

GLENROCK AND A PHANTOM SHIP: the *JAMES*

by Frank Osborne

Whilst working on *Boat People of the 1830s*, in a rare moment of relaxation I happened to leaf through my copy of *Historic Homesteads*¹ in which on page 321 was a photograph of Mrs John Morrice who lived at a house called *Glenrock* from 1863 until her death in 1916 at the age of 93. The caption said "She was Jane, a daughter of James Osborne from Yackandandah and Isabella Osborne, a sister of Henry Osborne from Marshall Mount."

On reading this my mind made an instant leap to 7th February 1836, when the ship *Clyde* arrived in Sydney with 11 Osbornes on board, one of which was Jane, who, according to the passenger list, was 8 years of age when she boarded the ship in October 1835.

According to *Historic Homesteads*, *Glenrock* was built c.1835 by one George Barber, a stepson of Dr Charles Throsby who had married George's widowed mother about the time of the *Coromandel* voyage of 1802. George Barber, who had arrived in Australia in 1814, married Isabella, a sister of Hamilton Hume, on 6th February 1815, at St John's, Parramatta. Following George's death by drowning in 1844 and Isabella's death in 1855, by 1862 *Glenrock* was up for sale.

In 1863 *Glenrock* was bought by Mr & Mrs John Morrice of Sutton Forest who had married at All Saints, Sutton Forest, on 9th November, 1838, (less than 3 years after Jane's arrival in Australia in February, 1836 at the age of 8²)

To quote from *Historic Homesteads*: “John Morrice, lately a tea planter in Jamaica, had arrived in Sydney in 1834 on board the *James*, a vessel chartered by Dr John Dunmore Lang for free immigrants. At Pernambuco³ provisions ran so short that Dr Lang was obliged to borrow some money from John Morrice to replenish supplies. In repayment, Lang gave his grant of 1,000 acres at Sutton Forest to John Morrice⁴”

To me, this story about John Morrice had an aura of folklore, so I did some checking. Yes, the marriage date was correct, but what about the ship? I had been working on ships for months, but had not found the *James*. Re-checking the bounty records drew a blank, likewise the internet programme, *Convictions*, which purports to list all of Sydney's shipping arrivals, so I began to call it the Phantom Ship.

Having recently met a lady relative of the said Jane, I sent off a few photostats with samples of articles in which I had analysed the degree of fact in family folklore. Some time after receiving the usual thankyou card, I received a letter from this lady's son who lives at Albury, whence he has been researching the Yackandandah Osbornes at close quarters. He provided the date of arrival of the *James* at Sydney: 17th November, 1834.

Hotfooting it to the library, the *Sydney Gazette* of 18.11.1834 had notice of arrival of the *James*, with a list of cabin passengers, including both Mr John Morrice and Rev Dr J D Lang, with mention of 79 steerage passengers. The next issue of the *Sydney Herald*, 20.11.1834, mentioned John Morrice Esq., Settler, and gave a full list of all passengers. The *Herald* had enjoyed two extra days in which to prepare a full report.

Bravo! No more phantom ship, but I had to apologise about the folklore inference; and a few words may have to be added to *Boat People of the 1830s* if it ever goes to a reprint.

1 *Historic Homesteads* National Trust 1993.

2 Jane's age was presumably reduced to enable her to bunk with her mother and younger sister on the ship. To work out her approximate year of birth deduct 93 from 1916 to come up with 1823.

Many ages were reduced on bounty ships.

3 A port in Eastern Brazil, now named Recife.

4 This was part of a grant to Lang's father, William, on his arrival in 1824. William Lang was lost at sea in 1830. George, the eldest, died in 1825, so John D, the second son, inherited the property.