

## **PATRICK & ELIZABETH FLANNERY OF CHARTERS TOWERS, QUEENSLAND**

### **Ballybeg, Co. Clare**

Elizabeth McCarthy (1865-1942) was baptised on 30 September 1865, born presumably just a few days before. She was the second of seven children born to Edward McCarthy and Bridget Lynch, who, after their marriage in February 1863 in Bridget's native Parish of Newmarket on Fergus, resided on the McCarthy farm at Ballybeg, Co. Clare.

*"Ballybeg is a townland (a townland being the smallest rural division of a Parish) of approximately 320 acres (about 130 Ha) situated in the old Civil Parish of Clareabbey which today along with the old Civil Parish of Killone forms what is known as the ecclesiastical Parish of Clarecastle/Ballyea."* (O'Brien, 2005)

The Ballybeg property had already been occupied by the McCarthy family for several decades as Edward's father Thomas had a shared interest in the land in 1826, according to the Tithe Applotment Books for the Old Parish of Clareabbey of that year. Subsequent records show continuing ownership into the current century.

Elizabeth and her six siblings were all baptised in the Parish of Clarecastle/Ballyea, but I know nothing of her early life.

On 30 June 1885, Elizabeth, aged 19 years, departed with free passage from London on the *Wiston Hall*, a 2500 tons sailing ship bound for Brisbane, Queensland. She disembarked in Cooktown, the ship's first port of call as it made its way southwards along the Queensland coast allowing other free, steerage, remittance and saloon passengers to disembark in Townsville,

Bowen, Mackay and Rockhampton before arriving in Brisbane on 25 August 1885.

The next I know of Elizabeth is her marriage to Patrick Flannery in Cooktown in December 1886. Patrick and Elizabeth Flannery are my great grandparents.

### **Kilkenny, Co. Killkenny and Kiltullagh Co. Galway**

It is here my conundrum commences. For the marriage register Patrick Flannery noted his place of birth as "*Kilkenny, Kilkenny, Ireland*" of parents Michael Flannery (a baker) and Catherine McCarthy (curiously the same surname as Elizabeth). Kilkenny is also noted as his place of birth on each of the birth certificates of their eight children and on his death certificate following his undoubtedly untimely death in 1901.

My own investigations, with the help of an archivist at the Kilkenny Archaeological Society in 2005, have failed to reveal any further information on the time and place of his birth in circa 1854-56.

Nor did an examination and search through the Queensland and other Australian shipping records confirm his time and place of arrival in the colony.

I have participated in the Y-DNA Project which has placed me (and, therefore, Patrick my great grandfather) in the Kiltullagh Flannery group, whose members have been traced to Kiltullagh Co Galway – sharing a border with Co Clare.

This is noteworthy given Elizabeth's early life there and it raises two questions.

Did Patrick and Elizabeth first meet in Cooktown? Or, did they know each other before either departed Ireland's shores with their reunion in the tropical north of Queensland pre-arranged?

## Mining in Queensland

Ever since coal was discovered in 1797 at Newcastle, about 160km north of the first European settlement at Sydney Cove, and it became the first export of the colony of New South Wales, the mining industry has played a key historical role in Australia's industrial and economic development. Vast quantities of gold were discovered in New South Wales and Victoria in 1851 and this had a dramatic impact on migration to colonial Australia. The populations of the various colonies increased quickly, with many inland areas opened up and new towns and cities established.

Although small amounts of gold were discovered in Queensland that same year, the first Queensland gold rush did not occur until late in 1858. Kerr notes that in Queensland between 1860 and 1900, (when the population of Queensland grew from 25,000 to 500,000), mining was the reason for the extensive population increase,

*"...especially in central and northern Queensland, attracting miners and tradesmen from the southern mining fields. Immigration from the British coalfields supplied the underground engine drivers and surface tradesmen. Their eagerness to succeed provided the impetus for new towns and extended administrative requirements and the railway system. Townsville, Cairns and Cooktown boomed because of decisions to build railways from the coast to the mining fields at Charters Towers, Herberton and Maytown." (Kerr, 1995)*

Cooktown, Cairns and Charters Towers are each integral to the story of Patrick and Elizabeth Flannery as the family moved to various locations in North Queensland seeking employment and perhaps fortune. Patrick was a labourer initially during his time in Queensland but became a miner for the last few years of his short working life.

