

**Here and there:
Crowe history from England to Australia and beyond**

Philip Crowe

The history of the financial travails of Robert Crowe (1745-1817) of County Clare, Ireland is told in detail in the article about the 'forgotten branch'. Some aspects mentioned briefly in that article¹ will be addressed more fully here. They concern events in St George the Martyr parish, the brief military careers of William Crowe and Michael George Crowe in the 73rd Regiment of Foot, the subsequent re-migration of Michael George Crowe and his family to India, and some history of that branch down to the present day. A family tree showing the descendants of Michael George Crowe and Letitia Stiles mentioned in this story is available here.

It is possible the Crowe family's connection with St George the Martyr parish dates from September 1778 when Robert Crowe and his two business partners were declared bankrupt by the Court of Chancery. Alternatively or in addition they may have been confined to the London Marshalsea in 1784 when they lost in the case brought by Nagel *et al.*

A subsequent connection with the parish is an indenture agreement between Michael Crowe and blinds maker John Conway (sic). It appears in the St George the Martyr parish register on 13 March 1801. Michael's apprenticeship was for a period of 7 years. Many years later Michael George Crowe opened a blinds making business at 51 Clarence Street, Sydney: 'Michael George Crowe begs to inform the Public, that he can supply them with Window Blinds of every description, Spring and Roller Curtains, etc on an improved principle, and at a moderate Charge. Orders executed at the shortest Notice.'²

Michael George's given names vary among the records – he is just Michael in the abovementioned apprenticeship registration; Michael George in most of the military records and while resident in New South Wales; George Michael in the first muster of the 73rd Regiment in 1813 and also in his burial record transcribed by the British Library; and finally just George Crowe in the record of his death in the East India Register and in his memorial inscription.³ Perhaps he was conflicted about his father George Crowe's responsibility for the death of his first wife (and Michael George's mother) Sarah O'Brien. Michael George is the form used here since he is so named in other Australian Crowe family histories.⁴

Michael George Crowe married Letitia Stiles at St Marylebone, Church of England, London on 12 June 1808, just a few months after he had completed his apprenticeship. It was a common requirement that apprentices were not permitted to marry during their period of indenture.

Banns for the upcoming marriage were announced on the previous three Sundays as required when a couple were not members of that parish.

Michael George Crowe's place of birth has not been determined, but we do know his date of birth -- 30 April 1789. This comes from his unusually detailed memorial at the South Park Street Cemetery in Calcutta: 'In Memory of Mr [Michael] George Crowe, died 21st December 1826, aged 37 years, 7 months and 21 days. This Monument is erected as a tribute of affection of the best of fathers, by his dutiful son, J. G. Crowe.' This was John George Crowe, eldest son of Michael George and Letitia.

Similarly, we do not know Letitia's place of birth, but we know she was born on 9 May 1794, again from a detailed memorial inscription: 'Sacred to the Memory of Mrs. Letitia Butler, relict [i.e. widow] of Mr [Michael] George Crowe, who departed this life 18th June 1837, aged 43 years, 1 month and 9 days. This simple tablet is raised in the Memory of one of the best and fondest mothers, by her bereaved daughter, A. S. Crowe'. Michael George died in Calcutta on 21 December 1826. On 28 Nov 1829, Letitia married Jacob Butler at Calcutta Cathedral.⁵ The A.S.Crowe was Ann Crowe born in Sydney on 30 April 1815. She later added the middle name Spencer – perhaps in memory of her parents' voyage to New South Wales on the *Earl Spencer*.

Letitia married at a very tender age -- 14 years, 1 month and 3 days, to be precise. The minimum legal age of marriage was 12 years for women and 14 for males.⁶ Their first child, John George Crowe, was not born until 1812,⁷ the delay of 4 years a good outcome in view of the young age of the bride. The place and exact date of his birth were not found. Their second child, Harriet (otherwise Harriot), was baptised in St George the Martyr parish on 24 January 1813. The family's address is shown as Richardson Street, and his occupation as cabinet maker.⁸

William Crowe, Michael George's elder brother, married Eleanor Hayes at St Ann, Church of England, Soho, in London on 9 March 1813. Their first child, also named William, was then about 1 year of age. They may have been married earlier in a Catholic ceremony. Only marriages in the Church of England were legally recognised at that time.

