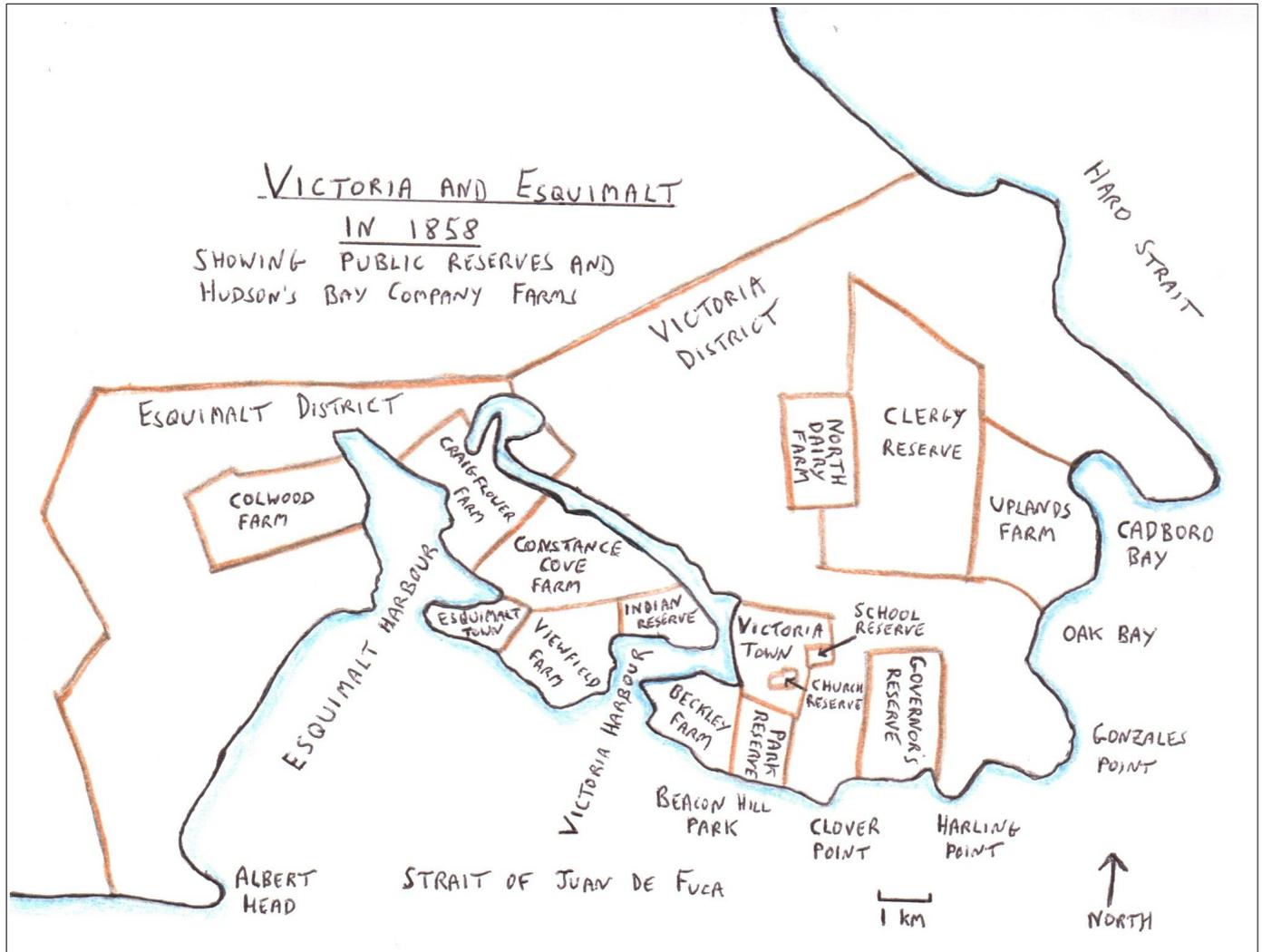


# Pioneers of Vancouver Island & HMS Trincomalee



## Pioneers of Vancouver Island and HMS Trincomalee



During the second commission of HMS Trincomalee (1852-57) many months were spent in British Columbia. In 1825, Sir John McLoughlin chose to build Fort Vancouver 80 miles from the mouth of the Columbia river, the location being influenced by the fertile agricultural land around. Soon there were acres of cultivated fields, orchards and pastures which attracted trade from the Hudson's Bay company, visiting naval ships and Russian traders in Alaska.

