The
Family of
Marie Louise Dorney
(nee Kiernan)
Origins of the Kiernan Name

The Kiernan name is of Irish origin and within Ireland is most common in Counties Cavan and Leitrim. The name literally means ‘son of the lord’. The name is reputed to be descended from Kiernan, grandson of Turlough Mor O’Connor, King of Ireland; the name dates from the thirteenth century

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Early Kiernans in Ireland

So far the Kiernan line has been traced back to Patrick Felix Kiernan, but in the early 19th century there were three other Kiernans living in the same part of Dublin as Patrick. We know they were related because they appeared as sponsors for the baptismal certificates for each other’s children. They were John Kiernan, Richard Kiernan and Jacob Kiernan. There was also a possible relative, John Farrell.

John Kiernan had a silk manufacturers shop next door to Patrick’s business at 3 Francis Street from 1807 to 1816, later moving to 3 James Street until 1828. He may also have been living with Patrick in 1825, as there is a J. Kiernan noted at that address on a register of donations.

Dublin Mercantile Advertiser, 12 September 1825

There was also a Felix Farrell Kiernan (1811-1863), 3rd son of Felix Kiernan, Rhode, King's County (now County Offaly) in Ireland.

Felix Farrell married in 1849 in Berbice, British Guiana, and subscribed to the O’Connel fund from Demerara, British Guiana in 1858. He died in 1863 in Amandale, British Guiana.

The names Felix And Farrell re-appear many times in the Kiernan family in Australia, so for this reason I believe Felix Farrel Kiernan was likely also a relative.

Freeman’s Journal, 12 May 1849

Freeman’s Journal, 14 May 1863

Dublin Mercantile Advertiser, 12 September 1825
Patrick Felix Kiernan was a prosperous businessman in Dublin in the early 19th century. He had a woollen drapery shop at 4&5 Francis Street, Dublin, from 1806-1833.

Patrick was married to Maria Teresa Dunne. They had several children that we know of, all baptised at St. Nicholas (without), Dublin. They were Maria Anna in 1822, Maria Eleanor in 1823, John Joseph in 1826, Catherine in 1828 and Felix Jacob in 1831.

Patrick contributed to mainstream Catholic causes, such as the O'Connell tribute, and used patriotism in his adverts.
John Joseph Kiernan (1826-1902) - Marie’s father

Many thanks to Peter Brian Kiernan (b.1923) for his assistance with information about John Joseph Kiernan.

John Joseph Kiernan was born in Ireland and baptised at St. Nicholas (without), Dublin on 3 April 1826. He was the son of Patrick Felix Kiernan, a woollen draper at 4 & 5 Francis Street, and Maria Teresa Dunne.

He studied at Saint Patrick’s College, Carlow.

John Joseph went to America as a young man and may have been in the Caribbean as he had a knowledge of Spanish. He arrived in Melbourne on 11th August 1854 from London on an unassisted passage on the Sigisbert Cezard as ‘J. Kernan, aged 30, American’.

John worked as a teacher or schoolmaster. He was first employed in Australia at Saint Patrick’s College, East Melbourne, where he was the Classical and Mathematics master.

The foundation stone for Saint Patrick’s had been laid in December 1854 and the school was to operate until 1968. The Catholic elite of the colony sent their children there, and people that we know John taught there as students, were Chief Justice John Madden1, Dr. Patrick Moloney2, physician and poet, and Sir Robert Wallace Best3, Victorian MLA.

The following information about Saint Patrick’s comes from the official website4

“Bishop Gould hired some of the most competent educators of day, including Whyte, Bleasdale (who is well known for his connections with Australian wines) and Dr John Barry. They dreamed of a great school and indeed they fulfilled their dreams with substantial dining rooms for the boarders, a stable for horses and a house in Brighton which served as an infirmary. The curriculum was the equal of any in the colony, the results were outstanding and the parents delighted. It was a classical style education and the languages offered included, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Spanish, Portuguese and German. Unfortunately the bankers were not quite so impressed and the school was bankrupt twice in ten years.

The bankruptcy of 1862 resulted in legal action against Dr Barry which few of those involved little credit and dragged on for months. Peter O’Farrell, the bishop’s solicitor did not help matters by the advice he tendered and eventually had to flee the colony himself. Twenty years later, and slightly insane he returned to Melbourne where he shot and wounded Archbishop Gould.”

