

Jemima Pitt and her two husbands.

by Carol Herben

Jemima Pitt was born 10 June 1783 Dorset England the third daughter of Robert Pitt and Mary Matcham. It is interesting to look at the pedigree of the Matcham family. Mary Matcham was a first cousin of George Matcham whose wife was Lord Nelson's sister.

Jemima Pitt arrived in the colony of NSW on board the "Canada" on 14 December 1801 with her widowed mother Mary, brother and three sisters. The family settled on Mary Pitt's land grant "Bronte" at Richmond.

On 18 April 1810 Jemima married Austin Forrest. Austin Forrest was born about 1779 Dorset England. He arrived in the colony of NSW as Master of a vessel direct from Calcutta India. He was employed by Campbell and Hook as Captain of the "Sophia" when on 23 March 1806 he returned to Sydney with a cargo of 64 tons of oil. Having set sail

again for New Guinea the ship was wrecked on a reef and he and the crew were rescued on 9 October 1806. They were taken to Calcutta on board the "Prince of Wales" and he was eventually returned to NSW on the "Varana". On his return he was placed in command of the "Duchess of York" which travelled the routes to the Fiji Islands and Tasmania.

Jemima and Austin settled in their home called "Swilley Farm" and it was there that their only child Eliza Mary Forrest was born on 14 April 1811. She only lived one month and was buried in St Matthew's Churchyard at Windsor.

Late in the hours of Christmas Eve 1811 Captain Forrest was returning home from Windsor when he was unfortunately killed by a fall from his horse. His body was found between 12 midnight Christmas Eve and 1am Christmas Day. Austin Forrest was laid to rest in St Matthew's Churchyard where his infant daughter was buried only 8 months earlier.

On 22 March 1813 Jemima Forrest (nee Pitt) married Robert Jenkins at St John's Church of England, Parramatta. Robert Jenkins was born about 1777 at Arlingham, England the son of Robert Jenkins and Mary Warren.

Children born to the marriage of Robert and Jemima Jenkins were Robert Pitt Jenkins born 26 January 1814 and William Warren Jenkins born 11 July 1816. Robert Jenkins arrived in the Colony on 25 July 1809 on board the "Atlanta". A merchant by trade he, along with William Charles Wentworth, Dr Redfern and Mr Wylde, became the first directors of the Bank of New South Wales in 1817.

Being one of the first five land grantees in Illawarra he was notified to meet at twelve noon on Monday 2 December 1816 at the hut of Dr Throsby's stockman. The site of the stockman's hut was in Harbour Street, Wollongong. Those promised a grant were Robert Jenkins (1,000 acres), George Johnston (1,500 acres), Andrew Allan (700 acres), David Allan (2,200 acres) and Richard Brooks (1,300 acres). All five grants issued surrounded the shores of Lake Illawarra. The grants were finalised on 24 January 1817.

On 4 May 1822, Robert Jenkins, only 45 years old, came to his untimely death on his way home from Surry Hills when his horse was spooked, reared when both horse and rider were thrown to the ground. Medical attention was sought, but to no avail with such serious head injuries. His remains were buried in Devonshire Street Cemetery. At the time of his death his young sons were aged only aged 8 years and 6 years. It was fortunate for the family that Robert Jenkins had made his will in 1820.

After the death of Robert, Jemima Jenkins purchased the large estate "Eagle Vale" near Campbelltown in 1828. Furthermore she obtained in 1834 and 1836 a further 2,000 acres adjoining to the west of Berkeley Estate increasing the estate to 3,000 acres.

Jemima Jenkins died 22 March 1842 aged 59 years at Campbelltown and was buried with her husband in Devonshire Street Cemetery.

The eldest son, Robert Pitt Jenkins, married Louisa Adelaide Plunkett on 10 November 1843. They settled on the estate "Eagle Vale" he inherited after his mother's death.

Robert Pitt Jenkins was a Member of the Legislative Assembly from 22 May 1856 until his death on 26 October 1859. Robert and Louisa Jenkins and their family sold Eagle Vale in 1858 to William Fowler who renamed it "Eschol Park".

After they sold Eagle Vale they set sail on the steel hull Clipper "Royal Charter" for England. The "Royal Charter" a vessel of 2,719 tons was built by Sandycroft Ironworks on the River Dee. She was launched in 1857. Built with auxiliary engines and capable of carrying 600 passengers she made regular trips from Australia to Liverpool, England and back.

Returning to Liverpool from Melbourne, under the command of Captain Thomas Taylor carrying 371 passengers, a crew of 112 and some company employees along with a large consignment of gold from the Australian Gold Fields, she ran into a storm. When the vessel reached the north western tip of Anglesey, off Wales, on 25 October 1859 the storm worsened and by the following day reached full force. Whilst trying to

pick up the line of the pilot boat at Point Lynas the winds reached force 10 and it was impossible to secure a line. The vessel dropped her anchors for safety and it was not until 1.30am on the following day that the starboard anchor chain broke. The "Royal Charter" was driven ashore her engines unable to move her away during the height of the gale. The ship was battered against the rocks and soon broke up. Of all the 483 souls on board 450 people lost their lives when they were dashed against the rocks.

Most of the victims were buried in Llanallgo Churchyard and it was the task of the local minister Rev. Stephen Roose to try to identify the bodies. Only one of the Jenkins children was not on the vessel at the time of the sinking she was in France.

William Warren Jenkins, the youngest of Robert and Jemima Jenkins two sons, was the first to marry. He married Matilda Pitt Wilshire on 11 July 1838 at St James' Sydney. In 1839 he built a house on the estate named Berkeley, which his father was granted in 1817. The Jenkins had 11 children between 1839 and 1857. By 1869 the second storey was added to the home. William Warren Jenkins had made a prosperous business from farming with many small leaseholds and several houses erected for the domestic and farm staff.

Upon the next hill, west of the homestead, the family set up their own private burial ground between 1873 and 1876. Matilda Pitt Jenkins died 25 May 1876 and was buried on the top of the hill. William Warren Jenkins died 6 May 1884 and was buried with Matilda.

Miss Matilda Jenkins of "Bianopa" Rose Bay made an application to the Minister for Works on 13 May 1901 to have her grandparents Robert and Jemima Jenkins exhumed from Devonshire Street Cemetery and brought to Berkeley for interment. The Minister accepted that both had been deceased for 59 years and 79 years and posed no risk to the public in their transportation to Berkeley.

Frederick Arnold, a stonemason of 53 Regent Street, Sydney, was engaged to dismantle the vault and refurbish it in preparation for the

new location. Alfred Jenkins stood at the gravesite and witnessed the leaden caskets being removed from the grave. The wooden outer casket of both grandparents were badly decayed. Mr Henry Parsons, undertaker of Wollongong, was given the task of providing new outer coffins for the journey and burial. The coffins and monument were placed on the train for the journey to Wollongong on 2 November 1901. Mr John Alger, the sexton for Berkeley cemetery, prepared the graves for their second resting place. Henry Parsons was waiting with the hearse at Wollongong Railway station to collect the caskets.

The monument in recent years has undergone further restoration due to its great age and weathering of the sandstone and should still be standing when the 200th anniversary of Robert Jenkins death comes around in just 14 years time.