



## ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

**“Read all about it!”**

**The origins and early history of the Squadron – as reported in the Press of the day**

### **Part 16: Attempted Assassination!**

**Thursday, 12th March, 1868 – The Sydney Morning Herald**

ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

SQUADRON DAY-THURSDAY, 12th March, 1868.

NOTICE. - Yachts to assemble in Double Bay, at 11 o'clock a.m.; to proceed, under orders of the Commodore, to the "Sailors' Home Picnic."

By order, G. H. HOWELL, hon. Secretary.

**Saturday, 14th March, 1868 – Sydney Mail**

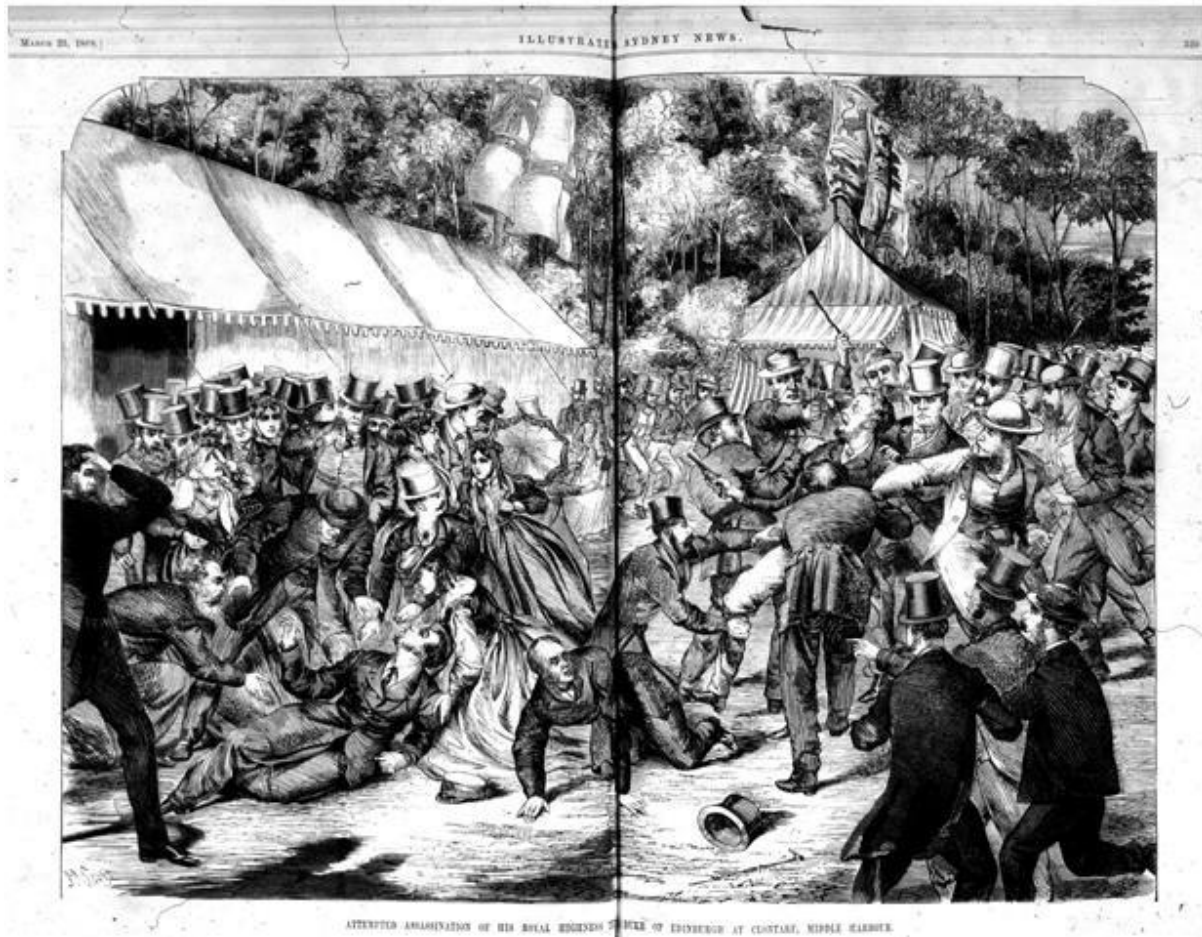
ATTEMPT TO ASSASSINATE H.R.H. PRINCE ALFRED, AT CLONTARF.

