

James Thomas MORISSET

(1780 – 1852)



Photo from the original miniature held by the Morisset Family

The following information was compiled from research into Family History. James Thomas Morisset is Ron Thompson's ggggrandfather and Ron is descended from Janetta Louisa Morisset the eldest daughter of James Thomas and Emily Morisset.

The research is ongoing and we hope to discover more information on the Morisset family.

James Thomas MORISSET m. Emily VAUX

*Janetta Louisa MORISSET m. Prosper John de
MESTRE*

Mary Ann Eva de MESTRE m. 2nd John WADE

*Prosper Tom Aulaire de Mestre WADE m. Violetial
PRYKE*

Jean Violetial WADE m. Albert Cecil THOMPSON

Ronald Eric THOMPSON

Miniature of James Thomas Morisset:

The image on the facing page is a copy of the original miniature of James Thomas Morisset. It is possible that the miniature was painted by a family member at the time of James Morisset's commissioning as an Ensign with the 80th Regiment of Foot which occurred in 1798.

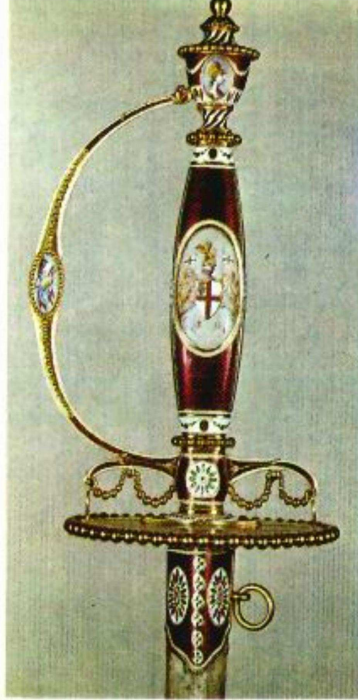
The miniature was passed down through the family and it remains in the possession of the Morisset family who had it extensively restored to its current condition. During the restoration process a lock of hair was found behind the portrait. This was apparently a common practice at the time the original miniature was painted.

There have been some copies of the painting and two other miniatures produced but they do not have the quality of this original and restored miniature. One copy is held by the Mitchell Library of New South Wales and the other is in private possession. No other portraits were taken due to the facial disfigurement James Thomas Morisset suffered during the conflict of Albuera at the Peninsula War in 1811.

James Thomas Morisset, the son of James Morisset and Jannetta Tadwell, was baptised on 21 August 1780 in the Church of St Giles in the Fields, Holborn.

James Morisset Senior was a famous goldsmith of Huguenot descent. He married Jannetta Tadwell at St James' Paddington, London, in February 1778. James Morisset crafted presentation swords and snuff boxes, and many of his works remain today held by the Queen, in Museums or private collections.

English small sword hilts in gold or gilt silver, set with coloured enamels, were the specialty of the London goldsmith James Morisset. The majority were created for presentation to British Naval Officers during the Napoleonic wars.



PRESENTATION SWORD This sword was presented by the East India Company to Lt.-Col. James Hartley for gallantry during the Mahratta War in 1779. It was made by James Morisset, and the hilt is solid gold.



Freedom box crafted by James Morisset. Presented to Captain Calder by the City of London for his role at the Battle of Cape St. Vincent, Feb 1797.

James Thomas Morisset was commissioned as an ensign on the 1 Feb 1798 with the 80th Regiment, the Staffordshire Volunteers. He joined his Regiment in India, and on 8 November 1800 was promoted to Lieutenant. The Regiment was sent to Egypt, but before they arrived, the battle of Alexandria has been fought and won. Despite this, Officers of the 80th were still awarded the Sultan's Medal. This medal of James Morisset is now held in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, New South Wales.

In December 1805, while home on sick leave, he purchased a Captain's commission in the 48th Regiment and was engaged in the battles of the Peninsular Wars (at the crossing of the Douro, at Talavera and Albuera). He also fought in Spain under Wellington. During these engagements, he was badly wounded by a sabre cut and suffered facial disfigurement, which he carried with him for the rest of his life. He went on to battles at Vittoria, Nive, Orthes and Toulouse. He was awarded the Military General Service Medal with clasps – Talavera, Busaco, Albuera, Vittoria, Nive, Orthes, and Toulouse. He did not qualify for the Egypt clasp, as the 80th Regiment did not take part in the battle of Alexandria.



