

## **The Hoad Family Narrative**

**John Gray Hoad** was born in Offham, Kent, England in 1793. Kent, south-east of London, was known as the 'Garden of England', because of its abundance of orchards and hop gardens.

In his early working life, John was a humble farm labourer. However, by the age of 48, he owned a 5 acre farm and was a hops dealer. Hops were Kent's most famous crop and required a large, itinerant workforce, many of whom came down from London's East End, Ireland or were gypsy (Romany) travellers. Hops were used to add flavour and aroma to beer, making it clearer and less perishable.

At the age of 29, he married Rebecca Emma Poole, aged 22. 4 years later, Emma gave birth to their second son **John Poole Hoad** (10<sup>th</sup> February, 1828), who was the third of nine children.

By his late 60s, John Gray Hoad had become very prosperous. He had acquired a 50 acre property and employed 4 labourers and lived in the very substantial Hoad House which still exists today under the protection of a Heritage listing in the UK. However, at the time of his death in 1871, his farm was recorded at only 8 acres.

In 1848 John Poole Hoad, at the age of 20, migrated to Australia on the 'Fairlie' with his brother, Mark, who was one year his senior. The Fairlie departed from Plymouth on 30 April 1848 and arrived at Sydney on 7 August 1848. They were soon joined by a wave of migrants coming to Australia as the gold rush exploded in the early 1850s. The Australian population trebled in the 20 years after 1851. John and Mark tried their luck around Sofala, NSW. Between 1851 and 1854, the population of Sofala went from a couple of hundred, up to 10,000 and back to a couple of hundred. The brothers apparently had no luck finding gold or a marriageable young woman. It is estimated that during the gold rush women comprised less than 20% of the population.

They moved north to the fertile NSW farming district of the Hunter Valley. At around this time, it is rumoured that they had a falling out and never spoke to each other during the latter part of their lives.

John Poole Hoad married Caroline Wilks in 1856 in St James Church, Morpeth. He was 28 years old and she was only 15! Morpeth, at the time was a thriving river port serving the flourishing Hunter Valley. In 1872, at the age of 32, Caroline gave birth to **Frederick James Hoad** at Largs, a small rural village 5km from Morpeth. Frederick was the 8th of 14 children.

Frederick married Louisa Ennis at West Maitland in 1896. He was 24 years old and Louisa was 23. Frederick and Louisa moved to Kurri Kurri and Frederick became a Lampman in one of the underground coal mines to which the town owed its existence. Mining at the time, was very dangerous work. Miners were forever fearful that the lamp flame would trigger a coal seam gas explosion. There was such an explosion in 1895 at Stanford Merthyr, killing six, injuring 9 and putting 400 men out of work.

Louisa gave birth to **Arthur Hoad** at East Maitland in 1897. Arthur was the 2<sup>nd</sup> of three boys. He soon followed his father into the mines around Kurri Kurri, starting an electrical apprenticeship at the age of 14. During his time there the local mining operations were very large, even by world standards. Richmond Main set a world record for a vertical shaft mine by hauling up 3400 tons in one eight-hour shift. It was, at one time, the largest shaft mine in the Southern Hemisphere employing 1200 men and boys, 200 pit horses.

In 1919, at the age of 22, Arthur married Elsie May Reddy, 18 in the Church of England and settled in the village of Heddon Greta on the outskirts of Kurri Kurri.