

Honor (Hannah) Rafferty
Arrived per *Digby* to Sydney 4 April 1849



Irish Heritage Certificate presented to Jim Edwards,
proud descendant of Hannah Rafferty Famine orphan girl per *Digby*



Between 1848 and 1850 over 4000 young women were given the opportunity to come to Australia from Irish workhouses under what is known the Earl Grey scheme. The first shipload arrived to Sydney on the ship *Earl Grey* on 6 October 1848 and the Hyde Park Barracks, the former convict building, became their home until they found employment. With the backing of descendants of the Famine orphan girls, the Irish community and governments in Ireland and Australian the memorial to these women was unveiled in 1999 (see www.irishfaminememorial.org for more detail).

Since 1999 the Great Irish Famine Commemoration Committee with the assistance of Historic Houses Trust [renamed Sydney Living Museums in 2014], the custodians of the Hyde Park Barracks and the Memorial, have held an annual get-together at the Famine Memorial to remember these brave young immigrant women who found refuge from the 1845-1850 Famine in Ireland. These women became the mothers of thousands of Australian-born descendants who are rightly proud of the contributions to the growth of this nation.

Hannah Rafferty, an orphan girl from County Roscommon, arrived to Sydney on 4 April 1849 on the *Digby*. She was initially employed in Bathurst where she married Bristol-born

Charles Edwards on 1 January 1851 in the local Catholic Church. They had seven children before Charles was killed in a gold mining accident at Cheshire Creek on 12 November 1866. Again destitute, but this time with fatherless young children, in 1869 Hannah married Frank Green. She died on 24 May 1900 and is buried in the Catholic portion of the Bathurst Cemetery with her daughter Sarah.

Jim Edwards, descendant of Hannah Rafferty, was a very keen supporter of the memorial since the idea to build it was first considered. He said that his family are fortunate to have a photograph of their orphan girl ancestor, wearing what he believed is a dress made by Hannah's daughter, Sarah, a dressmaker. The photograph of Hannah (pictured here) is also part of the orphan display at the Hyde Park Barracks. Jim turned out, with Hannah, to events at the memorial every year and proudly remembered the heritage of his ancestors and these brave young women. It is with the support of descendants like Jim Edwards that the Great Irish Famine Commemoration Committee (GIFCC) continues its historical work on the orphan girls and also remembers other refugee women who were forced to leave their countries due to famine or political oppression.

On 9 December 2011 Caitriona Ingoldsby, the Irish Consul-General in Sydney, presented Jim with the first official certificate of Irish Heritage (see above). Jim was accompanied by his daughter and son and a grandson (pictured) and, in his own words, he 'was greatly honoured' to receive this acknowledgement for his dedication to remembering the greater Irish community. The Certificate of Irish Heritage is part of the Irish Government's Diaspora Outreach Programme. Its presentation at the Memorial at the Hyde Park Barracks was a great occasion for Ireland, Australian and a continual reminder of the on-going relationship of the Hyde Park Barracks and the Orphan Memorial of which the Historic Houses Trust is the custodian.