It’s probable that one of the bankruptcies led to his departure from the school. He was still teaching at Catholic schools in 1870, where the following statement was made about him, “The Catholic school at Pentridge under Mr. Kiernan is an example of what a teacher, by unabated industry may do...”.

John was 38 and a tutor to Margaret McDonald, who was 16 at the time of their marriage. He had been in the same Volunteer Rifle Regiment as her father. It’s not sure for how many years he was in the Regiment,

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2 http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/moloney-patrick-4219
4 http://stpats.xavier.vic.edu.au/our-pastors

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but in July 1867 he passed an examination and was promoted to be a non-commissioned officer. He was named as the Honorary Secretary of the Pentridge Rifle Association in a newspaper notice postponing a meeting in August 1873.

Margaret’s father thought John Joseph was ‘ne’er do well’ and also that ‘it was better to marry a hard-working dustman than a penniless gentleman.’ Margaret’s parents gave consent for the marriage but later tried unsuccessfully to annul it.

John and Margaret married on the 27th July 1865 at St. Paul’s in Pentridge, Melbourne. John was the Honorary Secretary on the St Paul’s Committee at around this time.

They lived in Bell St, Pentridge until about 1873 and had three children there; Catherine, John Joseph and Felix Patrick. In 1874 they were living in Wodonga where they had two more children - Richard and Maude. They returned to Melbourne in 1875, and lived and taught in Oakleigh. Over this period they had seven more children - Charles, Marie Louise, Margaret, Esmond Laurence, Farrell, Theophilus and Stanislaus.

The Advocate, 13 April 1872

John matriculated from Melbourne University in 1871, having passed exams in Latin, English, Arithmetics, Algebra, Euclid and Geography. He also passed, in late 1870, the Ordinary Examination for the Civil Service of Victoria.

The Argus, 28 July 1879

John was an intelligent, well educated man but erratic in his behaviour and he had a drinking problem.

These following excerpts from Education Department records should convey an impression of the man. Some snippets include:

All payments to school stopped until discrepancy in the accounts is explained. (1872).

Charge of withholding salary from pupil teacher. (1875).

Censured and to be removed to another school for engaging in a fight with a Mr. Bates and conduct considered highly unbecoming. (1878).

Inspector Tynan complains that certain insulting Latin phrases have been made in the school register that ‘can only be the work of Mr Kiernan’ (1880).

Does not seem to endeavour to perform his duties in any but the most perfunctory manner; nor does Mr Kiernan appear to pay any attention to the directions and suggestions given by me (1888).

Fined five pounds for (a) unpunctuality of attendance (b) irregularity in curtailing the afternoon meeting (c) keeping the school records in a slovenly and inaccurate manner….It has been decided in the public interest to forward his name to the classifiers for transfer to a school of the smallest size (1889) and finally Dismissed for negligence and carelessness in the discharge of his duties, and for making false statements on the school roll (1890).
Schools staffed by John Joseph Kiernan

However, despite all these negative comments, he must have had some continued competency or he would not have stayed employed for so long.

One bit of advice that John passed on to his daughter Marie was ‘Never look down, always look up’

John died on 3rd April 1902 at 40 St. George’s Road, North Fitzroy, aged 76.


Margaret McDonald - Marie’s mother

Margaret McDonald was born on 6 January 1849 in Hobart and was the eldest of twelve children. She worked as a teacher after marrying John and in between bearing children. In contrast to John, most education department statements about her were positive or relatively neutral.

Examples include ‘She knows her business as a teacher very fairly and is active and diligent in carrying out the work of her school’ (1883), ‘knows her work and has an active manner in teaching’ (1884) and ‘an unsatisfactory teacher, has been neglecting her duties very much of late’ (1890). This last comment is perhaps understandable given that her husband appeared to be going off the rails.

Margaret died 16 January 1916 in Melbourne.

Both items: The Argus, 18 January 1916
John McDonald - Marie’s maternal grandfather

John McDonald was born in 1821 in County Carlow, Ireland to Andrew McDonald and Ellen McDarby.

There was a John MacDonald baptised on 23 December 1817 in the small parish or village of Tinryland to Andrew McDonald and Eleanor MacDarby.

