

Alfred Darlington Story

Alfred Darlington was born District: Bolton, Lancashire, a large town in Greater Manchester, in the North West region of England on 18-November, 1845, the third child of James and Ellen Darlington. By the time he was grown up the family had moved to North London.

Here they developed a close relationship with the family of John Skerman. Alfred's sister Alice married Frederick John Skerman, Fredrick's father John Skerman worked at the Royal Small Arms Factory, a UK government-owned rifle factory, in London Borough of Enfield. The factory had produced British military rifles, muskets and swords since 1816. Alfred's brother, Thomas Darlington married Frederick John Skerman's sister Sarah. Trade was slack at the time and piecework was the method of employment. By piecework the factory hands found it difficult to make a living so John Skerman decided that he and his family of thirteen Skermans would migrate to Australia. Alfred joined his sister and the Skerman party who with assisted passage from the Queensland Government set sail on the Netherby from Portsmouth on 13th April 1866.

Their introduction to Australia was not a good one, for the Netherby struck a reef off King Island in Bass Strait at 7:15 pm on the night of 14th July 1866. In a miracle of survival it stayed afloat long enough for the all the crew of forty nine and all the four hundred and thirteen passengers to disembark and to save some supplies, but the majority of the Cargo was lost, including a Foundry that the Skermans were transporting to Australia to establish a new business in Brisbane.

The passengers were rescued by the staff of the lighthouse and shipped to Melbourne, where they were housed for a time in the Exhibition Building. They then embarked from Melbourne on a ship called the "City of Melbourne" and finally arrived in Brisbane on the 6th August 1866.

While the Skekerman's gave up setting up a foundry and settled on a farm. Alfred obtained work on the Brisbane- Toowoomba Railway for six pence a day. He settled for some time in Gatton and then made his way to New South Wales.

He was working as a porter for New South Wales Government Railways when he married Mary Ann Godsen at Goulburn on 10th August 1869. They lived for a long time in Picton where their eight children were born. Mary Ann died on 20th August 1887 and Alfred died on 18th February, 1918.