## Cooktown

Cooktown is renowned in Australian and British history as the calm waters into which Captain James Cook and the crew of the "*Endeavour*" retreated for seven weeks in 1770 to repair the ship's hull after damage sustained earlier on the Great Barrier Reef. Gold was discovered in the Palmer River south-west of Cooktown in 1872 and Cooktown promptly became a port as a gold rush brought prospectors from all over the world. By 1880 a thriving community of about 4,000 permanent residents and up to 3,000 transient settlers lived in and around the town.

Patrick and Elizabeth were married in St Mary's Catholic Church Cooktown on 27 December 1886. Elizabeth was by then 21, and calls herself a "*domestic servant*" in the marriage register; and Patrick himself a "*carpenter*" and notes his age as 32. Their first two children were born in Cooktown: Michael Joseph (my grandfather) on 1 December 1887 and Catherine on 8 February 1889.

## Cairns Railway

Although the Cairns coast was sighted by Cook from the "*Endeavour*", a settlement there did not occur until 1878 stimulated by more gold finds, the resultant need for a port and a demand for improved transport facilities to the harbour. A railway from Cairns to Herberton was approved in 1884. Construction proceeded in stages, Kuranda (1891), Mareeba (1893) and Herberton (1910), which completed a line across the Atherton and Evelyn Tablelands.

Patrick and Elizabeth lived along lengths of the rail line as it was being constructed and where Patrick was working as a labourer. This is evidenced by the places of their abode noted on the birth certificates of their third and fourth children.

Edward Patrick was born at Springs, Cairns Railway on 6 February 1891 but died with “*infantile convulsions*” after only nine days of life and an illness of only one day’s duration. The couple then also named their next child Edward Patrick when he was born the following year on 6 April (1892) at Welcome Pocket, Cairns Railway.

Welcome Pocket is known today as Mantaka, an aboriginal name for the silkwood tree; but it derived its original name “*owing to its open forest nature, much appreciated by the surveyors after miles of work in the dense scrub extending to the coastal ranges*” (Cairns Historical Society, 1967). The Brisbane Courier of 17 March 1892 reported on the “*23 miles 20 chains*” third section of the Cairns Railway from Myola to Granite Creek: “*There are no earthworks of extraordinary magnitude, the largest cutting being at Welcome Pocket, where 18,000 cubic yards of soil were shifted*” (The Brisbane Courier, 1892).

Despite what those surveyors thought about the locale, I have visions of Patrick, splintered shovel in his blistered hands, toiling for long days and endless weeks there under the hot Queensland sun.

### **Calcifer near Muldiva**

Calcifer was the first town on the Chillagoe mining field, 200 kilometres west of Cairns by rail. The Chillagoe smelters commenced operation in August 1894 and were to become one of the largest metallurgical developments in Queensland prior to World War 1 producing copper, lead, silver and gold. Kerr notes that “*the operation of a new smelter would symbolize a new permanency on the northern fields, persuading miners and smelter workers to bring their wives and families to the new frontier towns*”. (Kerr, 1995, p19) Clearly, Patrick and Elizabeth were one of those families as their fifth child Bridget Maria

was born on 1 January 1895; “*Calcifer near Muldiva*” noted as the place of birth.

Kerr also notes that the Calcifer mining camp “*spread out on the flat below the Boomerang mine beside an oasis of spring water*” and that “*the number of miners, smeltermen, tradesmen, publicans and storekeepers totalled 40, accompanied by 45 women and children .. along with 20 Chinese ‘Johns’ supplying green vegetables*”. (Kerr, 1995, p20)

By 1898 the vibrant town of Calcifer comprised five hotels, several stores and a bank and the Flannerys were one of its pioneering families.

### **Mareeba**

Mareeba, like Calcifer, is a town on the Atherton Tablelands but in closer proximity to the coast 40km west of Cairns. The area was first settled by Europeans in 1877 and although Mareeba rapidly became a busy coach stop for Cobb & Co on the road from Port Douglas to Herberton, it grew into a much busier town only when the railway arrived in 1893.