Other baptisms to this couple include Mary, 1 January 1820, Cathedral of the Assumption, Margaret 16 January 1816, Tinryland. Andrew and Eleanor were married on 4 November 1815 in Tinryland. The witnesses were Michael Timmin and Elizabeth Tynan.

There is an Andrew McDonald in the tithe applotment books for Tomduff townland, Co Carlow. This could well be John’s father.

He had joined the 99th Regiment of Foot (Lanarkshire Volunteers) by early 1841 as Private No. 1024. His regiment sailed out to Australia as guards on a number of prison ships, spread over several years.

John sailed on the Somersetshire, departing Plymouth on 19 January 1842 and arriving in Hobart on 29 May 1842.

During the voyage there was a planned mutiny of troops and convicts and the ship was held up during the enquiry. One private was executed and three troops who took part were sentenced to penal servitude.

The convict ship Isabella, also carrying members of the 99th, had arrived in Hobart on 19 May. John, along with 70 other men and Colonel Jackson left for Sydney HQ on the Isabella on 9th June 1842.

Some troops (including John) were later despatched to Newcastle; John was stationed in Maitland in 1845, and had attained the rank of Corporal.
Volunteer detachments of the 99th were sent to Norfolk Island and New Zealand (John didn’t go to these last two sites), and by 1848 he was stationed in Hobart.

In September 1853 the Government of Victoria applied to Van Diemen’s Land for military assistance, and John, along with 12 officers and 295 men of the 99th were despatched there.

He moved to the 40th Regiment and Ballarat in 1856, when the 99th regiment returned to Great Britain. The 40th Regiment left Victoria for New Zealand in 1860. John did not go to New Zealand, but was apparently still a member of the Regiment and living in Ballarat in mid-1861.

This photo was taken c.1861 of the Pentridge Volunteer Rifles.

The Sergeant Major at the time was J. McDonald. The man on the left may well be John McDonald.

More research is underway to attempt a definite identification.

(From page 119, Victorian Land Forces, 1853-1883, George Ward.)
In 1865 worked as a Drill Sergeant with the Victorian Police and in 1871 was recorded as a Sergeant Major with the Victorian Volunteer Forces.

John and Louisa had four children while stationed in Hobart. Margaret, born c.1849, Henrietta Ellen, born 1850, Henry James born 1852 and Mary born 1853.

They had another 8 children in Victoria. John (1856), Frederick (1857), Harriet (1858), Joseph (1861), Thomas (1863), William (1864), Agnes (1867) and Emily (1871).

John was living in Pentridge, Melbourne from at least 1863 to at least 1872. He died at his home at 137 Park Street, Parkville on 7 July 1900.

Ellen McDarby – John McDonald’s mother

Ellen was born in about 1800 in County Carlow to Patrick and Ellen McDarby. Patrick was a farmer.

Ellen married Andrew McDonald around 1818. They had at least three children together. Margaret, born ~1819, John born ~1821 and another child.

Ellen’s daughter Margaret married a Ryan. She died in Carlton in 1862 aged 43.

In about early 1862 John’s mother Ellen came to Victoria, John’s father probably died before that date. Ellen died in in August 1864 in Melbourne.

Ellen, John, and Margaret, along with John’s wife Louisa, his two daughters Agnes and Emily and his grandson John Hamilton are buried in a grave site in the Melbourne General Cemetery.

Louisa White - Marie’s maternal grandmother

Louisa White was born in about 1830 to William White and Mary Charity Hall. Her birthplace is recorded many times on birth certificates as well as her death certificate, and each mention is of a different location.

She married John McDonald on 6 August 1847 at the St. Mary’s Roman Catholic in Sydney. The witnesses were William Cleary, also of the 99th regiment, and his wife Matilda.

Louisa and John married again on 1 of December 1847 in the St. Phillip’s Church of England church. This was probably because Catholic weddings were not recognised by the government at the time. John was
being transferred to Hobart and would have needed to be legally married to bring Louisa. Consent for the marriage was given by the Commissioner for Minors, which indicates that Louisa’s parents were either dead or not in Australia and that Louisa herself was under 21 years of age.

Louisa died in 1908 in Melbourne aged 78.