

Michael McArdle and his family

While working on the ships project it became apparent that although many pensioners only improved their lot marginally if at all, however, it was often their children who reaped the benefits, one such family was that of Sergeant Michael McArdle of the 41st Regiment of Foot and the Royal Canadian Rifles.

Michael McArdle was born at Devenish, near the town of Churchill in County Fermanagh in Ireland in 1821. At the age of eighteen he enlisted in the 41st regiment at Enniskillen on 26 July 1839 serving in the 41st Regiment of Foot until 23 April 1858 when he transferred to The Royal Canadian Rifles until 31 May 1860 when he was discharged as being unfit for further service.

Michael had a relatively successful career in the army attaining the rank of Sergeant at the time of his discharge. During his 20 years and 294 days army service he served abroad for 4 years and 9 months being India 2 years 11 months and Canada 1 year and 10 months. His character was recorded as being very good and he was in possession of 3 good conduct badges at the time he was promoted to the rank of Sergeant

At the time of his discharge Michael was 39 years of age, he stood 5 feet 5 ½ inches in height, had dark brown hair, hazel eyes and a fresh complexion, his occupation was that of a labourer. The place of his residence is not recorded but the town of Derrygonnelly (NE of Devenish) noted on the margin of the page. His pension rated was one shilling and 6 pence.ⁱ

Michael McArdle arrived in Western Australia on 27 May 1863 as Sergeant of the Guard on the convict ship Clyde together with his wife Annie O'Sullivan and their children Mary Jane, Francis, Susan, Robert and Michael, a further child Annie was born in Perth in 1865.

After their arrival the enterprising Michael set up business as a boarding house keeper in St. Georges Terrace and later operated a livery business in Murray Street, Perth, meanwhile the equally enterprising Annie operated a dairy. There are numerous instances whereby either Michael or Annie were fined for allowing their cows and horses to wander causing a nuisance in St. Georges Terrace as well as other minor infringements.

Despite all the hard work all was not well in the McArdle household and in 1874 Annie McCardle [sic] was charged with assaulting her husband and 'putting him in bodily fear.' Two of the daughter gave evidence of being witness to the attack and also the destruction of common property. The magistrate dismissed the case optimistically advising the parties 'to live happy and peaceably together for the future.'ⁱⁱ

In February 1876 Michael was charged with using grossly insulting language to Mr Frederick Graves, a pawnbroker. In his own defence he declared 'he was a character of some consequence-a distinguished son of Mars-who had added much to the military glory of his country, by his own valorous exploits, to all of which he had been incited by the magic bob-a day, of which he is now a recipient.' His argument did not impress the magistrate and Sergeant Michael M'Cardle [sic] was fined the maximum £2 with costs and bound over to keep the peace.ⁱⁱⁱ

Furthermore in 1876 Michael became embroiled in what has gone down in West Australian history as the 'Escape of the Fenians.' Detective Sergeant Rowe identified Bernard [sic] McArdle, pensioner, of Murray Street Perth as the owner of a one horse trap that was used in the escape.^{iv} When his role in the affair became public he was dismissed from the Enrolled

Force due to his 'proclivity for non-templar principles.' Enraged Michael returned home and vented his fury on his luckless family destroying a quantity of household goods and assaulting his wife and daughters. He was gaoled for 42 days and during this time he forfeited half his pension the other half being paid to his wife.^v

Despite Michael's chequered career with the Enrolled Force he must have been reappointed as in 1876 his pension was increased to 2/- per day for service to the Enrolled Force^{vi} and in February 1877 when charged with not sending his children to school he unsuccessfully offered up the excuse he was unable to supervise them as he was 'confined to barracks' at the time.

Tragedy struck the McArdle family in 1881 when the eldest son Francis died on 25 April 1881 aged 25. Francis was an enthusiastic member of the Metropolitan rifles and there are many mentions of his shooting prowess in the various newspaper accounts of the day. He was unmarried at the time of his death and was buried in the East Perth Cemetery.^{vii}

In 1882 Michael was assigned a Pensioner Allotment Perth location H34 of 3 roods 14 perches making title application in 1883. It is located extending from Hay through to Murray Street, Perth between George and Havelock streets.^{viii}

Sometime between 1883 and 1889 Michael left Western Australia as in 1889 his son Robert McArdle was a witness in a voting dispute when his brother Michael voted in his father's name and he stated 'My father left Perth between four or five years ago, and has been dead these three years.' He further stated they had been notified of their father's death by the Horse Guards.^{ix} A note on the bottom of Michael's WO 97 indicates that he may have returned to Ireland as a letter was sent to the Staff Officer at Omagh on 21 July 1883 followed by the notation of further correspondence in August and December of the same year.

Annie continued living with her children in the house in Murray Street until her death on 16 July 1894; she was buried in the East Perth Cemetery with her son Francis.^x Annie appointed her daughter Susan and son Robert as the executors of her will leaving her property Perth location W57, located between Mangle and Short Streets and fronting Mackie Street, West Perth which had been subdivided into 4 lots with houses built on all of them, as follows: the cottage at the corner of Mangles and Mackie was bequeathed to Susan, the 1st villa and land to Robert, the second to Ann, with Michael having the 3rd on the corner of Mackie & Short streets, strangely there is no mention of daughter Mary Jane. There is no mention in her will of the property in Murray Street although that was where they lived and was also the address of the livery business.^{xi}

None of the surviving five children of Michael and Ann McArdle were to marry, perhaps the example of their parent's marriage acted as a deterrent to seeking connubial bliss. The Electoral Rolls record them all living in the family home, firstly in Murray Street and later in Newcastle Street, however, by 1916 the family has shifted to Cleaver Street, West Perth. In 1896 the West Australian reported the West Australian Stock Bazaar between Wellington and Murray Streets owned by the McArdle family had been leased to Messrs W.B. Gordon & Co. to carry on the business of horse and cattle salesmen. In the 1903 & 1910 Electoral Rolls, the women were described as either spinsters or domestics while Robert described himself as a livery stable owner or livestock agent and Michael a compositor at the Government Printing Works.