*The Awards of Lt Colonel James Thomas Morisset
The Military General Service Medal with clasps:
Talavera, Busaco, Albuera, Vittoria, Nive, Orthes, Toulouse.
The Sultan's Gold Medal
These awards are now held by the Mitchell Library, Sydney, NSW.
These medals were donated by Mrs S.H. Sellheim wife of Major General V.C. Sellheim*

James Thomas Morisset departed with the 48th Regiment from Cork on the “Matilda” and arrived in Sydney, the colony of New South Wales on 3 August, 1817. In December 1818, he relieved Captain Wallis as Commandant of the Newcastle Penal Colony, a position he held until 1823. James Thomas Morisset was the longest serving Commandant of Newcastle and he was highly praised for his diligence by Commissioner J.T. Bigge and the Governor Lachlan Macquarie. During his time in Newcastle, he continued the building of roads, public buildings and a breakwater across the narrow inlet, separating the mainland from Nobby’s Island. In 1821, Governor Macquarie admired his work during a visit and named Morisset’s Lagoon in his honour. These ponds now appear to form part of Meri Meri Creek. He also had a convict constructed bath hewn out of a rock face at Newcastle Beach originally called the Commandant’s Bath, but now known as the Bogey Hole. The Bogey Hole is presently classed as a construction of significance and is listed on the New South Wales State Heritage Register. He made the first overland trip between Newcastle and Sydney, camping along the way at the location of the town, Morisset, which was consequentially named after him. This trek allowed the further survey and construction of an inland route between Sydney and Newcastle. In 1975 a tree located in the town of Morisset was classed as significant as a stopping place for James Thomas Morisset and a plaque was erected as a memorial.



*Plaque attached to tree in the town of Morisset, New South Wales
Photograph taken by Ian Wade*

During his time in Newcastle, he was promoted to Major. He remained in Newcastle until November 1823 when he was appointed the Commandant of Bathurst. The 48th Regiment was sent to India but Major Morisset remained in Bathurst.

Major Morisset's appointment as Commandant at Bathurst was at a time of high unrest between local settlers and the aboriginal inhabitants. Martial law was declared but he made a good impression by his firm control of the situation. In 1825 he took leave of absence to return to England.

During his time back in England, James received a letter from Mr Robert Hay, the Under Secretary for the Colonies and Secretary to Lord Bathurst, requesting a report on convict control in the colony of New South Wales

On 2 Aug, 1825, James Thomas Morisset applied for the appointment of Commandant of Norfolk Island and Lord Bathurst recommended this appointment. The penal colony at Norfolk Island was to be reopened for the second settlement where the worst felons would be Major Morisset then requested he be appointed as Civil and Military Commandant of the penal settlement. He was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in 1826.

Whilst he was in England he married **Emily Louisa Vaux** on 2 May 1826 at New Church, Ryde, on the Isle of Wight. Emily was the daughter of **John and Elizabeth Louisa Vaux** of Ryde. John and Elizabeth Vaux resided at *Barfield Cottage*, Ryde. James and Emily's first child, a daughter, **Janetta Louisa Morisset** was born on 28 Feb 1827 on Isle of Wight, UK and baptised 2 Apr 1827, Sevenoaks, Kent, UK.

On 4 June 1827 the family departed London on board the "Harmony" and arrived in Sydney on 27 September 1827. James Thomas Morisset was not able to take up the position at Norfolk immediately because there was no suitable married accommodation. This was due to the first settlement buildings being destroyed and Governor Darling thought it was not a suitable place for women. In the interim, he was appointed to the position of Chief Superintendent of Police of Sydney on 19 October 1827, a position he held until he took up his appointment on Norfolk Island on 26 May 1829. During his time at Norfolk Island, he had the reputation for being a stern disciplinarian, although this was probably no more than the standard of the day. This period of the Second Penal Settlement of Norfolk was when the worst criminals were sent to the island. He did not enjoy his appointment and being of ill health, he requested a transfer to some civil position in New South Wales.

In early 1834 James Thomas Morisset became seriously ill and had to be moved to Sydney, leaving his family on Norfolk Island. This was following an unsuccessful Mutiny attempt by the convicts.

