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Bro. COLONEL GEORGE JAMES MOLLE 1773 - 1823

George Molle, a soldier and lieut-governor of N.S.W., was baptized on 6th March 1773, the youngest child of John Mow, of Mains in the parish of Chirnside, Berwickshire, a member of an old Scottish landed family. His mother Margaret, nee Crow, died when he was young, his father in 1795. His brother William, a writer to the signet, adopted the name Molle in 1789. George joined the Scots Brigade, later 94th Regiment, in June 1793 as an ensign. He served in Gibraltar, the Cape of Good Hope, India, Egypt and Spain, and was regularly promoted until he attained the rank of lieut-colonel in September 1808.

After a spell of garrison duty at Gibraltar he transferred to the 46th Regiment; when it was ordered to New South Wales in 1813, as its commanding officer he was appointed lieut-governor of the colony, where he arrived in February 1814.

He was gazetted brevet colonel in June 1814. He and his wife played an active part in the colony's public and social life, for nearly two years being patrons of the Female Orphan School and members of the committee of the Institution for the Civilisation, care and education of Aborigines.

While in India, Molle had met and become friendly with Bro. Lachlan Macquarie who gave a dinner in his honour at Government House in Sydney in March 1814.

While 38 people dined until 11.30 pm., Elizabeth Macquarie was in labour in an adjoining room giving birth to her son, Lachlan Jr., at midnight when all but the house guests had departed. As a result, it has been suggested that Macquarie lacked passion.

Governor Macquarie, who was something of a 'one man band' did not allow Molle the authority he considered was his due, and in his public activities he became an opponent of Macquarie.

Soon after their arrival Molle and his officers complained of high prices and asked for higher pay. They disliked the favour shown by Macquarie to the emancipists, whom they excluded from the regimental mess, even in cases when the governor looked on them with favour. In 1816, William C. Wentworth grossly insulted Molle in a 'pipe' or lampoon. A PIPE was the name given to scurrilous verses, circulated in the early days of New South Wales, lampooning highly placed officials or other well-known persons. The pipes themselves were usually doggerel verses of little merit, interlarded with puns and Latinisms; they purported to issue from persons whose identity was thinly disguised by the lavish use of dashes, while the actual pipe-maker remained anonymous.

Pipes were obviously regarded seriously in official circles; Governor Macquarie offered a pardon to the convict who could disclose the identity of the pipe-maker, and the officers of Molle's regiment advertised a reward of 200 pounds for his detection.

Next year, during the investigation of its authorship, some of the officers of the regiment insulted Macquarie in his turn, and he felt that his 'old and much liked Acquaintance' Molle, on whose 'Friendship and Candour' he had relied, had not seriously tried to check the opposition of his juniors to the governor. Molle insisted that D'Arcy Wentworth, William's father, was responsible for his son's libels, and demanded that he be court-martialled. To end all this bickering, Macquarie asked that the regiment be removed.

Fortunately in August 1817 the 48th arrived to relieve it, and Molle departed next month for Madras.

In due course the Judge-Advocate Bro. Wylde decided that D'Arcy Wentworth was not liable for trial by court martial for the offence Molle alleged he had committed.

Molle died in Belgaum, India, on 9th September 1823. His eldest son, William Macquarie, who was born on the voyage to Sydney in 1813, became the owner of the 'Molle's Maines' estate in New South Wales.

The 46th Regiment had attached to it the Lodge of Social and Military Virtues No. 227, Irish Constitution and Bro. George Molle was a member of the Lodge. He participated in the procession in the first public Masonic Ceremony held in Port Jackson on 2nd November 1816 at the setting of the corner stone of Bro. Captain John Piper's house at Point Eliza (now Point Piper).

Bro. George Molle is remembered in New South Wales by a rivulet near the western town of Wellington named by The Surveyor-General Bro. John Oxley in 1817. Bro Oxley was a member of the Lodge of Social and Military Virtues.

More importantly is the Molle group of islands among Queensland's Whitsunday islands in the Great Barrier Reef. They were named North, South, mid and West Molle by Bro. Lieutenant Charles Jeffries R.N. also a member of the Lodge of Social and Military Virtues.

West Molle was re-named Daydream Island and has become a 5 star tourist resort. South Molle is a smaller and more down-market tourist resort. North and Mid Molle, once leased for grazing, are uninhabited and there is no trace of an East Molle Island.

REFERENCES:

Australian Dictionary of Biography.
The Australian Encyclopedia.
The Age of Macquarie, Melbourne University Press, 1992.

WHITSUNDAYS MAP

Note: South Molle is now Daydream Island.

