

Macquarie's refutation to Bennet, extracts concerning William Redfern

Extracted from

*A letter to the Right Honourable Viscount Sidmouth,*

*In Refutation of Statements made by the Hon. Henry Grey Bennet, M.P. in a pamphlet "On the Transportation Laws, The State of the Hulks and of The Colonies in New South Wales"*

*By Lachlan Macquarie, Major-General, and Governor-in-Chief of New South Wales.*

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The mortality on board the Surrey [sic], in 1814, and the General Hewitt, Captain Earl, Hughes Surgeon, in the same year (which ship lost 34 Male Convicts), was, I have no hesitation in believing, occasioned by the Convicts giving up their provisions to the Captain, on the promise of receiving in return tobacco, tea, sugar, &c. In crossing warm latitudes, the appetite fails, men become regardless of food, and willingly part with what is absolutely necessary to the support of their health and strength, in exchange for those little articles of luxury, which at all times they prefer to a proper allowance of wholesome food.

On the occurrence of these contagious maladies, I called on the Medical Staff at Sydney to inquire into the particulars, and to give me their opinions on the subject. The result of their inquiries, I had the honour to forward to Lord Bathurst, and the case met with that attention at the Colonial Office which it required. This able Document was written by Mr. Redfern, Assistant Surgeon on the Medical Staff.

From the appointment, according to Mr. Redfern's advice, of a Surgeon and Superintendant to each ship, (who, as they have informed me, have been required to read his remarks on the subject), the most happy consequences have resulted.

Under this new system, whereby a check is imposed on the conduct of the Captains of the ships, and the Convicts are furnished during their passage with proper medical assistance, every provision which the mind of man can devise is made for their safety.

A reference to the casualties which now occur, will shew, that in regard to the preservation of life and health, the present system requires no alteration.

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Mr. Redfern, in consequence of the Mutiny at the Nore in 1797, was, at his own particular request to Sir Jeremiah Fitzpatrick, then Inspector of the Transport Service, sent to this Colony in 1801. During the passage, he assisted the Surgeon, and kept the Journal of the treatment of the sick. A few days after his arrival in this Colony, he was sent to Norfolk Island as Assistant to the Surgeon stationed there. General Foveaux, shortly after his arrival, appointed him to the sole charge of the Hospital. On my taking the Command of this Colony, General Foveaux personally introduced, and recommended Mr. Redfern to my notice in the strongest terms, as to his conduct, character, and professional abilities, stating, that in order to secure to the Settlement the advantages of his professional skill, he had appointed him Assistant Surgeon in the Colony, and solicited Lord Castlereagh for his confirmation. His appointment was confirmed by His Royal Highness the Prince Regent in 1811.

Mr. Redfern's singular abilities are well known here, and I believe there are few families who have not availed themselves of his services. His duty in the General Hospital has been laborious, and most certainly fulfilled with a degree of promptitude and attention not to be exceeded.—I have heard many poor persons, dismissed from the Hospital, thank him for their recovery; but have never known a patient complain of his neglect.

Mr. Redfern had obtained a grant of 500 acres of land from Colonel Patterson, as a remuneration for his services to the Military at Norfolk Island; which grant I confirmed, making at the same time an additional one of 1390 acres, in consequence of his useful services here. Mr. Redfern's farm is allowed by all who have seen it, to be laid out and cultivated in a manner more nearly approaching the English style, than any other in the Colony.—He has now, after eighteen years' service, retired from his professional pursuits to his estate. I have appointed him a Magistrate, and as far as my opinion goes, no man in this Colony is better qualified to execute the duties of that office, with credit to himself and benefit to the public service.

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