

Private Farrell Cornelly
Enrolled Irish Pensioner Guard

By Laura Shannon

Private Farrell Cornelly's time in Western Australia was brief. He arrived in Fremantle on the *William Jardine* on 2nd August 1852 as an Enrolled Pensioner Guard. He was accompanied by his wife Bridget (nee O'Loughlan) and four-year old daughter Ellen (born 1849). They were all born in Ireland. Two more children were born after their arrival in WA. Elizabeth was born in Fremantle in 1853 and Farrell John (who became known as Edward John) in 1856 at Fort Lynton. Farrell Cornelly died twenty-five days after his son's birth.

Farrell Cornelly's birthplace was Melan, Co. Kings, Ireland and his burial place was Fort Lynton, Western Australia – half a world away. At the age of seventeen, on the 24th May 1825, Cornelly enlisted in the army in the 65th Regiment at Roscommon. His service of 20 years included a period of eight years in the East Indies and for another three and a half years he was posted in North America. During his military career Cornelly was awarded two Good Conduct medals. He was discharged at Cheltham on 28th July 1846.

Farrell Cornelly married in 1848. His bride was Bridget O'Loughlan, daughter of James. She was born at Hibernia, Ireland in 1834. Presumably when the call came for Guards for convict ships going to Western Australia, Cornelly seized the opportunity. It seems he had been working as a labourer since his discharge from the army. Enrolled Pensioner Guards were promised several acres of land and assistance to build a cottage after a set number of years service in the Colony. It must have seemed too good to be true.

In January 1852 Cornelly and family embarked on a voyage lasting seven months. This journey may have seemed a hardship but more was to follow as they were based at the Bassendean prison camp where they lived in tents. After spending the summer months "under canvas" it must have been dismaying to find on their posting to the Fort Lynton Convict Hiring Depot in 1853 that the only accommodation was in tents. Apparently Cornelly was experiencing health problems although he was given a medical clearance when he enrolled. It is not known whether he had suffered previous war injuries which caused the Superintendent Corporal Bruce Doran to report to the Colonial Secretary, "Private Cornelly is very unwell and I fear will not live long". This premonition proved true. Farrell Cornelly died on 26th October 1856. The cause of death is unclear. Corporal Doran recorded it as "heat affection and epilepsy", which was similar to Rica Erickson's state in the *Dictionary of Western Australians* of "heat exhaustion and sunstroke". However Sister Mary Albertus Bain in *A Life of its Own*, p24 declared Cornelly's death was due to malnutrition.

In recognition of Cornelly's service, his fellow soldiers erected a limestone tombstone on his grave at Lynton Burial Reserve. It is the central headstone of the three standing there, the others mark the graves of Corporal Redden and Private Hayes. The young widow, Bridget, remarried a year later to Charles Eastough after which they moved to the Greenough district.

Further research needs to be undertaken regarding the possibility of a connection (and perhaps blood relationship with the Farrell family. At least four other men bearing the surname Farrell arrived in Western Australia, including Michael Farrell who married Eliza Holly (sister-in-law to Ellen (nee Cornelly), wife of John Holly, and whose first child was named "Ellen". Also it may be significant that all these Farrells and Cornellys settled in the Chapman Valley.

It seems a possibility that Farrell Cornelly had an earlier marriage than that of his marriage

to Bridge O'Loughlan. This question arises because the writer was holidaying in Dublin in 1989 and by chance while glancing through a telephone directory spotted the name "Farrell Cornelly". A phone call was made and several letters followed. But the Dublin family was unaware of any relative going to Australia. Farrell Cornally's wife, Ursula, made efforts to obtain information – even to engage a Researcher – but was told that army records from so long ago were no longer available. Conjecture remains. After all, "Cornelly" is not a common name. In fact there is only one listing in the 2010 Western Australian telephone directories.

It seems sad that Private Farrell Cornelly's hopes of a better life for his wife and children ended so dismally – and, in a way, so incomplete.

