

CHARLES SHEPPEY STURT

Charles Sheppey Sturt was born on 21 September 1838 on his father's property at Varrowville, situated between Liverpool and Campbelltown in New South Wales. Capt Sturt was in Adelaide at the time and didn't get to greet his second son until a month later when he returned to New South Wales. Even then time was very limited as the family hurriedly packed up their belongings for the journey to Adelaide where Sturt had accepted the position of Surveyor-General.

Arriving in Adelaide, the family settled in a house on the corner of East Terrace and Wakefield Street while they waited for their new home to be completed. The family moved into Grange in 1841 with Napier now 5yrs, Charles Sheppey 3yrs and the newest family member Evelyn Gawler 1year old. Within two years the family would welcome another child, a daughter, Charlotte Eyre, lovingly referred to as Missie.

For the children the Grange must have been a place of great delight – a billabong right on their back door, the beach a mere ½ mile away, a farm yard of cows, ducks, chickens, pigs and horses. Not to mention their cat and dogs, the passing kangaroos and the innumerable parrots, magpies and cockateels. Acres of orchards, newly planted and a slowly developing garden of exotic plants and vegetables were their playground. If the tide was high, the Port River could be seen from the front door and when ensconced in their Nursery they could hear the servants at meal time and smell the freshly cooked food from the kitchen.

The boys while dearly loved by their parents, could be particularly mischievous. There was a story of how they stole the maids clothing after the girls went swimming at the beach and how the boys watched them struggle to get home, hiding behind bushes to avoid public notice.

Charles Sheppey is said to have delighted in dropping rotten pumpkins from the rampart of the roof onto the head of Mr Robert Torrens, a man he intensely disliked. Another story tells how Charles on finding a large monitor lizard, placed it in the bath-room for safe keeping, only to have it escape into the maids quarters where upon the frightened maid ran in her nightdress into a room of guests shouting for the horrid beast to be removed.

Between 1844 and 1846, a matter of 18 months, Sturt was absent from the Grange on his expedition into Central Australia. Charlotte, like on a number of occasions, was left to manage the farm and supervise and educate the children. When Sturt arrived home his health was extremely poor from exhaustion and scurvy. His physical appearance so shocking to his wife, that she fainted when she greeted him at the door.

Early in 1847 the family returned to England where Sturt underwent specialist eye treatment and published his journals of the Central Expedition. Unfortunately he arrived back in England too late to receive the Royal Geographical Society Foundation Medal in person, with Mr John Morphett accepting it on his behalf.

The family spent some time living in Keppel Street where they were able to re-establish their friendship with the Gawlers who lived nearby, however much of their stay was spent in Boulogne France near the home of Sturt's mother. Here the family felt the backwash of a Revolution and witnessed the Planting of the Tree of Liberty.



The family returned to Grange in late 1849 where upon Sturt was appointed Colonial Treasurer and later Colonial Secretary but his failing eye sight forced him to retire in 1851. The boys' education was paramount in Sturt's mind, brushing up on his Latin and Greek to assist in their classical education. In the spring of 1852 Napier was sent to England to attend Rugby school. Heartbroken by Napier's departure and in the knowledge that the younger sons would also have to follow suit, the family decided to return to England in 1853.

On their return, the family settled in Cheltenham, where Charles and Evelyn began their formal education. Sturt was anxious about the expense of their education and sought out postings for the boys. While preferring to place his boys in the navy, in 1856 he secured a commission for Napier in the Royal Engineers at the Military Academy at Woolwich. The following year, Charles Sheppey secured entry into the Addiscombe Military Academy, the seminary for The East India Company Military where he was commissioned into the Indian army in June 1858 and was posted to India in September, arriving in India on 22nd January 1859. Evelyn followed his brother into Addiscombe in 1859 with Sturt seeing him off at Southampton on May 27 1860 bound for Bombay.

With all three sons secure in the military careers Sturt, Charlotte and Missie moved to Dinan in France, primarily to "repair the financial damage of education and outfit". Napier who was now stationed in Malta, was in regular correspondence with his father. Sturt wrote that he was eagerly waiting for the return of Evelyn on sick leave and had purchased a small yacht to help amuse him. He further arranged a round of visits in England. Charles Sheppey now serving in H.M. Indian Army was at Asseergur "doing great execution with the rifle among big game" with Sturt expressing his son won't be so eager now he has succeeded in killing a tiger".