Patrick and Elizabeth’s sixth child Honorah was born at Mareeba on 3 March 1897.

### **Charters Towers**

Charters Towers, about 140km inland from Townsville, was the location of arguably the most important gold rush in the history of Queensland mining when thousands of men rushed to the area after a significant goldfield was discovered by Hugh Mosman, George Clarke, James Fraser and a 12-yr-old aboriginal boy Jupiter Mosman in December 1871 (Brumby, 2014). The town soon grew to become the second largest in Queensland during the late 1880s with a population of about 30,000 as gold production between 1872 and 1911 totaled 6.8 million ounces.



Gill St, Charters Towers

So large was the metropolis to become that at the height of the gold rush the town included 11 crushing mills, 65 hotels and one of the very first regional stock exchanges in Australia – the building which housed it extant near the intersection of the two main streets Gill Street and Mosman Street.

From an architectural heritage viewpoint the town is highly significant with the 1892 Post Office (and its prominent clock tower added in 1898) the centrepiece. Numerous historic buildings remain in close to original condition with a rare continuous columned pavement awning attached to most of the commercial premises on both sides and for the full length of Gill Street. Many of the former bank premises from the Victorian era remain, skilfully rehabilitated for new uses.

Patrick must have known Charters Towers prior to moving the family there in circa 1897-98 as it is recorded he was living at the Reefers Arms Hotel in Mosman Street in 1892, most likely as a transient mine worker. But by 8 September 1898, when Elizabeth, the couple's seventh child was born, the family was living in Mary Street, Charters Towers. The baby Elizabeth survived only six months as she died of "*gastroenteritis and exhaustion*" on 14 March 1899.

From 1898 the family was living at 38 Mill Street, next door to the appropriately named St Patrick's Hotel; both buildings surviving today although substantially altered in the interim period.



38 Mill Street, Charters Towers, c1979-80



38 Mill Street, Charters Towers, 2015



St Patrick's Hotel, Mill St, Charters Towers, c1950

On 4 June 1900 the couple's eighth and last child Henry John was born and on 10 August 1901 Patrick Flannery died in Charters Towers aged only 45 - the causes of death recorded as "*influenza, pneumonia and syncope*".

[Photo: David Flannery]



Patrick Flannery's grave and headstone,  
Charters Towers Cemetery

On the death of Patrick two benefit concerts were held in support of Elizabeth and their six surviving children then aged between one and 13. One was held in the Hibernian Hall in Mary Street while the other was held in the Theatre Royal in Hodgkinson Street.

Elizabeth continued to live in Charters Towers for another 40 years until her own death on 17 May 1942, aged 76.



[Photographer: unknown]

Elizabeth Flannery (nee McCarthy) with  
son Michael Joseph Flannery (right) c1919

My grandfather, Michael Joseph Flannery, also remained living in Charters Towers. He was to become a career soldier. On 15 November 1904, aged only 16 years, he joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Kennedy Infantry Regiment and in February 1912 enlisted in the Australian Permanent Military Forces. He served in Australia with the Australian Instructional Corps until February 1918, after which he was sent to Europe with the Australian Imperial Forces for the final months of the Great War, seeing action and wrap-up in France from September 1918 until his return to Brisbane in May 1919. He had married Ivy Myrtle Drew of Mt Morgan in Brisbane in 1915. She remained in Brisbane during the war years while he was at first posted to Albury in southern NSW and then abroad. Their first three children were born in Brisbane: Noreen Myrtle (1916), Michael John (1920) and Evelyn Elizabeth (1921). He was transferred to Randwick Barracks in Sydney in 1924 and the family lived in the adjoining suburb of Maroubra where four more children were born: Ivy Merle (1924), my father William Terrance (1927), Patricia Margaret (1936) and Edward Peter (1937). Major Michael Joseph Flannery's appointment with the Australian Military Forces was terminated the day before his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday in November 1947. He departed this life on 6 December 1968.

My story of the Flannerys of Charters Towers can be completed now only when my conundrum of the place and time of the birth of Patrick Flannery is resolved. If there are Clan members, especially related to the Kiltullagh Group in County Galway, who can contribute additional insights to this story I would be delighted to hear from you. I can be contacted at:

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## References

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