

Following Alison, then womens choir's fields of Athenry, poems by convict

Sorrow Songs from Point Puer, 1/12/1841

The following poetical compositions form part of a series from the accomplished pen of an unfortunate, long since passed away, this person, previous to obtaining his freedom, occupied a position on the scholastic staff of the Point Puer youth convict establishment, located adjacent to Port Arthur.

#### THE CAPTIVE

In every path of life, keen woes  
In dense array awaiting stand;  
But who the depths of suffering knows.  
Till banished from his native land.  
If o'er the exile's slumbers creep  
Sweet visions of the distant strand.  
Yet soon he wakes, and wakes to weep.  
As fades away his native land.  
And when he views with hope's bright eyes  
Vistas of opening bliss expand,  
His chains, alas! recall with sighs  
The memory of his native land.  
But, oh, if beaming mercy smiles  
And pity wave her angel hand —  
His heart forgets to grieve awhile.  
Forgets his lost—his native land.

#### MY NATIVE LAND

From the sweet islands of the South,  
That smile in sunny light  
And gem the bosom of the main,  
Like stars the brow of night;  
Across the weary length of earth  
And many a wide, wide sea  
My soul springs back at one swift bound  
My Native Land, to thee!  
Though sever'd far, no stem decree  
My fixed affections move;  
No frowns of scorn, no arm of might,  
Can rend thee from my love,  
Dear as the light that rushes down  
In Nature's merry glee—  
Dear as my own life-blood art thou  
My Native Land, to me!  
Full well I know thy hills are green,  
Thy vales are passing fair;  
That hears—the beautiful and brave—  
In pride and beauty there;  
I know thy deeds in arts and arms—  
That thou art great and free;  
But are these all that bind my heart,  
My Native Land, to thee?  
Ah, no! My dearest friends are thine,

And all that kindred claim,  
Yes, she for whom my bosom burns  
With unextinguished flame.  
And he—my gentle boy—is there,  
Who breathes but love for me,  
E'en 'midst the fate that bears me far,  
My Native Land, from thee!  
For these beneath the glorious blaze  
Of southern skies I sigh;  
For these amidst elysian fields  
The tear bedims mine eye;  
In vain the voice of kindred cheers;  
In vain the burst of glee,  
My bounding spirit starts away,  
My Native Land, to thee.  
Hope! in thy rainbow brightness rise  
O'er skies that frown the while;  
Oh! spread thine arch upon the storm  
And bless me with thy smile  
Oh! give me in thy radiant hues  
Through parting clouds to see,  
One, dear, sweet, promise of return  
My Native Land, to thee!

To be read as though preparing then writing an official letter to his Superior.

I am Richard Kent, I received my appointment and duties expected of me as naval surgeon in December 1792. I assisted the surgeon of the Boddingtons in the necessary attendance of the sick (and) in enforcing compliance with the stipulations made with the contracting ship owner, a Mr Richards for the maintenance and supply of the convicts and the guard during their continuance on board. I received 12 shillings per day until my return. I was expected to see that adequate medicines and other necessary items were provided by the contractor and were administered as required. For the commencement of my assignment I was to await the Boddingtons in the Cobh of Cork.

Writes...

6th February 1793,  
To Sir Evan Nepean,  
Under Secretary of State for the Home Department,  
Naval and Political Intelligence.

