

Emigration Series: 3



Emigration To Australia

We are employed in the Governor's botanic gardens ... we could reach almost off our scaffolds to the lemons and oranges, fig trees, pomegranates, peaches, etc, and the parrots sitting on the trees beside us in flocks ... all differing from the northern part of the globe

David Fairley, carpenter from Londonderry who emigrated to Australia in the mid-1830s

Australia emigration, as a mass organised movement, did not get going in a major way until the 1820s, after the disruption of the Napoleonic Wars. The distance involved, and the logistics of the journey, meant that the numbers going to Australia as compared with North America were much smaller. For the same reasons emigration to Australia was much more controlled. Regulation was applied at points of departure in Britain and Ireland and at entry points in Australia.

There were also government-assisted schemes such as the emigration of workhouse inmates to Australia. Labour had become extremely scarce in Australia around the time of the Famine in Ireland and the colonists in New South Wales and Western Australia pressed the Colonial Office to secure more settlers. Arrangements were made with the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners for a scheme of assisted emigration and the first 5,000 adults were sent in 1847.

Some Ulstermen were to travel to the southern hemisphere as convicts. Convict settlements were a feature of Australian society for nearly a century until the transportation system was progressively withdrawn from 1840 onwards. In that year New South Wales was removed from the system. It was followed by Tasmania in 1852 and Western Australia in 1867. The main reason for this was that the Australian colonists came to regard the convict system as a stigma on those who had chosen to emigrate as well as the criticism in both Britain and Australia because of the inevitable brutality of certain aspects of the convict system. Those emigrants who arranged their travel to Australia were generally better off than those who left Ireland for North America. The costs involved in shipping out to Australia were obviously much higher. Australia, therefore, attracted a significant proportion of emigrants with the resources to set themselves up in business or on the land in the expanding agricultural hinterland of the coastal settlements. The descendants of these Ulster emigrants were to play a significant role in the shaping of Australian society.

The easiest way to locate these records is to use the **Subject Index** in the Search Room. The following records are of particular importance:

Indexes to male convicts transported to New South Wales, 1830-1842.
MIC468/1

Indexes to male convicts transported to Western Australia, 1850-1868.
MIC468/1

Passenger List, 1841, Victoria, Australia. **T3036/6**

Register of Girls' Friendly Society - sponsored emigrants from various counties in Ireland, 1890-1921. **D648/9**

Indexes to births, deaths and marriages in New South Wales, Australia, 1787-1899. **MF4**

For details of assisted emigration from the workhouses see the records of the Boards of Guardians. **BG/**

Many of the emigration archives that are deposited in PRONI have been indexed and either transcribed or digitised and form part of the Emigration Database of the Centre for Migration Studies which can be accessed in PRONI and at certain public libraries.

