

Celtic Country: How it all began

Glen Innes is known as *Celtic Country* and the Australian Standing Stones have become famous throughout the land. *But why Celtic Country? What is our Celtic heritage - the historical background to all this?*

We know our first settlers were Scots, but, rightly, the Australian Standing Stones honour Celtic pioneers from *every* Celtic nation.

Consider, too, almost a third of all Australians claim to have some Irish ancestry, the Cornish are very much part of Emmaville's heritage - where Standing Stones pioneers Cornish-descendant John and Jean Tregurtha had strong links - there's a scattering of Welsh in Glen Innes, proudly represented by another Standing Stones pioneer, John Mathew.

Nor, since the Celts spread from Germany and France across Europe and into Asia Minor, do we overlook other nationalities from the Old World who have enriched our nation and community.

So there are rich sources of people and material. Not least that Australia's first saint, Mary MacKillop, a proud Celt descendant visited Glen Innes often. Her parents came from the historic Braes of Lochaber, the Highlands, 128km north of Glasgow.

Of the sources, we can do no better than draw on *Scottish Pioneers of the Glen Innes District*, the fascinating book produced by the late, distinguished historian Bill Cameron and his daughter Eve Chappell.

It tells how our beginnings go back to just 50 years after First Settlement when Scottish aristocrat Archibald Boyd took up in 1838 properties known as *Boyd's Plains* and *Newton Boyd* in what became Glen Innes district.

Boyd, from Selkirkshire, in Scotland's southern Uplands, was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and admitted to London's Lincoln's Inn and Middle Temple, where he was called to the Bar. He migrated to New South Wales shortly before taking up the properties.

Boyd's party was guided to the district by the "Beardies", emancipated convict stockmen William Chandler and John Duval, with long, flowing beards, immortalised by so many place names: Land of the Beardies History House, Land of the Beardies Festival, Glen Innes streets, Duval College at the University of New England, Duval High School, Mount Duval, near Armidale...

Boyd's pioneering party named the Glen Innes district Beardy Plains and the river flowing through it, Beardy Waters. Hence Beardy Plains appeared on official records before the town of Glen Innes was established in 1854.

Boyd's Plains extended from the source of Beardy Waters to where Furracabad Creek joins the river while *Newton Boyd*, was east of *Boyd's Plains*. Boyd also acquired *Temple Court* in the Murrurundi area.

He represented the squatters in their fight with the colonial government in England for land security. He apparently spent little time at the station and left the running of it to his manager, Thomas Hewitt. The 1840 Census reported that Hewitt, six free males, one free female and eight convicts lived there.

Three years later, *Boyd's Plains* was split between Archibald and his brother William. Archibald retained what became known as *Yarrowford* and *Whitmore* while William took *Grahams Valley* and *Stonehenge*, where the first homestead was built.

Archibald, like many other squatters, was ruined by the 1840s Depression and left the colony although William weathered it better and kept *Stonehenge* until 1859.

Bill Cameron couldn't resist injecting subtle humour into the history of *Stonehenge* and its Scottish manager Donald McIntyre. McIntyre, a true Scot said Bill, had apparently attended a Highland gathering in Glen Innes - and then someone placed an advertisement indicating McIntyre had lost a Temperance card on the way home to the station.

That was followed by another ad. from McIntyre offering a reward of 20 pounds for the identity of the person who placed the first ad...

Our first Celtic settler, Archibald Boyd?

He returned to the family estate in Scotland - and wrote historical romances.