This must have been a terrible time for his wife, Emily and his young family. In 1834, Emily's brother, Henry Edward Vaux, Deputy Commissary General, was accidentally drowned at Norfolk Island, by falling from a rock whilst fishing.

It is also believed that the beautiful Emily Bay on Norfolk Island was named after Mrs Morisset, however, this has not been confirmed.

Lt Col Morisset sold his army Commission and gave notice of his intention to resign and was given a year's sick leave.

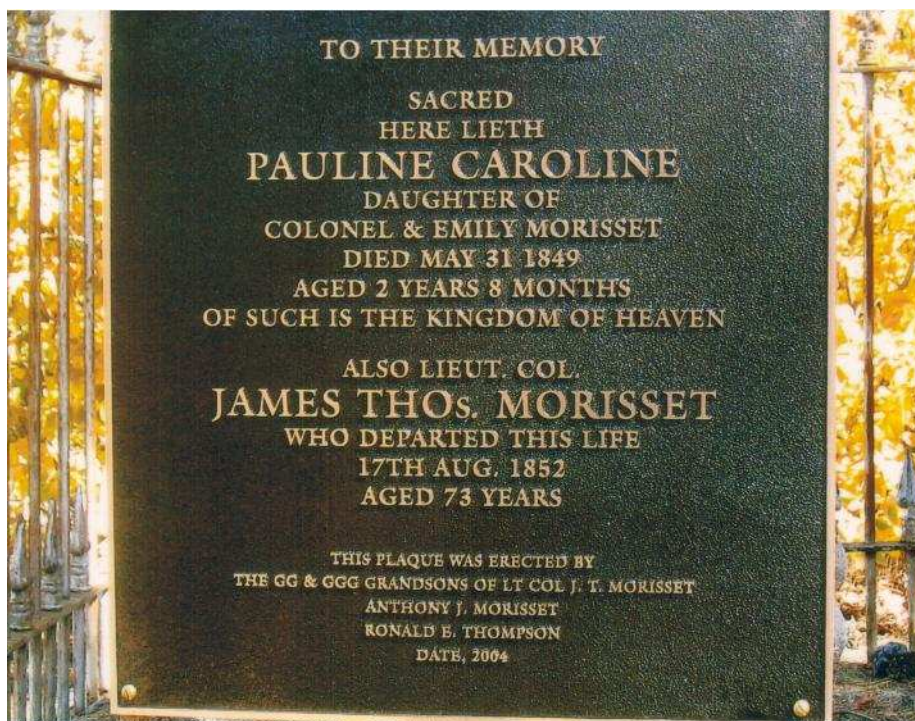
Lt Colonel Morisset resigned his Army commission and purchased a country estate at Winburndale Brook near Bathurst. He resided there on sick leave until his appointment, on 7 May 1838, as Police Magistrate of the Bathurst district. His reputation as an Administrator of Justice during these early days of Bathurst was held in high regard. He purchased land on the Sydney Road at Kelso and built a substantial residence on a rise of a hill not far from the present Kelso Hotel-Motel. Morrisset Street although spelt differently was named prior to Morisset's death to perpetuate his everlasting presence in Bathurst. He lost finances in the Bank of Australia crash in 1842 and was forced to sell his property and devote part of his salary to paying off his debts.

His later years were spent in ill health and he died on 17 August 1852 and is buried in the Morisset family vault in the Anglican Cemetery of the Holy Trinity Church at Kelso. The obituary of Lieutenant Colonel Morisset recorded that, "he served his country with fidelity and zeal during the best years of a long life-time, in both of which he has seen hard service, and is not unworthy of its favourable remembrance".

When James Thomas Morisset died, he left Emily and her family without any means of support. In Bathurst on September 13, 1852, she filed a petition to His Excellency, Sir Charles Fitzroy and the Legislative Council. She asked the House to take into consideration the long and valuable service of her husband during almost the whole period of his life. Her petition was for a pension for herself and the children still dependant on her care.

Mrs Emily Morisset died on 7 March 1892, aged eighty-nine, at McDougall Street, North Sydney, NSW. She is buried in St Thomas's Church of England Cemetery, North Sydney, NSW. James and Emily Morisset had five sons and five daughters.