IT is with the deepest sorrow that we have to announce a most determined attempt to assassinate his Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh. When the Prince left the luncheon-tent, at the Sailors' Home Pic-nic, he escorted the Countess of Belmore to the door of the Royal tent, and then turned to converse with his Excellency the Governor, the Chief Justice, and Sir William Manning. They remained talking a few seconds, and then his Royal Highness and Sir William Manning sauntered across the green towards the clump of trees bordering the beach, and under which the Galatea Band was stationed. The subject of conversation was the Sailors' Home, and his Royal Highness, to mark his appreciation of the institution, handed Sir William a cheque as a donation to the institution. Sir William made his acknowledgments for the donation, and then asked his Royal Highness whether he would go round to Cabbage Tree Beach to see the aboriginals, as they were then ready for some sports. Before his Royal Highness could reply a treacherous assailant, who had just left the crowd of persons congregated under the shade of the trees, stole up behind him, and when he had approached to within five or six feet pulled out a revolver, took deliberate aim, and fired. The shot took effect about the middle of the back of his Royal Highness, an inch or two to the right of the spine. He fell forward on his hands and knees, exclaiming, "Good God, my back is broken." Sir William Manning, hearing the discharge, and seeing his Royal Highness fall, turned and sprang at the would-be assassin, who then jumped back and aimed the murderous weapon at Sir William. Seeing the pistol directed towards him, Sir William stooped to evade the shot, and, losing his balance, fell. Fortunately, the charge did not explode; but as Sir William Manning was in the act of rising, the ruffian took aim a third time; just at the moment Mr. Vial, of Castlereagh-street, who happened to be behind, sprang upon the dastardly assailant, pinioned his arms to his side, and thus the aim of the pistol was diverted from the body of Sir William Manning to the ground. The weapon was discharged, however, and the shot entered the



## ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

foot of Mr. George Thorne, senior, who fainted, and was taken away by Mr. Hassall, and other friends.



In the meantime, a number of people, attracted by the discharge of firearms, and seeing his Royal Highness fall, ran to the spot, and three or four of them, among whom was Mr. T. Hales and a young gentleman named M'Mahon, lifted his Royal Highness to carry him into his tent. It was evident from the demeanour of his Royal Highness that he was suffering great pain, and he asked his bearers to carry him gently. This wish was complied with as far as possible, and thus he was borne into his tent. Here he was taken in charge by Dr. Watson, of H.M.S. Challenger, who together with Dr. Wright of Sydney, Dr. Powell of the Galatea, and Assistant-surgeon Waugh of the Challenger, were immediately in attendance. The dress of his Royal Highness was removed, and upon an examination of the wound it was found that the bullet had penetrated the back, near the middle, and about two inches from the right side of the lower part of the spine, traversing the course of the ribs, round by the right to the abdomen, where it lodged, immediately below the surface. No vital organ, fortunately, appeared to be injured, the course of the bullet being to all appearance, quite superficial.

While this painful examination was in progress another scene, which almost defies description, was going on in another part of the ground. No sooner had Mr. Vial grasped the arms of the man who had



## ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

fired the shots, than Mr. Benjamin Mortimer (an American gentleman), Mr. Whiting (of the firm of Dryman and Whiting), A. L. Jackson, and other gentlemen seized him; and, had it not been for the closing in around them of the police and other persons, they would speedily have placed him beyond the reach of the Law Courts. The people shouted "lynch him," "hang him," "string him up," and so on, and there was a general rush to get at him. The police, headed by Superintendent Orridge, got hold of the assassin, and they had the greatest difficulty in preventing the infuriated people from tearing him limb from limb. In this the police were ably assisted by the Chief Justice, Lord Newry, and the men of the Galatea Band. Both Lord Newry and Sir Alfred Stephen exerted themselves to get the prisoner on board the steamer lying at the wharf, while Mr. Orridge, with herculean strength, kept back the crowd as much as possible.