As the farms' growth and profits accumulated, in 1840 the Puget Sound Agricultural Company was established in London with plans to develop further the Puget Sound region. However the Oregon Boundary Dispute of 1846 resulted in Britain's loss of her lands in Oregon, including Fort Vancouver, to the Americans.

There was now a need for more farms north of the boundary line and the Puget Sound Agricultural Company decided to set up farms on Vancouver Island. James Douglas (Governor of British Columbia) was in charge of the western headquarters of the Company and divided the

acres reserved for agricultural use around Fort Victoria into four farms. View Field farm was established in 1850, Colwood farm in 1851 and both Constance Cove and Craigflower farms in 1853. There are a few snippets of information recorded in the diaries of British Columbians living on or around these farms which relate to the presence of HMS Trincomalee.

### Martha Beeton Cheney



Martha Beeton Cheney

One of the small number of early settlers on Vancouver Island, independent of the Hudson's Bay Company, was Thomas Blinkhorn (1806-1856). Originally a farmer in his native Sawtry in Huntingdonshire, he married Anne Beeton in 1827, and from 1837 to 1849 he had been stock-raising in Australia.

He reached Vancouver Island from England on the 'Tory' in May 1851 accompanied by Anne's teenage niece Martha Beeton Cheney, the latter kept a diary from 1853 to 1856 this being the only known diary by any woman on Vancouver Island in the pre-goldrush era. A former Captain in the Hudson's Bay Company's maritime service, James Cooper, was also on the 'Tory' and he was returning as a free merchant and landowner. Cooper had taken up more than 300 acres of land at Metchosin, nine miles from Fort Victoria by sea and he left the management of his Metchosin farm to Thomas Blinkhorn.

Entries in Martha's diary give a clear picture of a girlhood at Metchosin:

*'I had a ride with uncle around the plain....I had to churn and make up the butter....Ironing all day....We set the goose on five eggs....went to a dancing party on board the 'Trincomalee', kept up until four o'clock in the morning.'*

Noted as 'a belle of the period, blushing with the coyest of maidens behind their fans' she was destined to become one of Victoria's most gracious hostesses. In 1855 she married Henry Bailey Ella who was born in 1827 on Tower Hill, London, going to sea at the age of 14 years he first visited Victoria in 1851 as chief officer of the Hudson's Bay Company's chartered barque 'Norman Morison'. When Thomas Blinkhorn died in October 1856 the farm stock was sold and Mrs Blinkhorn with Captain and Mrs Ella moved into the town of Victoria.

### Robert Melrose (1828-1898)



Robert Melrose

On 16 August 1852 the Scotsman, Kenneth McKenzie (1811-1874) made a five year contract with the Puget Sound Agricultural Company to provide a farm of 600 acres, livestock, seed and implements, and to pay for all improvements. McKenzie was to receive £60 per annum and after three years share a third of the profit or loss. Having married in about 1841 Agnes Russell, he already had six children prior to parting for Vancouver Island.

McKenzie and his party of 73 persons (including labourers, blacksmiths, carpenters and a schoolteacher) arrived at Vancouver Island on 16 January 1853 on the 'Norman Morison'. After viewing Craigflower, the farm allocated to him, McKenzie moved the carpenters and blacksmiths

to the site on 24 January. By 1 April a temporary building was moved into by the family, with a large manor house being ready on 1 May 1856. To augment his labour force he used men from HMS Trincomalee, and he hired several groups of Indians but these proved unsafe hands.