*What happened to
Farrell Cornelly's Family
Particularly
Edward John Cornally*

By Laura Shannon

As stated in the former article the Irish Pensioner Guard Farrell Cornelly died a mere twenty five days after his son's birth after months of illness. The Commander of the Fort Lynton Hiring Depot, Superintendent Corporal Bruce Doran reported the child's birth as being on 1st September 1856 and gave the name as "Farrell". (His birth was registered as Farrell Cornelly at Port Gregory in 1856 No 3500 with his mothers names spelt incorrectly). This however may have been an assumption during a stressful period as the boy became known – and was baptised – as Edward John Cornally. It was a time of confusion, not least of which was the removal of the deceased family from the prison premises. Despite the promise to the Enrolled Guards of land and assistance to build a cottage there was no provision for a

widow whose husband had served only three years of the prescribed sever.

It is difficult to imagine the anxiety and sadness the young mother must have experienced. She had no family to turn to for support as they were all on the "other side of the world". She had no money and no home and she had somehow to provide for three small children, Ellen (7 years), Elizabeth (3 years) and her newborn son. Bridget Cornelly went to the nearby Wayside Inn where the proprietor Francis Watson Pearson gave her employment as a servant.

Pearson was an astute businessman and had recognised the necessity of providing accommodation and sustenance for passing travellers and before long had also obtained a liquor license. To supply the flourishing lead mining ventures in the hinterland there was a constant stream of traffic to and fro with the teamsters brining down the ore to Port Gregory for export and returning laden with necessary goods and equipment. The mining company hired Ticket-of-Leave convicts as labourers and teamsters. Among the latter was Charles Eastough, a former blacksmith and wheelwright.

When the authorities decided to abandon the Fort Lynton depot the convicts were transferred via Geraldton to the Greenough Hiring depot. Charles Eastough and Bridget Cornally had a formal arrangement which enabled her (with her children) to travel to Geraldton when the transfer of prisoners took place. They were married in Geraldton on 14 November 1857 before proceeding to Greenough. Pastoralists in the area were eagerly employing the convicts and seeking women for domestic servants. Charles Eastough was allocated to John Sydney Davis at his *Tibradden* property where employment was available for his wife Bridget and they were able to take their children with them. Charles and Bridget had 7 children.

The On 22 January 1858 Pensioners left at Lynton boarded the vessel *Les Trois Amis* bound for Champion Bay. Lynton was abandoned.

As the children grew up they too were employed, the girls trained as domestic duties and Edward in handling stock. From an early age the boy was sent to lonely outcamps to shepherd the sheep flocks and here most of his companions were nomadic aboriginals. No doubt he enjoyed the games and other pursuits with the children and quickly learnt the different dialects of each passing tribe. At the same time he was absorbing, albeit unconsciously, their tribal customs and traditions. During the years ahead this knowledge stood Edward in good stead for as well as being a competent stockman he was much sought after as a guide for pastoralists seeking new land in the Upper Gascoyne and North West Cape areas. More importantly he became a respected guide and informant for anthropologist Daisy Bates.

Bridget and Charles Eastough left *Tibradden* after Charles received his Pardon and went to the Chapman Valley where Charles set up a blacksmith shop. In 1878 Edward John married a "Valley" girl, Mary Culleton who bore him five children, the first baby dying soon after birth. The Cornelly girls, Ellen and Elizabeth married local farmers. Ellen married 1st John Olley/Holley 1866 and 2nd Anthony O'Malley. Elizabeth/Emily married Thomas O'Donnell at Geraldton. The children of Charles and Bridget also married members of Valley families. Many Chapman Valley residents are descendants of these early settlers.

Edward Cornally's contribution to Daisy Bates' anthropological records has gone unnoticed but there is no doubt that without his assistance much of the information claimed as hers would not have been known. The aboriginals regarded Cornally as one of their people and gave him the name *Nanyango* or *Nyinigo*, as dutifully recorded by Bates. Edward John Cornelly died in Perth in 1941, an "old and invalid man", aged eight-five years.

Bridget died in 1892.

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(Editors Note: Most names mentioned in Laura's articles have been spelt differently several times and in Edward's case he was known and used the name John many times.)