There was an unacknowledged son, Ambrose Australia Gripus Morisset born 22 Jan 1825 to Johanna Deasy/Deasey. Ambrose Morisset was baptised at St John's Parramatta on 6 Feb 1825.



Morisset Family Vault in the Pioneer Cemetery at the Holy Trinity Church, Kelso, New South Wales. Burial place of Lt Colonel James Thomas Morisset and his daughter, Pauline Caroline Morisset.



*Morisset Family Vault at the Pioneer Cemetery, Holy Trinity Church Kelso, New South Wales
Above photographs taken by Ronald Thompson*



*Headstone for Emily Morisset at St Thomas' Church of England Cemetery,
North Sydney, New South Wales
Photograph taken by Ian Wade*

The Children of James and Emily Morisset:

1. **Janetta Louisa MORISSET** b.28 Feb 1827, Isle Of Wight, England and baptised 2 Apr 1827 in Sevenoaks, Kent, England. Married in the Church of England, Kelso, NSW on 8 Jun 1850 to **Prosper John de MESTRE**, the son of **Prosper and Mary Ann de MESTRE** of Terrara, Shoalhaven, NSW. The witnesses to the marriage were Francis Lord of Kelso and Caroline Lawson of the Macquarie Plains. Chaplain William Lisle performed the wedding ceremony. Janetta died on 27 November 1918 at Ashley Street, Chatswood, NSW and is buried in the Presbyterian Cemetery, Gore Hill, NSW. Janetta and Prosper had one son and five daughters. Their son, **Prosper Morisset de MESTRE**, was a crown land agent and died as a young man of meningitis. He never married. Their daughters were:
Emily Melanie Wason de MESTRE married **Dr Thomas PICKBURN** but she died leaving a very young family. Emily and Thomas had 4 sons and one daughter.
Mary Ann Eva de MESTRE married 1st to **Captain William FRASER**. He was 67 years of age when they married and died 2 years later. Mary Ann Eva then married 2nd to **John WADE**. Mary Ann and John Wade had two sons, **Prosper Tom Aulaire de Mestre WADE** and **Eric Erratt de Mestre WADE**.
Lily Vaux de MESTRE died as an infant aged 14 months.
Kate Hope de MESTRE married **William Seymour WELLS** Kate and William had 2 children, Marjorie Seymour Wells and Prosper de Mestre Seymour Wells.
Mabel Faith de MESTRE, the youngest child married **Dr Thomas PICKBURN** after the death of her sister. Mabel & Thomas had 4 daughters and one son.
Prosper died at the age of 42 leaving Janetta a widow at 37 years of age with a very young family to raise. Janetta remarried in 1864 to **Thomas Morton RICHARDS**. Richards. Janetta and Thomas Richards moved to Cambewarra and built a home which was called "Barfield". Janetta and Thomas had one son, William Morisset **RICHARDS**. William married in 1899 to Annie Sheppard of Cambewarra, NSW. They had three children and were divorced in 1908.
2. **Edith Julia Eliza MORISSET** b. 25 Nov 1828 Charlotte Place in Sydney, NSW. Edith married 5 Jul 1851 in St Michael's Roman Catholic Church, Bathurst, NSW to **James C. CASSIDY**, son of Barnard Cassidy and Anne Ryan. James Cassidy was the son of an Irish Catholic convict and Edith was 5 months pregnant at the time of her marriage and married under the maiden name of her mother, Vaux. James Cassidy died 20 Jul 1917, Bathurst, NSW at age 86 years and he is buried in the Roman Catholic Cemetery, Bathurst, NSW. James was employed as an Auctioneer. Edith and James had 5 children.

Where and when Edith died remains a mystery but it is strongly believed that she died 26 Feb 1900, 180 Nott Street, Port Melbourne, Vic under the name of Emily Jane Morisset and was buried in the Melbourne General cemetery at Carlton, Victoria.

A death certificate for an Emily Jane Morisset lists her birth as c1830 and her parents as James Morisset and Emily Vaux. The informant on the death certificate was a Thomas Mayflower Crispe who died in 1903 and he is buried in the same grave as Emily/Edith.

