



ROBERT AND DIANA RAYNER AND FAMILY

Robert Rayner arrived in Australia as a convict on the "Burrell" on the 19th December 1830. He had been tried at Ipswich on the 22nd March 1830 and sentenced to 7 years for stealing shoes. A 16 year old farm boy, native of Suffolk, he was described height 5'1 1/4", complexion-ruddy, hair-dark and eyes- dark hazel. He had a small scar on the right side of his face.

On arrival as a Special Order, he was assigned to work on the roads. In 1837 General Muster of Convicts, he was listed as working for John Jones in the district of Cassilis. On the 26th October 1838 Robert Rayner obtained his Certificate of Freedom.

Diana was possibly born in the Mudgee area on the 29th December 1826. Her first child was born Mulgoa on the 23rd December 1839. According to the Baptism Register of St Thomas', Mulgoa, Sarah was the child of James Knight and "Diana, an unbaptised aborigine". James Knight was a Labourer, who worked for the Cox family. Sarah Knight married William Collins at Mudgee on the 5th July 1858. They had a family of 14 children. Sarah Anne Collins died at Wellington on the 25th October 1919.

On the 8th September 1840, Diana Mudgee married William Phillips, a convict, who worked for George Cox. William Phillips arrived in Australia on the "Cormandel" in 1820. He was assigned to Windsor for distribution. In 1828 Census he is listed as working on Iron Gang-2. Although he had been transported for life for the crime of "Larceny from Person" he obtained his ticket of leave on the 19th February 1838. It was altered for Mudgee on the 15th July 1840, and William Phillips obtained a Conditional Pardon on the 2nd March 1846.

Diana and William Phillips had two daughters, Mary-Ann, born 19th May 1842 and Emma, born 5th November 1845. Both were born at Gratti. Soon after, William Phillips seems to have parted company with Diana, and probably died in Mudgee in 1852 or 1862. I have been unable to find any record of
* what became of Mary-Ann; possibly she died at an early age. Emma married Basil Dickinson at Piambong on the 4th July 1866, and a daughter Emily was born on 1872. Emma Dickinson died of typhoid fever on the 31 January 1873 at Mudgee, when Emily was only 3 months old.

* (MARY-ANN RAYNER "MARRIED" MICHAEL PERRY AT NAMOI IN 1861.)

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Robert Rayner and Diana had three children born at Grattai. William was born on the 22nd August 1848, Elizabeth was born on the 21st November 1848, and Jane was born on the 12th April 1851. William did not marry and apparently died in Queensland. Elizabeth married John Blackhall on the 4th July 1866, in a double ceremony with Emma and Basil Dickinson at the Rayner family residence. Elizabeth and John began their family at Piambong, but moved to Spicers Creek about 1875. They had a family of fifteen, although three died as babies. Elizabeth Blackhall died at Spicers Creek on the 11th October 1917. Jane Rayner had two daughters, Diana and Caroline, before she married George Vitnell at Mudgee on the 6th August 1872. They had a family of five boys and one girl. Jane Vitnell died at Dubbo on the 24th March 1919.

About 1855 Robert and Diana moved to Piambong, and four more children were born there. Shadrack, born on the 1st April 1855, Caroline, born on the 12th July 1858, Harriet, born on the 6th January 1861, and Thomas born on the 26th January 1866. Shadrack Robert Rayner married Sarah Ann Metcolfe at Mudgee on the 18th April 1877, and they had a family of four girls and one boy. Shadrack Rayner died at Mudgee on the 13th December 1924. Caroline Rayner died of whooping cough at Piambong on the 11th November 1860. Harriet "married" Richard Smith in 1878, and had a son and two daughters. Harriet Smith died at Dubbo on the 7th December 1885. Thomas Rayner was only five years old, when he died at Piambong on the 3rd June 1871.

Robert Rayner acquired 30 acres of land at Piambong in 1855, and another 30 acres on 1859. He was "accidentally killed by a dray passing over him" on Piambong Road near Mudgee on the 16th October 1874. He died interstate, and because he and Diana never married, "having no person of kin to him in the said Colony." The Estate consisted of ninety acres of land, 11 head of horned cattle and 58 sheep. However Edward Cover held a mortgage on the land and had a "partnership claim upon certain cattle, sheep, crops etc." Robert also had a debt of 10 guineas to George Henry Cox (with interest "eleven pounds one shilling") and also owed William Kellett of Old Flagstaff Stores "eight pounds and sixteen shillings" for cash and goods supplied". The land and other property belonging to the Estate were sold at public auction. This is probably the time when John and Elizabeth Blackhall moved to Spicers Creek.

It seems that Robert had two other children, Ann (born 1858) and Robert (born 1863) with "Mary Cummings, unmarried" at Grattai. Mary Cummings was a sister of Edward Cover's wife, Susannah. Ann Rayner was baptised on the same day as one of the Cover's daughters.

Diana Rayner applied for Conditional Purchase of 400 acres of land at Piambong in 1885. In 1892 she acquired Conditional Lease of another 879 acres. Also on 1892 Shadrack applied for Conditional Purchase of 640 acres, and Conditional Lease of another 640 acres. However in 1895 Diana's land was taken over

by Reginald Belmore Cox. Also in 1895 Shedrick's Conditional Lease was taken over by George Henry Cox.

In the 1891 Census for County of Wellington, locality of Piambong Shadrack Rayner's household contained 2m and 5f, which probably included Diana, as Shadrack's wife died in 1888.

From "Yewen's Directory of the Landholders of N.S.W." published in 1900 for Hargraves Division-Piambong P.U. Shadrack Rayner is listed as a dairy farmer and grazier.

Diana Rayner died at Piambong on the 4th May 1902. She was buried at Piambong, as was Robert Rayner and other members of the family. There is a headstone for Thomas Rayner (son of Shadrack) who died on the 12th May 1913 on a property now owned by Bob Loneragan. It would seem likely that other family members were buried there also.

On certificates of some family members, Diana's maiden name is given as Jennings, although the origin of this name is unknown.