On 4 March 1905 an advert appeared in the West Australia whereby, under the Legal Transfer of Land Act of 1904, Mary Jane McArdle, spinster; Susan McArdle, spinster; Robert McArdle, horse dealer and salesman; Michael McArdle, printer and Anne McArdle, spinster, applied to be registered as the owners as tenants in common for Perth Town Lot V 43 (containing 3 roods 26 1/2 perches) between Wellington and Murray streets and Part of Perth Town Lot V 13 between Wellington and Murray Streets.^{xii}

For some years there had been discussions between the State Government and the Commonwealth concerning the building of a new Post Office and, as good fortune would have it, after much discussion the site chosen was a parcel of land opposite the Perth railway station incorporating Perth Town lot V13. The McArdle estate claimed £35,000 compensation but after haggling settled for £25,000 which must have been a considerable profit on the purchase price.^{xiii}

On 11 June 1906 Michael and Miss McArdle (possibly the eldest Mary Jane) left Western Australia on RMS Ortona for a three month holiday in the UK returning on the RMS Ophir in November 1906.^{xiv} Prior to the departure the employees of the Government Printing Works presented Michael with a 'handsome travelling bag, suitably inscribed', as a mark of respect and wishing him bon voyage and expressing a wish for good health as he had been unwell.^{xv} In 1913 Michael together with all three of his sister once again travelled to the UK for an extended holiday returning on the ship Afric leaving Liverpool on 16 October 1913.^{xvi}

Robert McArdle's life revolved around horses, as a relatively young man in partnership with Mr D.J. Avery he travelled around the state buying horses and shipping them to Java, Singapore and Mauritius. After his father's departure he managed the livery stables in Murray Street in partnership with J.H. Ogborne and after dissolving that partnership on his own account. He was a keen amateur rider and horse owner and a member of the West Australian Turf Club.^{xvii} The newspapers of the day carried many accounts of his exploits including one where he had a serious fall clearing hurdles on his mount 'Mabel.' He died on 2 June 1921 aged 58 at St. John of God hospital, Subiaco. The beneficiaries of his estate were his siblings. The amount chargeable with duty amounted to £1,592.11.3.^{xviii}

The following year, on 7 April 1922, Mary Jane died aged 68. Once again the beneficiaries of her will were her surviving siblings. Duty was payable on £15,143.0.5. The estate consisted of various properties throughout the city and shares in The Swan Brewery, West Australian Bank and the Fremantle Gas & Coke Company.^{xix}

Mary Jane's death was followed by Michael's when on 29 October 1924 aged 60 he succumbed to carcinoma of the stomach. Michael had spent his working life working for the Government Printing Works and at the time of his retirement was a sub-overseer in No2 compositing room.^{xx} His estate which consisted of large property holdings and stocks and shares was valued for probate at £18,513.13.10 which he left, in its entirety, to his sister Susan.^{xxi}

Of the two remaining sisters Annie and Susan, Annie was in ill health and they decided to leave the family home and repair to the Convent of Mercy, Victoria Square for their remaining years where Annie died on 21 October 1932. Annie's estate differed from those of her siblings in that although provision was made for her remaining sister Susan and masses for her soul, the bulk of the estate of £14,089 was left for specific purposes mainly bequests to the Convent of Mercy Victoria Square; Redemptorist Order North Perth; St Joseph's

Orphanage Subiaco; Convent of Mercy Midland Junction; Presentation Convent Cottesloe; Loreto Convent; St. Brigid Parish West Perth; Mission to the Blacks Broome; Institute for mentally deficient children Castledare; and a separate amount to the Convent of Mercy Victoria Square to build a grotto in the grounds.^{xxii}

Susan died on 23 February 1948 aged 90 Years. Her obituary in The West Australian records ‘...[she] is believed to have given away in her lifetime, in conjunction with her brothers and sisters, about £70,000 in charity to the poor and in gifts to churches and convents.’ It further recorded she devoted her life to the welfare of the poor helping to found St. Anne’s Society for the relief of the sick poor. The family gave substantial funds to the building fund of St. Mary’s Cathedral and the stained glass window above the high altar is inscribed ‘The gift of the McCardle family.’^{xxiii}

ⁱ WO 97- 1708-074 Michael McCardle

ⁱⁱ Perth Gazette, 15 May 1874, page 3

ⁱⁱⁱ West Australian Times, 18 February 1876

^{iv} AJCP reel 1680/183/604

^v West Australian Times, Tuesday 28 March 1876, page 2

^{vi} WO 97

^{vii} The West Australian, 29 April 1881, page 2

^{viii} SROWA Cons 31, 1881

^{ix} The Western Mail 16 March 1889, page 11

^x The Daily News 16 July 1894, page 2

^{xi} SROWA Cons 3403/1895/076

^{xii} The West Australian 4 March 1905, page 3

^{xiii} The Sunday Times 31 October 1908, page 15

^{xiv} The Record, 17 November 1906, page 11

^{xv} The Record, 16 June 1906, page 12

^{xvi} Findmypast Outward Bound Passenger List

^{xvii} The Western Mail, 9 June 1921, page 38 Obituary

^{xviii} SROWA Cons 5458/212/21

^{xix} SROWA Cons 3458/105/22

^{xx} The Daily News, 4 November 1924, page 5, Obituary

^{xxi} SROWA Cons 3403/1924/585

^{xxii} SROWA Cons 3403/1932/828

^{xxiii} The West Australian, 26 February 1948, page 14