3. **Edric Norfolk Vaux MORISSET** b. 22 Jun 1830 Norfolk Island, NSW. Married 3 Jul 1860 in St Bartholomew's Church, Prospect, NSW to **Eliza LAWSON**, the daughter of William Lawson Jnr and Caroline Icely. Edric attended The King's School, Parramatta, New South Wales as a boarder in the School House from 1843-1846. Edric joined the Police Force in 1853 and became Superintendent of Police and Deputy Inspector General. Edric was a Police Magistrate and Commandant of Native Police in Queensland from 1853. Superintendent of Police at Bathurst, Maitland and Goulburn, New South Wales. Edric died 26 Aug 1887 in Goulburn, New South Wales. Eliza died 11 Oct 1900 in Goulburn, New South Wales. Edric and Eliza had no children.



Edric Norfolk Vaux MORISSET
(*Photograph from Family Album*)



Eliza (nee Lawson) MORISSET
(*Photograph from Family Album, Sydney*)

Whilst in Maitland as the Police Superintendent, Edric had a home built called "Barfield". This home is now classified by the National Trust. Edric and Eliza owned a property called "Marston" in Goulburn and at the time of her death Eliza also owned another property "Lansdowne" near Goulburn. This property was bequeathed to her nephew Alfred Rendell Street. Eliza also bequeathed money to Ronan Morisset and Ada Morisset.

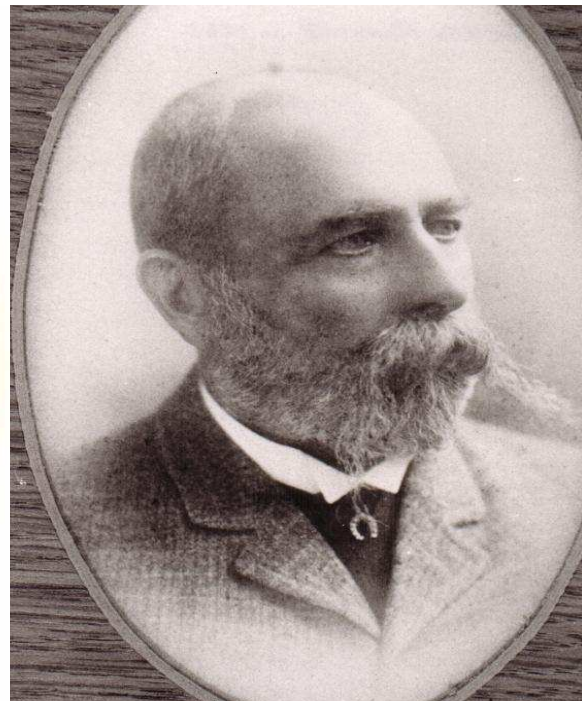
In his mother, Emily Morisset's first Will, Edric is named as an heir and executor but he died in 1887 so her will was amended. Emily's first will, written in Oct 1881, has two witnesses, Maria Emily (nee Lawson) Icely and Eliza (nee Lawson) Morisset.

4. **Fleurette MORISSET** b. 4 Nov 1831 Norfolk Island, NSW. Married 1st 12 May 1853 to **Andrew KINSMAN** who d. 1 Sep 1855. They had one son, Andrew b. 1854 d. 1892. Married 2nd in 1858 in NSW to **Carl Friedrich REIMENSCHNIEDER** b. Havana, Cuba 1833. Carl was naturalized in 1856 and Carl died 1894 in Glebe, NSW. Fleurette died in 10 Jul 1923, Stanmore, NSW. They had nine children and c1913 a son of Fleurette and Carl changed his family name to Morisset.

