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"A Highland Scot."

Mrs James Bell, of Morven, Glenferrie Road, Malvern, who has just entered the 94th year of a life that is still full of interest and mental activity, does not scorn the good things of life which come from material success, but places them at their true value. A Highland Scot of the very finest type, she comes of a family of sailors, soldiers and divines, who can trace their ancestry without a break back to the year 1030. Today, frail perhaps in body, but with a mind sharp in its judgment as when she was a young woman, admitting with some annoyance that the winter cold is beginning to affect her hearing, scorning eye glasses except occasionally for writing, this little lady, whose conversation is illumined by a most delightful sense of humour, has a mind stored with memories of a childhood and young womanhood spent in the stimulating atmosphere of Edinburgh society, with its vigorous, intellectual life, and the social gaiety of a military centre. It was from this extra-ordinarily interesting existence that she came to live, more than 60 years ago, in the quiet of the Australian bush, where she used to stand and listen, even for the sound of a bird.

Mrs Bell was born in 1837 in a military hillstation at Midnapore, near Calcutta. Her father was Major Alexander Stewart Singer, in the East India Company's Service, and through her paternal grandmother, she traces her direct connection with the Stewarts of Appin, whose history is part of the history of Scotland, of which she is so proud.

When she was only nine months old, she was taken to Edinburgh by her parents, and left with her grandparents, the Reverend Dr Singer, lawyer, clergyman and farmer, and his wife, who was Anne Stewart.

Her father died at the early age of 41, as a result of the rigours of the Indian climate. A memorial erected to him in Simla declares that "no less than if in action he died in the service of his country".

Of her life in Edinburgh, Mrs. Bell retains vivid memories. She recalls Queen Victoria's visit to Edinburgh following her accession to the throne, but perhaps one of the most interesting pictures she paints for her listener is that of the courtyard of Holyrood Castle filled with cavalry ready to depart for the Crimea.

"Those were the times when we lost all our dancing friends and all the young men who used to row us up the Dee. After an inspection of the castle courtyard, the wives and sweethearts were allowed to follow the regiment to Jock's Lodge, as the barracks were called, where the band played 'The Girl I left behind me', then the women all went back home, the men went on, and very few came back"

It was in 1861, after the death of her mother, that Mrs. Bell decided to come to Australia. Her only brother had come out with General Macarther as a member of his staff, and later he obtained an excellent post with the Bank of New South Wales.

Mr James Bell the owner of Woolbroke Station Teesdale and one of three brothers who had come out to join their uncle John **Bell** known as "Big Bell", one of the original squatters of this country was a fellow passenger to the two girls on the voyage which took three months. "We had been warned to take care of ourselves," Mrs Bell recalls with one her fascinating twinkles in her eyes, "but I was the only one who did any good for myself."

She married her wealthy husband shortly after her arrival, at Christ Church, South Yarra, the officiating clergyman Rev Mr Guinness, a member of the famous stout family, who had himself been married three times.

Mrs Bell's uncle, Captain Alexander Johnson, of the Ceylon Rifles, was also in Australia, having come out before the gold discovery and taken up land at Carranballac afterwards bought by Mr. Chirnside. As Mrs. Bell recalls memories of those early days on that vast sheep property, covering thousands of acres, when she admits she felt "very much alone", and later

the development of the town of Teesdale, it is easy to imagine her keeping up the traditions that she would have upheld as the lady of the manor in the land of her birth.

An inscription on a silver tray on which tea was served during the interview, bore testament to the affectionate esteem in which she was held by the people of the district.

It is impossible within the limitations of space to give an adequate idea of the wealth of memories which this much travelled and much experienced old lady has stored up to illumine the twilight of her life

One of her chief preoccupations is the history of the branches of her family which is traced in a marvellous tree dating from 1050 to 1882, and that shows as she puts it with one of her happy chuckles, she was an 18th cousin of Queen Victoria. She is also connected, through three different channels, with the Lyons family of Glamis, into which the Duke of York has married.

Mrs. Bell's pride now lies in her children, her grandchildren and her greatgrandchildren whose portraits surround her in a charming home that is filled with treasures garnered in many lands of the world. Her only daughter died some years ago. One son Mr Alexander Bell lives with her in Malvern. The other son is Mr J C Bell of Addiscot, Torquay.

<http://ndpbeta.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/4097764?searchTerm=James+Bell>