

January 2024



Dear Club Members,

January 26th is Australia Day, it's the anniversary of the day when British ships arrived in Port Jackson, New South Wales in 1788. In any country where the British rock up it's fair to say that life for the local inhabitants changes for the worse. The Aboriginal people had of course been living on this land for 50-65,000 years, one of the oldest continuous cultures on earth. Aboriginal people soon began to die from disease, and many more were killed as a result of conflict with settlers. Even now Aboriginal Australians face a number of health and economic deprivations in comparison with the wider Australian community. Now Australia Day celebrations are a complicated subject, for Australia's indigenous population the day actually marks the invasion of their country.

But today for Australia Day we are talking about a real life Australian woman; Granny Smith. If that name sounds familiar it's because you've possibly eaten a Granny Smith Apple. Yes, there really was a Granny Smith, and the apple was named after her. She was born Maria Sherwood in 1799 in Sussex England, the daughter of a farm labourer, she married Thomas Smith, together they went on to have 8 children. In 1838 there was a British Government scheme to encourage settlers to go to New South Wales, it turns out that only sending convicts is not a viable way to take over a country and establish a new population. The family set up as fruit growers, with Maria making extra money selling fruit pies in the local market. She threw the leftover peels and seeds from a batch of French crab apples she'd used to make her pies on to the compost heap. The seeds germinated and were allowed to grow. The resulting tree isn't a crab apple tree, but by happy accident of cross breeding has become larger and sweeter. The tree becomes known as the Granny Smith, and all Granny Smith apple trees are descended from that tree.

The fruit grew in popularity due to it's versatility and it's ability to be stored for long periods of time. It could be picked in March, and stored until November (remember this is the Southern Hemisphere, so March is an autumn month). Granny Smith apples were exported in enormous quantities after World War I, as exports from the country grew. By 1975 forty percent of Australia's apple crop was made up of Granny Smith apples.

The Smiths chose to leave Britain in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars. In the 1820s and 30's there was a labour surplus, leading to depressed wages, as mechanisation started to reduce the need for farm labourers. In the summer of 1830 the Swing Riots broke out in Kent, and spread to Sussex. Rioters broke the new threshing machines, and if caught they would likely be hung or transported to Australia. Labourers were often only hired on short term contracts, employed to do a particular task, paid and then sent on their way to find different work.

Beckley, the parish where the Smiths lived and worked was identified as "one of the most pauperised parishes" in the county, according to the guardians of the Rye Poor Law Union. "We are in the greatest possible distress for want of labour at the Rye union board," wrote parish official Samuel Selmes. "Yesterday we had upwards of 80 labourers out of employ and our houses [workhouses] are quite full." To resolve this issue the parish paid for about 200 people to be taken

to Australia to begin new lives. Maria, Thomas and their five children were among them. One hundred and twenty years later a similar scheme sent British people around the world to start a new life, this time paid for by the Australian Government. The ten pound poms were charged just £10 on assisted passage, with the expectation of establishing new lives for themselves and their families. My uncle and his wife were two of them, they're still there with a large extended family.

Happy Spinning

Katie

Fibre Content- In case your parcel is missing the label

13% Polwarth,

13% Tussah Silk

10% South American Wool

3% Viscose Tweed Ness

61% Merino

Further Reading-

The real Granny Smith-

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-45434973>

Ten Pound Poms-

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_Pound_Poms

Granny Smith Apples tasting notes

<https://www.orangeippin.com/varieties/apples/granny-smith>

Australia Day

<https://www.australiaday.org.au/about>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australia_Day_debate