5. **Laura Theresa MORISSET** b. 22 Jul 1833 on Norfolk Island, NSW. Married 6 Jun 1865 Anglican Church of St Mary in Balmain, NSW to **Philip Frederick SELLHEIM**, b. 1832, Conradsdorf, Hesse, Darmstadt, Austria, son of Heinrich Sellheim and Marian Emma Sophia Schaefer. Philip studied Merino breeding in Silesia, emigrated to Queensland in 1855 and managed Banana Station, Lower Dawson for four years. Philip owned Strathmore Station from 1861-1866 but due to falling prices he sold the property then managed Valley of Lagoons from 1866-1870. Laura and Philip had 2 sons and 1 daughter. On the 14 February, 1873 the Sellheim family sailed on board the “*Boomerang*” from the Port of Brisbane to Sydney, New South Wales as cabin passengers. This trip to Sydney was prior to the birth of their daughter Leonore. Laura died 26 Aug 1878 in the Palmer River District of Far North Queensland and she is buried in Maytown Cemetery, Queensland. At the time of Laura’s death Philip was goldfields warden at the Palmer River 1874-1880 and the Sellheim children would have been very young with Victor 12 years, Casimir 7 years and Leonore only 4 years of age. The cause of Laura’s death was heart failure due to many weeks of suffering from continual Gulf fever. In 1861 Laura had traveled to England with her mother, Emily Morisset and her sister Ada Morisset. We assume that they were visiting Emily’s elderly parents, John and Louisa Vaux. In 1880-1888 Philip was goldfields warden Charters Towers then Gympie from 1888-1892. In 1892-1899 Philip Sellheim was Under-Secretary for Mines in Queensland. Philip d.12 Oct 1899.



*Laura Theresa SELLHEIM
(nee Morisset)
Photo from Family album*



*Philip Frederick SELLHEIM
Photo from John Oxley Library
Brisbane*

A son of Laura and Philip was **Victor Conradsdorf Morisset SELLHEIM** CB, CMG, b. 1866 in Balmain, New South Wales who was educated at Brisbane Grammar and qualified as a Surveyor. He enlisted in the Kennedy Regiment, commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1892 and was promoted to Captain in 1893. He attended training courses in England and was attached to various British Headquarters when war broke out in South Africa. He joined the Queensland Mounted Infantry for the advance on Pretoria. Victor had a long and illustrious Military career serving in India and in Egypt and England during WW1. He attained the rank of Brigadier General on 1 Feb 1916 and was a member of The Military Board. He was awarded the Companion of the Bath (CB) and was made a Companion of St Michael and St George (CGM). He was promoted to Major General in January 1920. Victor resigned from the Army in 1927 to take up the post of Administrator of Norfolk Island where his grandfather, James Thomas Morisset, had served as Commandant.

In 1928 Victor suffered a fatal heart attack and was buried in Kingston Cemetery, Norfolk Island. His grave on Norfolk Island is subject to the Sellheim Grave Act relating to the upkeep. Victor married 7 Dec 1890 in Townsville, Queensland, to Susan Henrietta Howell-Griffith. Susan d. 9 Oct 1944, Sydney, NSW.



*Victor Conradsdorf SELLHEIM
Photograph from Family Album
Copy held by Australian War Memorial, Canberra*

The second son of Laura and Philip was **Casimir Vaux SELLHEIM** who served with The Queensland Imperial Bushmen during the Boer War; he was promoted to Captain and transferred to 5 Queensland Imperial Bushmen. He was decorated with the Queens Medal with 3 clasps and the Kings Medal with 2 clasps. Casimir was born 5 Feb 1871, Valley of Lagoons Station, near Cardwell, Queensland and he was also educated at Brisbane Grammar School. He married 19 Apr 1899 to **Elizabeth Thomson**.

During WW1 Casimir changed his name to Morisset and was appointed as a Major on Special Service to escort Italian Reservists back to Italy to serve their country. In 1918 the family was residing at Cooper Street, Double Bay, Sydney, NSW. In 1936 Casimir was residing at "Dimby Plains", Quirindi with his daughter Leonore and her husband Geoffrey Morgan-Jones. Casimir died in 1949 at Quirindi, New South Wales.

Casimir and Elizabeth had a daughter:

Leonore Ada Alexia MORISSET b. c. 1905 in Middleburgh, Transvaal, South Africa. Leonore married 22nd April 1931 to **Geoffrey Morgan-Jones**, the son of Edward Jones and Blanche Ellen Morgan.