A third London marriage which has significance here, and also subsequently, is that of Patrick Flinn and Catherine Hayes at St Ann, Soho, on the same day as the above mentioned marriage of William and Eleanor. In fact, their entry in St Ann's marriage register immediately precedes that for William and Eleanor. Patrick was not a Crowe blood relative, although likely to have been related by marriage. One of the witnesses to his marriage was Letitia Crowe; and one witness to William and Eleanor's marriage was Patrick Flinn. It is very likely that Eleanor Hayes and Catherine Hayes were close relatives, probably sisters. So Patrick could have been the

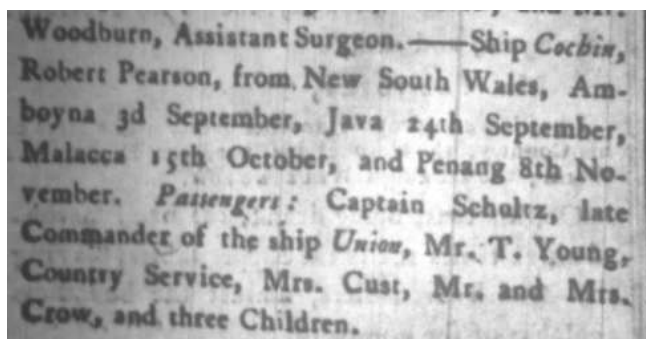
brother-in-law of William Crowe's wife Eleanor Hayes. Catherine had been baptised in St George the Martyr parish on 3 May 1795.

William Crowe, Michael George Crowe and Patrick Flinn all came to Australia as members of the 73rd Regiment of Foot (i.e. infantry). They enlisted in the first quarter of 1813, initially in the 2nd Battalion, transferring to the 1st Battalion soon thereafter.⁹ The 2nd Battalion was dispatched for active service in Europe. The 1st Battalion went to New South Wales, departing Portsmouth on 2 June 1813 with 200 male convicts, perhaps not your usual batch of wrongdoers -- 'among them [were] Captain Davidson, Mr. Lindsay Crawford, several bankers' clerks, the men called Luddites, and the smugglers of Christchurch, who were convicted of aiding French prisoners to escape for France'.¹⁰ Also on board were Eleanor Crowe and her young son William, Letitia Crowe and her children John George and Harriet, and William and Michael George's youngest brother Edward. The presence on the voyage of wives, children and the sibling seems to have been an unofficial arrangement since they are not listed as passengers on the *Earl Spencer* on the ship's arrival in Port Jackson (Sydney) on 9 October 1813.¹¹

William and Michael George were 'discharged with permission' from the 73rd Regiment within 6 months of arrival in NSW -- Michael George on 5 February 1814, and William on 12 March 1814, both having found substitutes. For the history of William Crowe and descendants in Australia see Angela Young's *Ripe for Harvest*.¹² One matter to note is that later research shows William Crowe of the 73rd Regiment of Foot could not have been the Captain Crow(e) of the *Brazil Packet*.

In a general muster (i.e. census) of the inhabitants of New South Wales conducted in the period from 17 October to 16 November 1814, Michael George Crowe's occupation is shown as 'Carpenter'.¹³ Perhaps he didn't have enough work to keep him busy making blinds and had branched out to general carpentry to make a living. In any case, he placed a notice in the *Sydney Gazette* on 13 May of the following year stating he was closing his business and was 'intending to leave the Colony shortly'.¹⁴ He requested creditors to submit claims without delay so he could finalise his financial affairs. On 13 July the family -- which now included the recently-born third child, Ann -- boarded the merchant ship *Cochin* for a voyage to India, via Amboyna and Java in Indonesia, Malacca and Penang in Malaysia, arriving finally at Bengal.

