



# THE LIFE OF GEORGIANA MOLLOY

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(1805-1843)

The following account was written by Mrs Eleanor Lewin (Member of the School Council) using the works of W.J. Lines, “An All Consuming Passion” and A. Hasluck, “Portrait with a Background.” Further information about Georgiana Molloy is available from a wide variety of historical sources. Please contact either the school or your local library for links to these sources.

Georgiana Kennedy was born on 23 May 1805 at Crosby Lodge near Carlisle in Cumberland. On both her father and mother’s side she was connected with old Border families. After the sudden death of her father her mother moved the family to Rugby for the “sake of her sons’ education”. Georgiana, along with her sisters received the typical female education of their day, which was a thorough grounding in the art of pleasing men! They would have been taught singing, dancing and playing the pianoforte and harp; embroidery, fine sewing and sampler-work, drawing and painting. A certain amount of history, geography and literature and a great deal of Scripture.

In making the move from Carlisle to Rugby, Mrs Kennedy may have considered that urban surroundings were better for her daughters’ chances of matrimony. It is not known where Georgiana met her future husband Captain John Molloy, but in a letter of 11 December 1828, written to him, she speaks as if she had known him a long time. Captain John Molloy was now aged forty-eight, Miss Georgiana Kennedy must have seemed just the right person. She was now twenty-four, past her first youth as it was then regarded, and a home of her own would give her that happiness which she had lacked in her mother’s home. After considerable heart-searching, she wrote accepting his proposal.

Married to a man nearly twice her age, Georgiana Molloy was swept up in the great events of early nineteenth-century Britain – population growth, war, revolution, religious revival, and the encouragement of self-interest – that saw a colony established in Western Australia. During twelve years of colonial life she endured ‘domestic drudgery’, bore seven children, moved three times, established two gardens, botanised in the bush, and maintained a moving and eloquent correspondence with family and friends and with a London horticulturist, James Mangles.

At his behest, Georgiana Molloy began collecting Australian plants. In the course of her journey into the bush, she awoke to Australia’s natural beauty and discovered her own freedom. Being in the bush became her ‘all consuming passion’.

Georgiana Molloy had organised others to collect on her behalf. Besides Charlotte Heppingstone at Augusta, whom she asked to collect seeds specifically requested, she also convinced Aborigines to bring her flowers.

She had learned that, owing to their custom of placing wreaths on graves, the Nyungar associated flowers with death. Nevertheless, she overcame their dislike of flowers, obtained their cooperation in collecting, and reported: 'the native Herdsmen are also employed bringing in some desired Plant or Fruit'. She also discovered that the Nyungar especially disliked flowers placed on their heads. On one occasion, however, she persuaded a man to allow her 'to place a large piece of the crimson Anterrhinum in his hair'.

Georgiana Molloy often boasted of the tranquil relations that prevailed between the settlers and the Aborigines. In a November 1833 letter to her sister she wrote, "The natives are very fond of all the settlers at Augusta and we live on the most peaceful terms." Local Aborigines affectionately referred to her as 'King-bin' and to her husband as 'King Kandarung'.

In 1833 Georgiana befriended an Aborigine from King George Sound who with his companion decided to stay at Augusta. Georgiana found he spoke 'tolerably intelligible English' and she told her mother he exhibited 'great confidence' towards her and Captain Molloy. Georgiana supplied him with flour and allowed him to cook in her kitchen, in exchange he and other Aborigines brought her possum, 'a delicate food', fish and other bush foods. He entrusted her with his spears, and other local Aborigines gave her knives and waddies.

Georgiana Molloy died tragically in childbirth on 8 April 1843. The life that had begun 37 years before in England at the violent dawn of the nineteenth century, that had been swept up in religion and emigration and crossed oceans to the far corner of the earth, that had borne seven children, and had found grace in the Australian bush, ended.

Georgiana Molloy was buried on 10 April, in a field near the house she knew as Fairlawn near Busselton and her grave was surrounded by a square of spiky yucca lilies that she had brought with her from Augusta. The Church of St Mary's Busselton was not yet built, later her body would be re-interred beneath it, with her two little children from Augusta and her name commemorated on a brass tablet within the old church. At Augusta, the pink gladioli from the Cape that she planted in her garden will not die, but come up anew each year and at the Vasse the Yucca gloriosa she brought with her to the colony grow thickly still in the field where she was originally buried.

Georgiana Molloy Park in Augusta now stands on the land where the Molloy's home once stood. It is inspiring for those at Georgiana Molloy Anglican School today to travel to Augusta and sit in this park taking in its view over the water and wonder at the marvelous yet humble achievements that Georgiana accomplished in her short 37 years of life.

Although over 150 years have passed since Georgiana Molloy first came to the area, she is an inspiration for people living in today's modern world. "Rejoice in Service" is an apt motto for Georgiana Molloy Anglican School as it so accurately reflects its patron, Mrs Georgiana Molloy.

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