Dear Sir Evan,

The Boddingtons arrived here on 23rd of last month, where I found the convicts had been for a considerable time waiting our arrival, and man of them on board the Hibernia, where they had been for seven weeks, very ill in fevers and dysenteries. We received from three sloops eighty nine male convicts, all healthy, and the remainder to make 125 from the Hibernia, which, at coming on board appeared in health. They had not been long on board before several of them complained, and symptoms of fever very apparent amongst them, tho' they were properly wash'd and cleans'd. They are now getting better. I took the five over the stipulated number contracted for from a letter I received from the sheriff, in consequence of a request of his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant that we might take as many more as the ship could conveniently carry. There is a great many more females here than were contracted for. The Boddingtons cannot carry one more of them than her number. The Sugar Cane, I believe, may, as she has better accommodation than the Bod'n. She has not arrived here yet. One soldier has deserted since our arrival here. They are a very troublesome sett, and require more looking after than the convicts. If the winds will permit, Capt'n. Chalmers informs me that he will be ready before or by Monday next. I wish sincerely it was sooner; I fear from the hurry in stowing the water casks that many of them may be found deficient, which will be attended with disagreeable consequences. I hope my taking the five over will meet your approbation. The sheriff has not sent the proper lists with them, but he informs me he had not their crimes as they had been collected from all parts of the kingdom. This will be unpleasant, as there will be no discriminating those guilty of great offences from those whose offences may be small. I must say that it would be right to bind down the captains of ships carrying convicts under the direction of an agent, that he might comply with the orders given him for the preservation of the lives and health of the convicts; for, if I had not persevered and got everything done myself on the Boddingtons, for the cleanliness and comfort of the convicts, I do believe there might be a great mortality amongst them; for my orders respecting them were never attended to, and Captain Chalmers told me he only came in the ship to navigate her. After which I contrived to get the convicts themselves to preserve order, cleanliness and regularity among one another, and I am happy to say that the trouble I took in keeping them in order was amply compensated in the little trouble there was with them in the medical department.

As I think it my duty to inform you of every particular, hope you will excuse my being so tedious....I am etc.  
Richard Kent. - Surgeon Superintendent Kent to Under Secretary Nepean. (2)

Records from the Office of the  
Comptroller-General of Convicts

The following are particulars recorded of a typical child convict I would have had oversight for.

ROBERT ----- , No. 2029. Arrived at Van Diemen's Land, May, 1836, ship, Elphinstone. Tried September 8, 1835. Fourteen years.

Trade—None. Height, 4ft. 5 £ in. Age, 13 in 1836. Complexion—Pale. Head—Oval. Hair—Light flaxen. Visage—Oval. Forehead—High. Eyebrows—Light. Eyes—Right eye half grey, half blue, left grey. Nose—Long. Mouth—Medium Width. Chin—Medium Length. Native place—Greenock. Remarks—Small scar on right and left cheeks. Transported for theft by housebreaking. Gaol report—Once in Bridewell. Hulk report—Good. Stated this offence—Housebreaking and stealing plate. Tried with Daniel McDonald on board. I have been in gaol so often I cannot recollect how many times. Surgeon's report—Stubborn temper, diligent at school, and greatly improved.

There were innumerable journeys to New South Wales and Van Diemens Land that took place on innumerable ships. From the famous first fleet setting sail in 1787, there were many voyages carrying the Irish, the Friendship, the Lady Penrhyn, Prince of Wales, and the Scarborough in 1788, the Neptune in 1790, the Active and the Queen in 1791, the Kitty in 1792, my ship, the Boddingtons and the Sugar Cane in 1793. The Sugar Cane, carried 110 men and 50 women, and on a voyage of 157 days there was one death, by execution. The Friendship, this was in convoy with the Minerva in 1800, the voyage was 176 days, of the 133 convicts on board there were 19 deaths. The Providence in 1810 took 140 men, 41 women, on a 162 day voyage there were 6 deaths. In 1801 there was the Anne 1, 1802, the Atlas 1,2 and the Hercules 1, 1803, the Rolla, 1806, the Tellicherry, the Three Bees in 1812 transported 219 convict men, on the voyage of 149 days there were 9, maybe 10 deaths, on the General Hewitt in 1814, the journey took 165 days, of the 300 men on board, 34 died.

The Tellicherry(6 deaths, 5 male, one female) and the Minerva carried the depredatories operating out of the Wicklow Mountains, caused quite a disruption... the Tellicherry convict log lists among many from all over Ireland, Martin Burke, Glen Imaal, Wicklow, State Prisoner, never tried in Ireland, United Irishman, Michael Dwyer, Camara, Glen Imaal, state Prisoner, never tried in Ireland, United Irishman. John Mernagh, Ballinaske, Glenmalure, state prisoner, never tried in Ireland, United Irishman, Hugh Byrne, Kirikee, Wicklow, never tried in Ireland, United Irishman, Arthur Devlin, the same, then Joseph Holt, travelled on the Minerva.. there was another Byrne, Billy I think, executed at Gallows Lane, near the Gaol, September 26th, 1799. Built that Military road to flush them out.

Oisín comes in and introduces the trad music celebrating 1798 starting with The Minstrel Boy..