: Thomas (aged 13) by her first husband Thomas Taylor; and Daniel (age 10) and possibly his brother, Thomas, by Thomas Darcy to consider. This raises the question of how did the rest of his family react?

After nine weeks of marriage, a son, Alfred, was born in Pitt Town on 25 July 1848<sup>648</sup> to David junior and Harriet. Of course, for David's children it meant a new brother.

George Loder, at age 87 years, passed away at the home of his son-in-law, Thomas Arndell, at Caddai, 18 August 1848.

<sup>644</sup> A Geographical Dictionary Gazetteer of the Australian Colonies 1848 by William Henry Wells.

<sup>645</sup> BDM Reg No V1848 243 33B O, Pitt Town, Merryll Hope advises that marriage was with the consent of friends and didn't need Governor's permission. However, there was a period when convicts, ex-convicts, and people who were not classed as ‘gentlemen’ required the Governors permission?

<sup>646</sup> BDM V18481292

<sup>647</sup> According to the NSW Pioneer BDM register, there were only two Thomas Brown(e)s that died that year, one was 12 years living in Sydney, the other was at Jerry's Plains BDM V1848 1110 33. The Index of Coroner's Reports for 1848 at reference No 4299 lists the death of a Thomas Brown on 7 June 1848 - The cause of death was found to be due to ‘natural causes’ and was given at the Coroners Court, Armidale on 19 June 1848. The registrar for the occasion was a doctor (*R. Masner G.C.C.L.?*). Unfortunately all coronial court records for that period appear to have been lost. The church burial register indicates Thomas as having died several (2) days before, on 23 June 1848 as opposed to eighteen days. The parish of Armidale shows only 4 deaths that year - Armidale as a ‘Place of Registration’ for BDM's does not show deaths recorded until 1856. An extensive search by the Armidale Family History Group (Their letter dated 3 May 2001) including Cemetery transcriptions: Small Denominations, Roman Catholic, Church of England, and Presbyterian, failed to reveal any evidence of a Thomas Brown having been buried or died in Armidale. Intriguingly, I have found references in family correspondence of 1981-84, of him having died on 6 June 1848? Regrettably, one possible source, the Maitland Mercury of 29 June 1848, that might have given an account of Thomas' death, is missing.

<sup>648</sup> In E-mail, Marie Tattam to John Griffiths 14 October 2000, she explains she had seen the registers for St James, Pitt Town, which had the birth and Baptism information. “From Armagh to Parkes” by Barry L Campbell, page 46 puts the year 1848 only.

While David and his family were trying to deal with the developments in mid 1848, life on their part of the Hunter moved on. A public demonstration of the benefits of chloroform given on the evening of Monday, 28 August 1848, was presented by a Dr Stolworthy in Singleton.<sup>649</sup> Experiments were conducted on two gentlemen of the town – In one ‘ ..he extracted the stump of a tooth without pain being felt by the party’.

**Mail Coach Robbed.**

‘On Thursday Morning last the mail was robbed, according to the report of the driver, in the following manner. About three-quarters of a mile from the post-office, on the road to Singleton, almost within sight of Mr E. Doyle’s of Montrose Park a man standing about 20 or 30 yards from the track presented a musket at the driver, and demanded the mail bags to be thrown out of the carriage on to the road side. After this had been done by the mail-man, he was ordered not to turn back to Jerry’s Plains, but to drive on to Singleton, on pain of being shot.’

‘ The driver, who it appears had only been a few days engaged in that capacity, this being his second trip with the mail, and happening to be alone, acted agreeably to those instructions, and drove on to Singleton, some 17 miles distance, before he reported the circumstances to the police’.

‘ It was not therefore until evening that the information reached the police barracks here. The constables from Singleton and our horse police have scoured the bush night and day ever since, but have not succeeded in falling in with the robber, .....’

**Hot and Changeable Weather.**

‘ Thursday and Friday last were the hottest days we have experienced this summer; the weather is now cool and cloudy. These sudden changes have had a very injurious effect upon the general health here, and coughs, head-aches, and sore throats are unusually prevalent.’

**A School for Jerry’s Plains.**

‘ I am happy to state that the “Board of National Education” has returned a favourable answer to our application for assistance, and we may shortly expect to welcome a school under the general system in full and beneficent operation at Jerry’s Plains.’

Sunday, 14 January 1849

**More on the Jerry’s Plains Mail Robbery.**

‘ It appears that on Saturday last the description, of a deserter from the 11th regiment had been sent to the police at Muswell Brook, and that during the day the man was apprehended, and after he had been confined in the lockup information was received that the Jerry’s Plains mail had been robbed, and as the prisoner somewhat answered the description given of the robber, chief constable Fox made further inquiry respecting him, and ascertained that he ..... changed a £1 note, at Mr. Hegarty’s which has been proved was in the bag when the mail was robbed; .....

.....<sup>650</sup>

Monday, 15 January 1849

Jerry’s Plains correspondent  
Maitland Mercury

David’s son, Alfred, was baptised 10 May 1849<sup>651</sup> at St James Church of England, Pitt Town. David status was entered as “Cattai Settler”. It seems more than probable that Harriet, and her baby son, stayed on in Pitt Town until his baptism. This arrangement suited David so he could attempt to prepare the family at Jerry’s Plains for the new additions to their ‘ranks.’ There is some question as to how David’s family reacted to Harriet’s inclusion into their sphere and the circumstance by which it occurred? David may have only been able to make a few occasional trips back to Pitt Town, one of them in time for Alfred’s baptism.

<sup>649</sup> The Maitland Mercury, Hunter River District News, Wednesday, 30 August 1850.

<sup>650</sup> The Maitland Mercury, Wednesday, 17 January 1849. Jerry’s Plains correspondent NLA, mfm NX27.

<sup>651</sup> Year of baptism uncertain at this point but likely to be 1849 before being taken to Jerry’s Plains.