

BRUCE EVANS' PAGE.

My great great grand father, Maurice Ruxton, with his wife and daughter, Sophia, aged 4, arrived in Van Diemens Land in 1833 to take up a job as a jailer at Bothwell Prison on a salary of £51/—/— per annum. The family came from Draughtent in Ireland.

In 1825, John Scott, another great great grandfather with his wife, Margaret, migrated to Tasmania from Caputh, near Dunkeld in Scotland. In 1834, he was employed at Denham Court, near Sydney. His employer then appointed him manager of another property at Monaro, some 300 miles south of Sydney.

In 1833, great grandfather, Joseph Evans aged 16 years, arrived in Sydney aboard the convict transport, *Asia*. In 1838, he was granted a Ticket of Leave enabling him to be employed on a property adjoining the one managed by John Scott.

In 1840, a region that was to become known as Gippsland was explored by squatters seeking better grazing for their livestock. Joseph Evans was assigned to one who took up one of the first runs in 1844. John Scott took up land in the same area in 1845.

Although there is no anecdotal knowledge that the Scott family knew Joseph Evans while they were on the Monaro Tablelands, it seems likely that they would have at least known him by sight. At that time, there was a great stigma attached to a convict, some even arguing that they and their descendants should never be entitled to vote.

If they were aware of his convict status, they kept it to themselves as even Joseph's granddaughter who was born about ten years after his death, vehemently asserted that he was a "Remittance man". She claimed that he received a sum of money regularly but had no other evidence to support her opinion.

(A Remittance Man was usually a younger son or, in some cases a prodigal son, who was sent off to the colonies to avoid embarrassment for their parents. They usually received a stipend from the family estate.)

Evans and Scott lived about 10 miles apart in the Bairnsdale District for over thirty years. Joseph's second son, also Joseph, married one of John Scott's many granddaughters.

There is a gap in the records that does not conclusively connect the convict with the person who married Sophia Ruxton in Hobart Town. It does not seem credible that an ex-convict working for a squatter in Gippsland would be likely to wed the only daughter of a jailer in Tasmania. What circumstances would take him there and how long did he know the young lady before they were wed? What's more, it was eventually discovered that his father-in-law came to Gippsland with the young couple.

The circumstantial evidence is as follows: -

1. There is strong evidence that a convict named Joseph Evans, born in London in 1817 calculated from the records of his trials, arrived in the Bairnsdale district in 1844 and was still resident there in 1850, when he is on record as giving evidence in a boundary dispute.
2. His records show that he could read but not write.
3. The wedding certificate from Hobart Town is signed with a 'mark' by both the bride and groom although the bride's father signed the certificate.
4. His records show that the bridegroom was also born in London in 1817.
5. The couple immediately after their marriage came to Gippsland and specifically to the same property upon which the convict was employed. This suggests that he was already familiar with the place.
6. The only other possibility is that from 1847 to 1850 at least, there were two Joseph Evans employed on the Lindenow Run, both born in London in the same year, neither of whom could write. As the European population in the district was numbered in hundreds only, that scenario is possible but highly improbable.

The missing link is the lack of records of passengers to and from Tasmania in 1846/7.

It is possible that Lindenow Run sold cattle to the prison at Bothwell and that Joseph was given a job in delivering them. Just how long did it take for him to win his bride?



Joseph and Sophia produced first a daughter, followed by seven sons before their second daughter was born. Two more sons were followed by their third daughter. They may well have lived in a hut like this. Most huts had a bark roof held in place with saplings stripped of their bark.. The dirt floor was kept in order by regular sweeping after being sprinkled with water.

It is hard to imagine how Sophia managed to raise her large family. In addition to the housework, she had to make all the family's clothing, including underwear by hand..

At a very early age, Elizabeth, the firstborn had to do everything she could to help. With seven little brothers, there would have been a constant fear of one or two of them getting lost in the bush that pressed in around them or got bitten by a snake or the numerous

spiders and insects that crept and crawled everywhere.

To compound her problems, Sophia was losing her hearing and eventually became profoundly deaf. As she could not read or write, she was isolated even from the few people within her acquaintance. In 1888, aged 50 years, Sophia's busy but lonely life came to an end – a pioneering woman whose legacy is a large number of descendants spread from Melbourne to Cairns along Australia's east coast as well as Hawaii and California.