*Casimir Vaux SELLHEIM/MORISSET
Photograph from Family Album
Copy held by Australian War Memorial*

Leonore Ysabel MORISSET the daughter of Philip and Laura Sellheim was born in 1874 in New South Wales and 7 Jan 1914 she married **Reverend Frederick William Edward Wilkinson** b. c1874 Hobart, Tasmania, son of Frederick Wilkinson and Isabella Elenora Hamilton. At the time of marriage Leonore was living in Neutral Bay, Sydney, NSW. Leonore died 8 June 1962 of cancer and heart problems in Wollstonecraft, Sydney, NSW. Leonore is interred in the Northern Suburbs Crematorium, Sydney, NSW. Leonore was an informant on the death certificate of her uncle, Ronan Kelso Morisset who died in Brisbane in 1929. At the time of her father's death in 1899 Leonore was living with her Aunt Ada Morisset at McDougall Street, North Sydney.

6. **Otho Bathurst Palmer Morisset** b. 22 Nov 1835 Bathurst, NSW d. 14 Jan 1891 in St Leonards, Sydney, NSW. Otho was a Superintendent of Stock and he never married.
7. **Rudolf Roxburgh MORISSET** (known as Dosh) b. 8 Apr 1838 Bathurst Plains, NSW. Married 22 Nov 1857 in Port Curtis, Queensland to **Margaret CLARKE**. Rudolf died in 7 Jun 1887 in Deniliquin, NSW. Rudolf attended The King's School, Parramatta, NSW as a boarder in School House from 1850-1852. He would have left the school after the death of his father in 1852. In 1859 Rudolf joined the Native Mounted Police Force in Queensland and he was stationed with the 1st Division covering the Port Curtis and Leichardt districts. He was listed as a 2nd Lieutenant Rudolf was a keen horseman and in 1863 he won the first Rockhampton Steeplechase despite two falls which resulted in his arm being broken in two places. Rudolf was a Justice of the Peace in Queensland. Rudolf was Police Magistrate at Menindie 1875-1878, Wilcannia 1878-1880, Hill End 1880-1883 and Deniliquin 1883-1886. Margaret d. 1921 Maitland, NSW. Rudolf and Margaret had one son, **Charles Seymour MORISSET**. Charles Seymour Morisset b. 1858 and died 28 Jul 1953 in East Maitland, New South Wales at age 95. Charles married in 1913 in East Maitland, NSW to **Emma Amelia SPARKE**. They had no children.



Rudolf Roxburgh (Dosh) MORISSET

Photo from Family Album

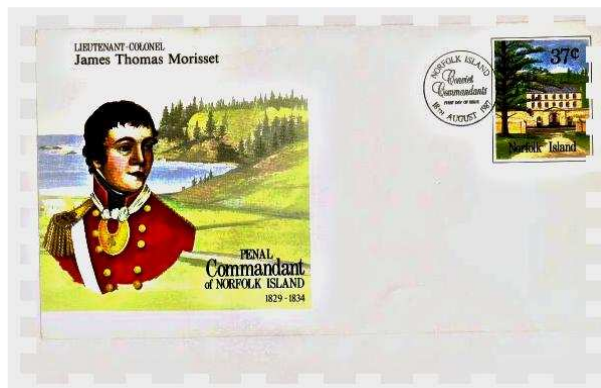
8. **Ronan Kelso Morisset** b. 29 Feb 1840 Bathurst, NSW. According to the Electoral Roll of Central Queensland dated 1870-1871 Ronan was living in the Valley of Lagoons Station with the Sellheim family. Ronan Kelso Morisset d. 22 Oct 1929 aged 89 years. He died in the Goodna Mental Hospital suffering from cardiac failure and senile dementia and he is buried in the Ipswich Cemetery. On his death certificate his niece Leonore Wilkinson is listed as an informant. Leonore's address at this time is Beatrice Street, Taringa, Queensland. Ronan's occupation was farmer and we believe that Ronan spent many years on various cattle stations in Far North Queensland.

9. **Aulaire Liddiard Morisset** b. 28 Oct 1841 Bathurst, NSW, d. 1 Sep 1909 Townsville, Queensland. married Ann Macarthur in Queensland 15 Nov, 1877. Aulaire was Police Magistrate and Inspector of Police in the Burke District in 1871. He was also the Commissioner of Gold Fields at Cloncurry. Aulaire and Ann had seven children.