The *Cochin* had a long and eventful voyage to India. Soon after leaving Sydney, the *Cochin* 'fell in' with two other



Woodburn, Assistant Surgeon. — Ship *Cochin*, Robert Pearson, from New South Wales, Amboyna 3d September, Java 24th September, Malacca 15th October, and Penang 8th November. Passengers: Captain Scholtz, late Commander of the ship *Union*, Mr. T. Young, Country Service, Mrs. Cust, Mr. and Mrs. Crow, and three Children.

merchant ships, the *Indefatigable* and the brig *Campbell Macquarie*, all destined for Bengal. They headed north along the eastern Australian coastline and nearly came to grief on the Great Barrier Reef. The *Indefatigable* in particular was fortunate to survive one episode of grounding. Navigating through Torres Strait also proved challenging.

In addition, an encounter with indigenous people on Prince of Wales Island at the tip of Cape York resulted in the wounding of *Cochin's* captain and two members of his crew. The diary of Joseph Arnold, a passenger on the *Indefatigable*, records that:

[A party of three or four men from the *Cochin*] went ashore about 4 o'clock yesterday, & were immediately attacked by the natives who threw Spears & fish gigs [multi-prong spears used for hunting fish] at them from the bushes. Captain Pearson received a spear through his back which went a little way into his breast, & Mr. Cox the first mate had a spear go through the upper part of his right shoulder. The spears were of wood and like those of Port Jackson. The natives advanced boldly against the fire Arms, and when Capt. Pearson's party reached the boat they followed them into the water when Capt. Pearson was wounded. They report that they killed, or any rate dropped two or three of the native's & they fired 30 or 40 shot & bullets among them. I rather think however that the English were the aggressors, for altho' Capt. Pearson said that the natives at first threw spears among them, yet Mr. Cox said that he advanced towards them for a parley, and was very near them when Mr. Underwood fired at one of them & he fell, & immediately they threw their spears at him and one of them went through his shoulder, stopping about the middle of the spear, so that he ran towards the boat supporting the spear and carrying his musket, and was the last to get into her, when the natives ran into the water after him, but too late. A very large number of fires appear on the largest Prince of Wales's Island to day, so that it is probable the alarm signal has been made among them.¹⁵

Six weeks after the incident at Torres Strait, the ships were anchored in the harbour at Batavia (now Jakarta). At about 5 o'clock on the evening of Sunday 22 October, a fire started on the *Indefatigable* when a quantity of spirits (possibly rum or brandy) was being extracted from a cask. A lighted candle might have been nearby to provide some light in the gloom. In any case, the fire spread and before long had reached the eight barrels of gunpowder stored in the magazine located immediately below. The resulting conflagration was spectacular. By morning the vessel had burnt to the waterline and all cargo on board was lost.¹⁶ Fortunately for the Crowe family, the *Cochin* was unaffected and proceeded on its way to Bengal via Malacca and Penang. Robert Pearson survived his injury and was still captain of the *Cochin* when it eventually arrived in Bengal on 10 December 1815 after a voyage of 148 days.

Catherine Hayes, the wife of Patrick Flinn, provides the final link with St George the Martyr parish. Patrick chose to remain with the 73rd Regiment rather than settle in New South Wales. Late in 1817 the regiment departed Sydney for Trincomalee in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) to provide reinforcements in the suppression of the Uva Rebellion.¹⁷ He was killed in action there on 14 March 1818. Five years later his widow Catherine married John Stainwright. Where? – in St George the Martyr parish, Southwark.

Some of these descendants died at a young age, likely a consequence of poor public hygiene and high levels of communicable diseases in India at that time. Cholera, malaria and tuberculosis are just a few of the diseases that caused a high level of mortality in India in the 19th century, and still do to some extent today. Michael George Crowe died at 37, his wife Letitia at 43. Their eldest son John George Crowe died at 38, and second child Harriet at 32. Ann is an exception living to 84, but then she spent the latter part of her life in England. To these we can add Jacob Butler, Letitia's second husband, who died at the age of 37. He and Letitia died within three months of each other. Frequent re-marriages were another consequence of these high levels of early mortality.