Late in 1862 Sturt suffered a dangerous fever, ("gout which flew to my chest, causing violent inflammation and pain") bringing him near death's door. Napier returned from Malta to be with the family until the illness passed and in February 1863 Napier received orders to leave Malta for the beautiful island of Corfu. The posting was short with the collapse of Ionian rule and the abandonment of troops in Corfu in June 1864. Young Sturt was despatched to Gibraltar under the command of General Frome.

Sturt abandoned his self imposed exile in France and returned to England in September 1863 in search of a country home. His dream was denied, and by November he resigned himself to taking up residence at 19 Clarence Square Cheltenham Gloucestershire. Six months later they received the terrible news of Evelyn's death. He had only written to the family on the 13 May in he was in "excellent spirits on his way up country to Mhow; but on his arrival at that station, before his happy letter was even despatched, he was suddenly cut off by cholera! Taken ill at breakfast on the 28th, and given up from the first by the doctors, he died at dawn on the 29th".



By 1868 both Napier and Charles Sheppey found themselves in the Abyssinian campaign at the Relief of Magdala. Napier had been ordered to clear the Senafe Pass and then move up into front lines as a field engineer. Charles was in charge of supplies. Both men were mentioned in despatches and together returned to Bombay. Charles was stationed at Balgaum in Bombay and continued his passion for hunting with a magnificent collection of some 200 birds of which his father received twenty two. Sturt commenting about his son "He got an employment peculiarly suited to his taste, and has, I hear, made good use of his time".

Napier returned home at the end of 1868 and proceeded to the Brompton Barracks at Chatham to undergo a course of instruction in electricity,

telegraphy and exploding torpedoes. He was home by June 10 1869 when Sturt wrote his last recorded letter to Charles Sheppey in India. A letter "long and full as ever of loving solicitude for those nearest and dearest to his heart... I wish I could see that you had your promotion too". (Captain)

Lieut. Colonel Napier George Sturt, Royal Engineers, was Gazetted as Colonel on 19 March 1888. He retired and settled in Llanvihangel Court, Monmouthshire where he became a J.P. and country councillor. His wife Beatrix became Charles Sturt's biographer.

Charles Sheppey Sturt married on 15 August 1865 to Louisa Caroline, 3rd daughter of the late Stephen Lawson of Longhirst Northumberland of the 7th (Queen's Own) Hussars. Tragically Louisa died in 1867 after child birth, along with her child. Charles was serving in the Abyssian Campaign at the time.

In August 1870 Charles married Florentia, eldest daughter of Col. Robert Sale of H.M. Indian Army, who bore a daughter Evelyn Caroline in 1871. Evelyn married Edward Philip Standly Alderson but died with the birth of her second son Brian Geoffrey Alderson. Her first son was Frank Harold Alderson born in 1896 and as a captain served in both World War I and II while her daughter Winifred Evelyn Alderson married David Berrington Griffith Davies and had two sons William and David.

Charles was gazetted as a Major General 1 March 1891. Charles Sheppey retired to Newport Castle, Pembrokeshire, Wales and died at Muddiford House near Barnstaple on 22 December 1910. He is buried in the family plot at Cheltenham Cemetery and Crematorium, Gloucestershire.

Military Career

Medals: Indian General Service Medal
Abyssinian Campaign, 1867 – 8 Despatches, London Gaz., 10 July 1868. Medal
Burmese Expedition, 1886-7. – Despatches G.G.O. 864 of 87.

Began service in India 22nd January 1859

Regimental duty 22nd, 6th and 7th Native Infantry from 11th June 1858 – July 1866

Lieutenant with the 6th Native Infantry Bombay Army (London Gazette 1860)

Lieutenant with the 8th Native Infantry (Allen's Indian Mail 1865)

Assistant Engineer Public Works Department, from July 1866 to November 1867

Land Transport Train Abyssinian Expeditionary Force from November 1867 to July 1868

Promoted to Captain (late 6th Native Infantry) 31st October 1869 (Edinburgh Gazette 26/7/1870)

Duty with 7th Native Infantry from January 1872 to August 1873

Staff Officer Regiment from August 1873 to November 1876.

As a Lieutenant Colonel he was granted one year's medical leave on 21st December 1876. This record shows that Charles had been absent from India for a total of 3 years 324 days on medical certificate.

Promoted to Major 30 July 1874 (London Gazette 17/11/1874)

Army list 1879 he is listed a Lt. Colonel 16th Native Infantry

Army list 1882-4 he is listed a Lt. Colonel of the 7th Native Infantry

Major General 1st March 1891 (Bombay Infantry) and placed on the Unemployed Superannumerary List 30 September 1893.