

Winifred Callaghan
Per Maria arrived Sydney 29 June 1850

Winifred Callaghan, also known as Winifred Mary Minnie Callaghan by descendants, was born in Dublin about 1834. The shipping list of the *Maria* notes her parents were William and Mary, both dead. She was Roman Catholic, aged 14, could read and was a needlewomen from Dublin. She was one of 160 young women who came from several workhouses in Dublin as well as 25 from the Royal Hibernian Military School and 5 from the Mendacity Institute. She was in the South Dublin Workhouse where she entered from South City Dublin on 21 September 1844, aged 10, her father was dead and her mother was living out of the workhouse¹ She was recorded as Catholic with no occupation and was registered by the Board of the Workhouse. She left on 16 February 1850, obviously in time to board the *Maria* at Plymouth with others girls from the South Dublin Workhouse.

There is no surviving disposal list for the *Maria* girls but on 21 February 1851 Winifred came before a magistrate complaining of ill usage by employer, Mrs Callopy. Her indentures were cancelled by consent of both parties by the Court of Petty Session at the Water Police Office.² Mrs Callopy's identity has not been established.

Winifred married Richard Plummer Burgess on 4 September 1852 at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Sydney. The ceremony was performed by Rev John McGarvie who was also a member of the Board of Guardians, the organisation which oversaw the orphan girls after their arrival in the colony. Winifred was noted on the ship as able to read and write and she and her husband both signed the marriage register. Richard was 29 and Winifred was about 16, no parents, ages or occupations are recorded on the marriage certificate [see below].

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I, *R. P. Burgess* do hereby declare that I am a Member of, or hold Communion with, the *Presbyterian* Church.

I, *Winifred Callaghan* do hereby declare that I am a Member of, or hold Communion with, the _____ Church.

I, *The Rev. John McGarvie* of *Sydney* Minister of *St. Andrew's Church* do hereby Certify, that *Richard Plummer Burgess* of *Sydney* and *Winifred Callaghan* of *St. Andrew's* were joined together in Wedlock by me, on the *fourth* day of *September* 1852, at *Sydney by special license* in the presence of: *George J. Elliott* and *Mary Malachlan* Witnesses: *Richard Plummer Burgess* *John McGarvie, D.D.* Minister. *Winifred Callaghan* Parties

Burgess was a Cornish master mariner and ship's captain and Winifred has been found by descendants as a passenger on several of his voyages between Sydney and Tasmania and also as far afield as Mauritius. Their first child, Richard Henry Burgess was registered as born on 7 August 1853 in Tasmania but was possibly born at sea.

¹ South Dublin Indoor Register, National Archives of Ireland, Dublin, BG79/G/1B, Entry No.2672.
² 1858-9 Report on Irish Female Immigrants, Appendix J No.227.

The family moved to New Zealand where they ran a pub. A daughter, Mary Elizabeth Burgess, was born in Auckland on 10 November 1855 but she drowned in a small creek on 14 January 1857 at Wairoa, near Napier, when aged 2 years. Another son, William Henry was born on 8 January 1858, followed by Gertrude Hannah on 21 April 1860 and Thomas Alfred in late 1862. All are registered in the district of Ahuriri, which also covers Wairoa. As well as caring for her children, Winifred helped run the pub and Richard also engaged in some coastal trading.

Richard Burgess drowned during the shipwreck of the schooner *Success* on 30 December 1863. *The Southern Cross* newspaper, dated Monday, 15 January 1864, under Marine Casualties recorded:

Wreck of the schooner *Success*. She sailed from the River Heathcote on Sunday, the 27th, bound for Wellington, in command of Captain Brownhill, with a crew of four hands. On arriving in the Straits on 30th she got caught in a S.W. gale. The weather was thick. She struck the shore in Palliser Bay. The mate (Mr Burgess), and a boy Morris, found a watery grave. The mate was well known and respected in port, he has till recently been a resident in Dampier Bay, Lyttelton; he leaves a widow and several children, now residing in the Heathcote Valley, to lament his loss. The boy, Morris, it appears only shipped in the schooner a few days before she left the Heathcote. The vessel was in ballast and owned by Messrs Brownhill and Co., Christchurch.

Following the death of her husband at the age of 40, Winifred was left with four small children. Her first-born child, Richard Henry, apparently took his swag on the road seeking work although quite when this happened is unsure as he would have been only 10 when his father died. Earlier orphanage records do not survive, but about 1866 the younger children went to the Lyttelton Orphanage, where, in 1870, they are recorded as Gertrude Burgess aged 12 and Thomas Burgess aged 8, both noted with a mother but no father. Both children were still there in 1873 and Thomas only was located in the records in 1874. It is possible that Winifred spend some time in gaol following the death of her husband and this may be the reason the children were in the orphanage. However, the records do not confirm this and, no doubt, she was placed in a dire situation when her husband died leaving her with four young children.

Winifred remarried to Sydney Lee Dyer in Napier on 22 November 1868. She is recorded as a widow, aged 32. Dyer was 26, having been baptised on 19 August 1843 at Bristol, Gloucestershire, England.³ Winifred and Sydney were witnesses in an inquest near Napier in June 1870. They moved to Australia in the 1870s, where they both died. They do not seem to have any children. Winifred lived to see her youngest daughter, Elizabeth Julia Anne, marry John Hiles in 1886 (see details below).

Winifred and her second husband both died in Sydney: Winifred on 3 April 1890 at Redfern and Sydney Dyer in May 1910. Both are buried at Rookwood. Sydney Dyer, her widower, noted on her death certificate that she was born at Gunnedah on the Breeza Plains. The family believe that Winifred had reinvented herself and she was no longer an unfashionable Irish famine Orphan. She was Australian and an English ship captain's widow before she met Sydney Dyer. Some of that was true, of course, but it did make researching her complex.

Winifred's children which have been identified are:

³ Information supplied to Migs Eder by a Dyer researcher.

1. Richard Henry Burgess. Birth not confirmed. He worked at an early age on sheep farms around Canterbury, New Zealand and was working on Mesopotamia Station when he married Betsy (Bessie) Roy Fergusson, from Scotland, on 10 June 1876 in Christchurch. They had 8 children. Richard was a bushman and lived all his married life in or near Staveley, he died 19 August 1932. The photo below shows Richard Burgess with his wife Betsy and their eight children [photograph supplied by descendants with grateful thanks].



2. Mary Elizabeth Burgess. Drowned, aged 2 years.
3. William Henry Burgess. The family have no details but family lore said he went to Australia; his common name makes him difficult to trace.
4. Gertrude Hannah Burgess. Died in Ashburton Hospital on 25 December 1880, aged 20 of tuberculosis; she did not marry.
5. Thomas Alfred Burgess. The family have no details but family lore said he went to Ireland.
6. Elizabeth Julia Ann Burgess. Born February 1865, clearly too late to be Winifred's first husband's child but no investigation of this has been made. Her second husband, Sydney Dyer, claimed her on Winifred's death certificate but this is not proved. Elizabeth married John Henry Hiles (Giles) in Nyngan, NSW in 1886 and had seven children; she died in 1901.

The descendants have the greatest respect for Winifred. She had to be tough to survive and cope with placing her children in an orphanage because of her limited options.

They are happy to exchange emails with people about their orphan ancestor. If a descendant of Win has a photo of her, perhaps taken when Elizabeth married or with a baby grandchild, descendants and the Great Irish Famine Commemoration Committee would dearly love to know.

Information supplied by descendants in New Zealand:

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