Aulaire Liddiard MORISSET

10. **Ada Gulnare Morisset** b. 24 Jun 1843 Kelso, NSW, d. 1912 Sydney, NSW. Ada never married and lived with her mother. Ada traveled to England with her mother and sister, Laura in 1861 and was residing at Kent Cottage, Isle of Wight. Ada was a beneficiary in the will of her sister-in-law, Eliza Morisset (nee Lawson) wife of Edric Morisset
11. **Pauline Caroline Morisset** b. 27 Sep 1846 Kelso, NSW d. 31 May 1849 Kelso, NSW. Pauline is buried with her father in the Morisset Family Vault at Kelso.



First Day Cover issued by Norfolk Island 18 August 1987



*The Holy Trinity Church, Kelso, New South Wales
Photograph taken by Ronald Thompson: 2004*

MORISSET FAMILY RESEARCH

RESEARCH NOTES:

A great deal of research has been undertaken on the Morisset family, in particular of James Thomas Morisset and we have found that much of the published material is very misleading.

“The Fatal Shore” by Robert Hughes has a number of hugely inflated statements not backed up by reference or documentation that can be confirmed.

The first error in the book said James Thomas Morisset was from ‘the 80th Regiment’ when in fact he had been a member of the 48th Regiment of Foot. Next statement of error states that Morisset ‘was a career officer with no family money’. Records show that his commission to Captain cost 1500 pounds and this was obviously paid by his very wealthy father, who was a renowned craftsman of silver and gold objects mainly presentation swords, presentation boxes and jewellery.

The statement made that Lt Col Morisset ‘had a brood of unmarriageable daughters’ is an example of extreme sensationalism. James and Emily’s eldest daughter was Janetta who in 1834 was 7 years of age and still a child, Edith was 5, Fleurette 2 year of age and Laura a baby of 6 months. Records show that all daughters married well and raised many children whose descendants are very proud of their heritage.

Hughes description of Lieutenant Colonel Morisset’s appearance due to his facial wound, received as a fighting soldier during the Peninsular War, is very disturbing to the descendants of James Thomas Morisset, and to any defence force veteran who has been injured during a conflict fighting for his country.

Hughes main source of information appears to come from the Memoirs of Foster Fyans. These memoirs were transcribed from Fyans holograph manuscript given by descendants to the State Library of Melbourne. This manuscript, although interesting and informative, it is described by Fyans descendants as lacking in factual weight and mostly written when he was an elderly man with his active past well behind him. It is written in an erratic style and was referred to as the Fictional Frustrating Fyans.

Hughes obviously only selected any statements damaging to Morisset and did not use any references that praised his work.

The published work of the late Professor John Turner and his teachings of Newcastle History attempted to set a more balanced view of the character of James Thomas Morisset. John Turner’s book, “Newcastle as a Convict Settlement”, gave a full transcript of the report by Commissioner Bigge who praised Morisset for his diligence as Commandant of Newcastle.

The claims made in relation to the amount of, and method of punishment carried out by Morisset, are not the same as the official records. All punishments were recorded and any executions were only carried out on the permission of the Governor of New South Wales. Remarks made by a Captain Currie, of HMS Satellite in regard to Morisset being King Lash may have been made in reaction to Morisset’s strict alcohol restrictions imposed on convicts and soldiers in Newcastle. Many ships tried to smuggle the lucrative trade in alcohol in defiance of Morisset’s orders.

“Newcastle Its First Twenty Years” by Jack Delany has also given an unbiased account of the time Morisset spent at Newcastle and included detailed research on the activities required of a Commandant. Mr Delany’s comment “When one thinks of the highly paid executive of today, one wonders how they would have handled these problems and the multiplicity of duties”. This is over and above the care and discipline of convicts. Morisset was the longest serving Commandant at Newcastle and when he left the once penal settlement Newcastle was ready for free settlers and further development.

BARFIELD:

UK Census records for 1861 show that Emily Morisset’s parents, John and Louisa Vaux were living at “Barfield Cottage” Ryde, Isle of Wight.

Edric built a home in 1865 in East Maitland, NSW and named the home “Barfield”. This home is now classified by the National Trust of NSW.

When Janetta and Thomas Morton Richards moved to Cambewarra their home was called “Barfield”. Barfield Road in Cambewarra is named after the early home of Janetta and Thomas Richards.

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Norfolk Island Bounty Museum
Norfolk Island Cemetery, Shane Quintal
Norfolk Island Kingston Museum

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