Michael George and Letitia's eldest child, John George Crowe, held administrative positions in the government in India,¹⁸ the 'government' then being the British East India Company. The Company administered India supported by its own army until 1858 when the British Crown assumed full control.¹⁹ At the time of his marriage to Esther Frances Chopin²⁰ in 1835 John George was an Assistant in the Judicial Department in Calcutta, and at the time of his death in 1850 was 'Examiner, Bengal Secretary Office'.²¹

Of the seven children born to John George and Esther, I will mention only the first and the last. The eldest was **Esther Letitia Eleanor Crowe** born in Calcutta on 21 July 1836. She married firstly James Field, a merchant of Akyab, Burma (now Sittwe and part of Myanmar).²² The British transferred the Burmese seat of government to Akyab in 1826 and it became a thriving port city. It did have a bad reputation for malaria and cholera though it was probably no worse than other locations on the Indian coast.²³ Field seems to have had a prosperous business since he and Esther are known to have had a number of visits to London and Paris. They are reported to have had a daughter Annie who is presumed to have died young.

After James Field's death in 1864, Esther became governess to the 13 children of George Henry Weld. His first wife Sarah Henson Sharpe had died in 1865, six months after the birth of the last child, Lucy. Esther accompanied Weld as governess on a visit to his relations in England, and married him later that year at St George's church, Hanover Square, London. The family returned to India where Weld was Commandant at Chunar. The couple had four children,

providing Weld with seventeen descendants, though not all of them survived to adulthood. He died of an abscess of the liver in 1870 having achieved the rank of Lieutenant General.

The story of the youngest of John George and Esther's children, **Henry James Alexander Crowe**, is complicated. John George died 3 months before Henry was born. About ten weeks after Henry's birth, his mother Esther re-married – to Henry Theophilus Blythe Critchley on 15 October 1850 in St James Church, Calcutta.²⁴ Esther and Critchley went on to have five children. To complicate matters further, Critchley had a previous marriage, to Matilda Black, with whom he had three children.

The above mentioned, Henry James Alexander Crowe, married Margaret Jane Durnford on 16 Dec 1871 in Akyab. He 'had a long connection with journalism, having been attached to newspapers in the Federated Malay States, India and Burma'.²⁵ He had been in the Malaya for only about 7 years when he died of malaria on 5 March 1907 at the Grand Hotel, Penang.²⁶ At the time of his death he was 'job manager' or 'works manager' of the *Pinang Gazette* (sic).²⁷ A committed and prominent Freemason, he was secretary of the Royal Prince of Wales Lodge, Penang.²⁸ His obituary states he "was a man well on in years', although 56 years of age doesn't seem very old to us today.

A couple of weeks before I began writing this piece, I received an email from a Crowe relative in England. It turns out that he is the 4 times great grandson of Michael George Crowe and Letitia Stiles. He was able to tell me about some of the genealogy of that line; and I was able to acquaint him with the antecedents of Michael George Crowe through to his six times great grandfather James Crowe of Clare and Dublin (c.1712-1774).

I am indebted to Maureen Silkstone, Alexander Crowe and Andrew Crowe for providing information about Bradford Alexander Crowe and descendants.

The second of Henry James Alexander Crowe's children was Bradford Alexander Hill Crowe who was born in Calcutta on 7 December 1883. He became a Marine Engineer in the Merchant Navy. Following an accident he was admitted to hospital where he met and later married nurse Florence Mary Summerfield. The family lived on Perack Road, Pulau Penang in Malaya. In 1935 Bradford slipped at home and sustained a head injury from which he did not recover. He died a couple of weeks later in hospital from meningitis and is buried in Malaya.

After the death of her husband, Florence Mary Crowe (née Summerfield) returned to Manchester in England to be close to relatives. She had been born in Manchester in 1892 and baptised there on 19 October of that year. She returned to Manchester with her three young sons. They sailed on the German ship *SS Trier*, complete with a German crew, the nation against whom hostilities would break out just four years later. The second son, Sydney

Bradford Hill Crowe, enlisted in the British Army in 1941 when he turned 18 and fought against Germany as a paratrooper and member of the SAS in such places as Egypt, Italy, France and Serbia.

After the war, Sydney and his wife Leila Arstall and their one-year-old toddler, accompanied by Florence Mary Crowe then aged 61, immigrated to Australia under the Assisted Passage Migration Scheme. They embarked at Southampton on the *SS Asturias* on 5 September 1951 arriving in Fremantle, Western Australia after a voyage of 31 days. Sydney was a plumber by trade and later became a Plumbing Inspector in Perth. His son and two grandchildren live in Western Australia today. Florence Crowe died in Perth in 1978 aged 88 years.

