

Tragedy on Port Hacking

On 22 December 1864, a party of nine people, including five children, were returning home on the Hacking River after gathering provisions for Christmas. Peter and Mary Anne Molloy and their four young daughters were in one of two flat-bottomed dinghies with Charles Gogerly who was rowing. In the other was the Molloys' 11-year-old son, John and a neighbour, Thomas Potter.

Gogerly and Potter had been drinking heavily. When Gogerly stood up to reach into Potter's boat for a bottle of rum, he staggered and fell, capsizing both boats. All perished except young John Molloy and Gogerly himself.

At the Coroner's inquest, the jury returned the verdict that the seven victims had drowned and, it was concluded, '... we consider the men were under the influence of drink at the time of the occurrence.'

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On 22nd December 1864 it appeared that the two flat-bottomed dinghies had set out on Port Hacking from Molloy's place to gather provisions for Christmas. They were on their way home when the tragedy occurred.

In one boat was shell-gatherer, Thomas Potter and 11-year-old John Molloy. In the other were Charles Gogerly, Peter and Mary Anne Molloy and their children, Mary Anne, Caroline, Susan and Ellen, the youngest of whom was still being breastfed.

Gogerly and Peter Molloy had been drinking, and Gogerly wanted the bottle of rum which was in Potter's boat. He reached over to the other boat, slipped and both boats capsized. The accident was witnessed by Thomas Potter's wife, Mary, Sergeant Taylor, and Charles Gogerly's son, John who swam from the shore about 800 yards away and managed to save his father.

After the Coroner's inquest at the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel, Botany, the jury returned the verdict: 'We find that the deceased ... came to their deaths by suffocation by drowning, and we consider the men were under the influence of drink at the time of the occurrence.'



Charles James Gogerly arrived at the colony in 1819 as a convict under life sentence. He was granted conditional pardon in 1838, and then from 1843 spent 12 months in prison for obscene libel relating to a Sydney newspaper, the *Omnibus & Sydney Spectator*, of which he was printer and publisher. He acquired his land at Port Hacking in two separate lots in the early 1850s and it is believed he resided there from 1854, the first white settler there.

Charles Gogerly [source and date unknown]

References:

- 1864 Report of the Boat Accident for which Old Charles Gogerly [sic] was held responsible.
- Sydney Morning Herald, 22nd and 29 December 1864
- Garawarra.woprdpress.com/2018/02/27/old-gogerlys-rum-disaster/