

A Pioneering Woman Struggles to Make her Way

Margaret Collie and her husband Duncan McQuarrie, a brewery worker from Edinburgh, Scotland, came as assisted migrants on the *Prince George* in 1838, initially camping in Emigrant Square in the West Parklands, until they found employment.

Because of the strong demand for building timber, timber merchants such as David Crafer and Patrick Coglein were supplying men with provisions and a saw and sending them in to the Adelaide Hills or Tiers as timber cutters. This was hard work in a lawless and dangerous place for which good sawyers were well rewarded. McQuarrie very quickly tired of this life and headed for New South Wales, abandoning his young wife to the Tiers. In order to survive in this relatively remote and inaccessible area, Margaret chose to keep house for a notorious sawyer named Richard Tuson Searles, otherwise known as Black Dick, in his timber cabin in the stringy bark forest somewhere between Belair and Crafers. When Margaret had a daughter by him named Catherine after Black Dick's mother, she called herself Mrs Searles.

Following a serious incident in 1840 at their local pub, the Sawyers Arms, which was held up by bushrangers and Black Dick implicated in receiving stolen property, "Mr and Mrs Searles" shifted away from Crafers to a timber hut on Cox's Creek. Together they had eight children, but not until 1852 after the birth of the eighth were they eventually married. After this, he took their eldest son aged 12 years and headed to the Victorian goldfields, not to return for at least ten years.

Abandoned again, Mrs Searles was forced to seek government assistance as a destitute mother of seven children. This was reluctantly given after enquiries into her "mode of gaining a living and certain irregularities in her house." While not being specific, the Destitute Asylum listed her occupation as washerwoman, in contradiction to her claim to be a nurse.

On February 6, 1859, the family's plight deteriorated further when a bush fire passed through Cox's Creek burning their hut to the ground, and destroying all their possessions. However, eldest daughter Catherine married a farmer from Milang and the whole family was able to relocate there. This led to Margaret marrying for the third time, a boat builder there named Joseph Kidd. When she died in 1878, her epitaph read simply:-



Cox's Creek

*Kidd Margaret.
A colonist of over 40
years;
formerly Mrs Searles of
Cox's Creek*

From information provided by Simon Gore,
Margaret's great-great-grandson
March 2014



Margaret COLLIE [c1815-1878]

Married

[1] Duncan McQUARRIE

&

[2] Richard SEARLES

&

[3] Joseph KIDD

Departed 12 September 1838 from London

Arrived 26 December 1838 on the

Prince George

Children of Margaret:

Catherine (c1840-1882) m Thomas JONES

Leonard (c1841-1927) m May CASSADY

Margaret (c1844-1921) m Henry LUSH

Henry (c1845-1928) m Durham LEITCH

George (c1847-1882) m Anna Maria FREESTONE

Tuson (1848-1926) m Ellen GOULD

Louis (c1850-1934) m Mary Ann HAEUSLER

Emma (1851-1924) m [1] Henry BALLS

[2] Charles ANGELL