Sydney's elder brother Henry James Alexander Hill Crowe, and his wife Nellie Rene Winifred Kidds emigrated to Canada. They had two children and five grandchildren, one of whom now works in Adelaide, South Australia.

The story of this branch of the Crowe family has come full circle. Michael George Crowe and Letitia Stiles left England for fresh pastures in Australia in 1813, and then travelled on to India. Some descendants returned to England, others to Canada, and ultimately a few came to Australia – adventurous people seeking a better life for them and their children.

¹ Crowe, P., *The Crowe Gentry of County Clare: A Forgotten Branch*. The Other Clare Vol 41. 2017 pp. 100-105. https://crowehistory.files.wordpress.com/2018/10/article-3_tracked-changes-removed.pdf

² *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 May 1814, p.2.

³ *East India Register*, India Office Family History Search, British Library, 2nd edition; see also India Office Family History Search, *Bengal Obituary*, p.126.

⁴ See, for example, Angela Young, *Ripe for harvest*, Moss Vale, NSW: self published, 1980.

⁵ India Office – Family History Search, <http://indiafamily.bl.uk/ui/NonTabBriefDisplay.aspx?SearchType=QuickSearch>. Accessed 7 Sep 2018.

⁶ The Marriage Act 1753, Population Europe Resource Finder and Archive -- <https://www.perfar.eu/policies/marriage-act-1753>, accessed 27 Aug 2018.

⁷ British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia, *South Park Street Cemetery, Calcutta: register of graves and standing tombs from 1767*, London: BACSA 1992, P.89; see also *Ripe for Harvest*, p.8 – 'In 1815 in Appin . . . [they] were alone except for 3 yrs old John'.

⁸ London, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1906, Ancestry.com.

⁹ The National Archives, Kew, WO 12/8001.

¹⁰ *Caledonian Mercury*, 10 June 1813; *Lancaster Gazette*, 12 June 1813.

¹¹ *Sydney Gazette*, 16 October, 1813, p. 1.

¹² Young, *op. cit.* Copies of the book are held in four public libraries in Australia, and in the libraries of the Royal Australian Historical Society, and the University of Melbourne. The book is also held by the New York Public Library System.

¹³ New South Wales, Census and Population Books, 1811-1825.

¹⁴ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 May 1815, p.2.

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- ¹⁵ *Joseph Arnold Journal, 8 March-17 December 1815*, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, C 720/4, pp.419-20.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.482-87.
- ¹⁷ History of the 73rd Regiment of Foot. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/73rd \(Perthshire\) Regiment of Foot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/73rd_(Perthshire)_Regiment_of_Foot) Accessed 31 August 2018. Lieutenant John Maclaine, a cousin of Governor Lachlan Macquarie of NSW, was also a member of the 73rd Regiment and died during the campaign to suppress the Uva Rebellion. Maclaine was a controversial figure who, among other matters, was accused of the summary execution of suspected rebels without trial or due process. See -- <https://www.mq.edu.au/macquarie-archive/lema/biographies/profiles/maclainejohn.html> Accessed 6 Sep 2018.
- ¹⁸ Young, *op.cit.*, pp.15,23.
- ¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_India_Company
- ²⁰ India Office, *op cit.* <http://indiafamily.bl.uk/ui/FullDisplay.aspx?RecordId=014-000046507>. Accessed 10 Sep 2018.
- ²¹ India Deaths and Burials, 1719-1948, Family Search, FHL microfilm 498988.
<https://familysearch.org/pal:MM9.1.1/FGLL3YL>.
- ²² Now a place of humanitarian crisis with hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees forced into flee to Bangladesh (formerly Bengal, India).
- ²³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sittwe>
- ²⁴ India, Select Marriages, 1792-1948.
- ²⁵ 'Penang Journalist dead', *The Straits Times*, 5 March 1907, p.7.
- ²⁶ *Eastern Daily Mail* 8 Mar 1907.
- ²⁷ *The Straits Times*, *op cit.*
- ²⁸ *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 7 March 1907, p.157.