

*Thomas Kelly of the
Lincelles
and his family*

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A Sergeant Thomas Kelly arrived on the *Lincelles*, January 29, 1862. His regiment is not given in Broomhall and, the state of some records being what they are, an inherent possibility remains in regard to possible confusion between this soldier and two others of the same name. They were Thomas Kelly of the 83rd Regiment and Thomas Kelly of an uncertain East India Company regiment (1).

One of them was the father of an interesting man -William Henry Kelly - who adorns our ever-increasing list of pensioner and police linkages. Information contained in the 'Bicentennial Dictionary' led the way, but complete confirmation of identities and clarification of relationships was supplied by a descendant. Thomas Kelly (born in Dunlavin, County Wicklow, Ireland in about 1819, died at Guildford in 1888) joined 53rd Regiment in Kildare in 1839 and was transferred to the 10th Regiment of Foot in 1842 and is understood to have served in India for 17 1/12 years, rising to the rank of sergeant. He served in several campaigns and received four medals with appropriate bars and clasps. He particularly distinguished himself in the Lucknow operations during the Indian Mutiny of 1857-1858. One of his sons named a New Norcia farming property 'Lucknow' to celebrate his father's glory (2).

The soldier Thomas Kelly married Catherine Ann (1822-1875, family name unknown) and just three of their various children born in India lived to make the voyage on the *Lincelles*: Mary Ann (born c1847, married to William Boxhall at an early age), Bernard, William Henry and John. The family lived in the Pensioner Barracks for a brief period. Thomas then moved on and prospered as a land holder and a benevolent settler. He obtained property in South Perth and at

Victoria Plains, donated money for worthy causes and supported efforts to improve the status of ex-penites.

His second surviving son, Bernard Kelly (born in the 1850's, died June 1934), also did rather well in the colony. He farmed at various locations and eventually settled around New Norcia. Bernard moved horses in the course of a long trek north from New Norcia to the Durack holdings in the Kimberley. He may have arrived there just in time for the 'relief of the Duracks', but was probably also supplying horses to the Kimberley police. His brother William Henry Kelly was a constable at Wyndham in 1886-1887, so that gives us an exact date. There is a family tradition that many horses got sick from eating a particular plant and died as a result (3).

It is possible Bernard Kelly was a horse trainer or horse breeder. There is explicit and fascinating evidence that horses from the area between Victoria Plains and Geraldton were supplied to the British Army in India and to graziers – at least one other family active around Greenough in those years (the Eatons) may have been involved in such work. Alfred Vile Eaton and his brother Henry Eaton went on to serve with the WA colonial police. Whatever the circumstances, Bernard became a successful man of property and held public office in the Victoria Plains district. He married Mary Butler at New Norcia in 1882; the couple raised a large family (4)

William Henry Kelly (born c1852-1856 in India, died 1944), the first surviving son of Thomas Kelly, lived a very long and at times turbulent life. He joined the WA police of the time as a probationer on the first day of 1886 and was promoted quickly to the rank of 1st Class Constable. The reason for rapid advancement: hard service in the far north. He was posted to Cambridge Gulf (Wyndham) as a member of the first police party to serve in the East Kimberley. It is probable he received his transfer south for health reasons, as was the case with at least one other member of the group (5).

Constable Kelly went on to serve at Kojonup, York, Broomehill and Albany until his dismissal on August 31, 1896. There had

been disciplinary problems on seven occasions, resulting in fines, reprimands and the threat of removal. They were mostly rather petty offences, although one fine was for being 'under the influence' while on duty. The context of his removal is the severe and punitive discipline system of the day; the Police Regulations were very tough.

A revealing picture of the demands and varied nature of W H Kelly's police work is available. While at York in 1890 and 1891, amongst other duties, Kelly, arrested a violent drunkard and had his police whistle broken in the process; chased and brought back an absconding contract employee; collected the dead body of a farm worker and took it to the morgue; kept order at polling booths during an election; attended an official funeral; made an arrest for suspected arson; served subpoenas for minor offences; looked after a man who had attempted suicide; took part in caring for sick Aborigines and finding shelter for them; went on routine bush patrols; visited outlying settlers and distributed census papers (6).

William Henry Kelly became a Victoria Plains farmer and lived to a great age. Many descendants of farmer Kelly and wife Mary Thompson live among us.

Notes

- (1) Broomhall, F.H. *The Veterans* (Hesperian Press, WA, 1989), B157
- (2) Communication from Marelda Kelly, January 13, 2006; *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians*, Vol.3, K-Z, pp1708 and 1714
- (3) Second communication from Marelda Kelly, January 13, 2006; *Bicentennial Dictionary*, Vol.3, K-Z, pp1708, 1712, 1714
- (4) *Bicentennial Dictionary*, Vol.3, K-Z, p1714; WA Police Records of Service of Alfred Vile Eaton, Henry Eaton and William Henry Kelly
- (5) West Australian Police Gazette, 20/3/1886
- (6) WA Police Record of Service of William Henry Kelly; Moran, K.J. *Sand and Stone*, Part 2 (Frickers International Publishing, Perth-London), pp59-68