

William Keane (1819 - 1887)



The Guard, the prisoner, the sister, and a secret romance.....

Born in Tipperary, Ireland in 1819 William Keane was one of the 68 Pensioner Guards on board the Edwin Fox employed to guard the convicts on the 1858 voyage from England to Australia.

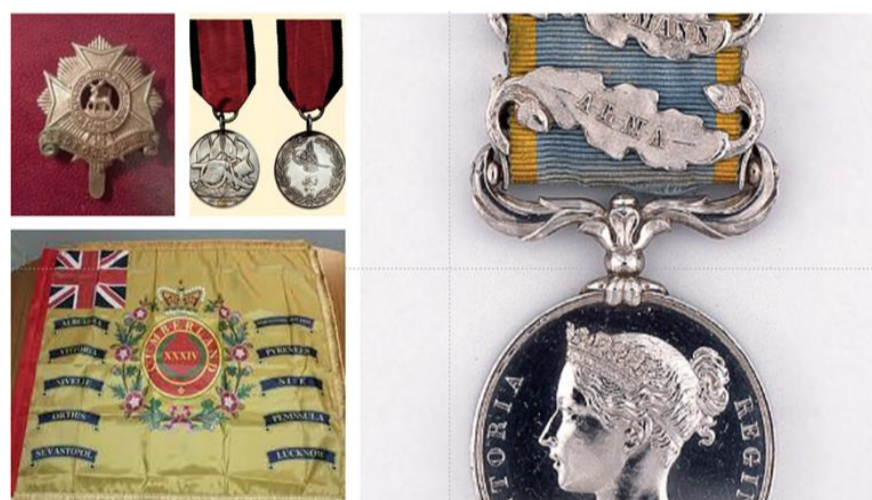
As with a number of the other guards he travelled with family members and in William's case he travelled with his younger sister Mary, but more on that later.

William joined the British army ~ 1839 serving in both the 16th and 88th British Regiments and spent time posted in India, Gibraltar, West Indies, Corfu, and the Crimea serving a total of 17 years and 50 days,

He was awarded the Crimea Medal Clasps Alma, Inkerman & Sebastopol, and the Crimea Turkish Medal.

In Australia, he found work as a labourer and spent some time as an enrolled guard until they were disbanded in 1887.

William died in 1887 because of severe burns he received at home Adelaide Street Fremantle



John McCann

During the voyage Mary and John met and so started a romance, William was said to be vehemently opposed to the relationship and to the eventual marriage of his younger sister.

However, the marriage lasted 18 years and ended when John died of pneumonia in Geraldton on 13 November 1880. They had 10 children together which Mary raised after John's death.

John had been convicted at Manchester court in 1857, his crime was to steal one shirt, one sheet, one handkerchief, one pair of boots and one pair of shoes. For this he received a sentence of six years transportation. However, he had previous convictions for theft under one of his aliases John Walker.

