



Richmond River Historical Society Inc.

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John Peate and family

In the early 1800s Australia was seen as a young man's country. It was thought that there was adventure, plenty of work, and every hope of becoming wealthy within a few years. In some ways this was true, but it depended greatly on the individual young man as to whether there was success or failure.

One young man who arrived on the "Helen" in 1841 was John Peate, aged 22. He had been born in Oswestry, Shropshire, and had been a shepherd. His parents were both dead but apparently he left quite a few relatives in that part of England. He came as a bounty migrant under the sponsorship of Gilchrist & Alexander, a major mercantile, banking, and shipping firm in Sydney which was responsible for bringing out many migrants.

It was no doubt this firm which organized a job for John with Ward Stephens, newspaper mogul, politician and squatter, who at that time had land in the New England District. It was there that John Peate started work. He soon became a valued employee and, as Ward Stephens moved across towards the coast and Runnymede Station, Peate went too. However, soon after we find him working as cattle manager for William Wilson at his three properties, including Lismore Station. It is not clear why Peate changed employers but it could have had something to do with Ward Stephens' land dispute concerning the property later to be known as Disputed Plains.

In 1847 John Peate married Elizabeth Ford. The witnesses were William and Jane Wilson and it is said that it was the first marriage to be held at Lismore. Soon afterwards John established himself as a butcher at Ballina and then at Lismore. Over the next few years he became a very successful businessman and landowner.

He and Elizabeth had eleven children, ten of whom survived. Two of their sons, Jack and Jim, became famous as cedar cutters in the Whian Whian State Forest area. Peate Mountain (sometimes wrongly known as Peach Mountain) is named after them.



The seven daughters married and their family names are some of the best known of the Richmond River District: Daley, Parry, Flick, Wilson, Britt, McKenzie, Rayner. There are many descendants in the area. One daughter, Martha, married Henry Parry, and it is here that we obtain a clue as to why John Peate decided to come to Australia. Henry Parry's mother was Charlotte Peate, a relative of John. No doubt the families had kept in touch and perhaps John decided to follow his cousins to Australia.

The Peate daughters: *back row*: Eliza Rayner, Emma Wilson, Isabel Flick, Martha Parry; *front row*: Elizabeth Jane Daley, Catherine Ellen McKenzie, Mary Hannah Britt.

John Peate was very interested in his local community. He was on the school committee in Lismore and was very interested in improving the education of people in the area. He was able to read and write but apparently his wife could not. Perhaps this influenced his thinking. He was also a staunch supporter of the Church of England and was Warden at the Lismore church for many years.

All their daughters lived in the Richmond River District but the three sons eventually became cane farmers on the Tweed. John Peate died in 1895, a successful businessman and a respected citizen. He is buried in the North Lismore Cemetery.

Photograph: The Peate daughters: **back row:** Eliza Rayner, Emma Wilson, Isabel Flick, Martha Parry; **front row:** Elizabeth Jane Daley, Catherine Ellen McKenzie, Mary Hannah Britt.

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