The 25 year old Robert Melrose and his wife Ellen travelled with McKenzie on the 'Norman Morison', and it is Melrose's diary which has provided an insight into Craigflower during the early period of settlement. Entries in his diaries mentioning the Trincomalee are as follows:

- 1853 July 17 Visited the frigate Trincomalee. Fine dinner.
- 1855 August 25 HMS Trincomalee arrived in Esquimalt Bay.  
D. Lidgate  $\frac{3}{4}$  drunk.
- September 11 SS Otter and Schooner Jessie arrived.  
One bullock killed for HMS Trincomalee.
- September 13 Bateaux Agnes arrived,  
One bullock killed for Trincomalee.
- September 14 Will Stephens engaged (work) for Mr McK.  
Bullock killed for Trincomalee.
- September 15 SS Otter sailed Nisqually.  
Bullock - 2 sheep for Trincomalee
- September 25 Great ball held at the Naval Hospitals.
- September 26 Great Theatrical Opera celebrated at the Hospitals. Showers.
- September 28 Give sheep killed.  
Dozen sent on board the Trincomalee.
- September 30 HMS Trincomalee sailed San Francisco.
- 1856 August 12 HMS Trincomalee, 22 guns arrived in Esquimalt Harbour.
- August 29 SS Otter taken HMS Trincomalee in tow up to Coweighan
- September 4 The Indian hung who shot Thomas Williams.  
SS Otter and HMS Trincomalee arrived from their Coweighan trip.
- September 7 Mr Cooke, gunner, HMS Trincomalee held a prayer meeting in the schoolroom.
- September 30 Mrs Muir buried  
William Newton and Miss Todd married.  
HMS Trincomalee Ball
- October 6 HMS Trincomalee sailed for the coast of Mexico

## Edward Cridge (1817 - 1913)



Edward Cridge

Edward Cridge was born at Bratton Flemming, Devonshire on 17 December 1817, receiving his BA from St. Peter's College (Peterhouse) Cambridge in 1848. After being ordained he served as curate of North Walsham, Norfolk and then of West Ham and as vicar of Christ Church, Stratford, London.

After being appointed to the chaplaincy of the Hudson's Bay Company at Victoria in 1854, Cridge travelled on a small chartered vessel, the 'Marquis of Bute', arriving at Victoria on 1 April 1855. Cridge describes how his wife 'Mary was greeted like a long lost friend by the church ladies group who were already considering her as a fresh voice for the church choir.' He was the second clergyman of the Church of England to reside on Vancouver Island, the first having been the Rev. Robert Staines who arrived in 1849 and was drowned off Cape Flattery in 1853. For a few years Cridge was the only missionary in the area and would hold services aboard the visiting HMS vessels.

The following are entries concerning HMS Trincomalee in Rev. Cridge's diaries:

*'Aug. 28, '55.- Attended a prayer meeting on board HMS Trincomalee'*

*'Sept. 9, '55.- Trincomalee sailed and President arrived.'*

*'Aug. 30, '56.- the Governor went in the Trincomalee to Cowichan to demand the Indian who had lately shot a white man.' - The wounded man was brought to the Fort, where I visited him. He recovered and was sent away to be safe from the Indians' vengeance. The Indian who shot him was delivered up by his tribe, was tried and executed in their presence.*

*'Aug. 21, '56.- Held a prayer meeting at the Parsonage, with Mr. Cook, the gunner, and Mr. Price, midshipman, both of the Trincomalee.'*

*'Aug. 24, '56.- Held a prayer meeting with Mr. Cook, of the Trincomalee, in the Craigflower school-room.'*

In due course the district church at Victoria, Christ Church, so-named after his church in London, was made the Cathedral in Victoria and in July 1876 Edward Cridge was consecrated bishop.

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