The task of putting the prisoner on board the ship was not an easy one, and it was fully ten minutes before they could get him on to the wharf. By that time all the clothing from the upper part of his body was torn off, his eyes, face, and body were much braised, and blood was flowing from various wounds; and when he was dragged on to the deck of the Paterson he appeared to be utterly unconscious. No sooner was he on board than a number of sailors had a rope ready to string him up, and it was only by the interference of Lord Newry that his life was spared. Some of the police were very roughly used, detective Powell getting about the worst of it. In the scuffle he fell over some stones and had a chance of being trampled to death. The whole of the police on the ground were under the command of Mr. Fosbery. The people, out of whose hands the prisoner had been rescued, immediately gave vent to their disappointment, and at an indignation meeting, summarily convened, determined to bring him back from the steamer, and dispatch him at the scene of his crime. A rush was then made for the steamer, which had just hauled off a few feet from the wharf, and they shouted to the captain to haul in. For a moment this officer appeared to waver, but the Hon. John Hay, who was on the bridge, doubtless divining the intentions of the crowd, peremptorily ordered the captain to haul off. This he did, and the vessel accordingly proceeded on her way to Sydney. The effect of this dastardly attempt to assassinating the Prince, among the immense number of persons congregated at Clontarf, may be more easily imagined than described. A large number of ladies fainted, others were seized with hysterics, and the whole multitude was convulsed. Suddenly a joyous throng had been converted into a mass of excited people, in whose breasts sympathy for the Royal sufferer, and indignation for his murderous assailant, alternately prevailed; while pallid faces and tearful eyes told of the deep anxiety that was felt in reference to the extent of the injuries which his Royal Highness had sustained. People crowded by hundreds around the tent in which the sufferer lay, until they were informed that they must keep back, in order to allow free ventilation; they at once fell back thirty or forty yards, and formed a complete cordon around the tent, and anxiously awaited the result of the examination. Finding the people so anxious about him, his Royal Highness said, "Tell the people I am not much hurt, I shall be better presently."

His Royal Highness, who never lost consciousness, although feeling faint and weak from the shock to his nervous system, and from loss of blood, described to his attendants the sensation experienced when struck by the bullet. He said he felt as though he was being lifted off the ground.

At about five o'clock his Royal Highness was placed on a litter and borne by men of the Galatea to the deck of the Morpeth, a solemn silence being preserved by the people, who stood on either side while



## ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

the cortege passed. Among those who were in immediate attendance on his Royal Highness were the gentlemen of his suite, namely, Lieutenant Haig, Lord Newry, and the Hon. Eliot Yorke, all of whom were painfully affected by the tragic occurrence. His Excellency the Governor, Commodore Lambert, Captain Beresford, and Mr. Toulmin were also most assiduous in their sympathetic attentions and proceeded to Sydney in the same boat. Prior to this the little steamer Fairy had been sent up to Sydney with a message for the officer in charge of the Galatea, to be prepared with a boat to convey the Royal sufferer to the shore; and when the Morpeth arrived off Farm Cove a barge from the Galatea came alongside. The Prince, who was lying upon a stretcher with a soft mattress under him, and his head supported by pillows, was lowered into his barge, which was manned by a number of his own sailors.

On arriving at the landing place, he was carefully raised out of the boat. Rumours of the occurrence having reached town, large numbers of persons rushed to the jetty in front of Government House, where it was presumed the Prince would land. Here a body of police and marines were posted, some of them guarding the approach from the wharf to Government House, and others forming near the landing place, in order to escort his Royal Highness. The crowd forced back to the high ground and kept at some distance from the chosen line of route. The Prince was surrounded by a guard of marines, and the sight of his prostrate and helpless condition called forth from the crowd many expressions of sympathy.

Upon the arrival of the Paterson at the wharf, the prisoner was landed and conveyed in charge of Mr. Orridge to the gaol. O'Farrell is a fair-complexioned man, about five feet eleven inches in height, and apparently about five and thirty years of age. He has a slight beard and moustache, and a military air. He is perfectly self-possessed, is said to be a man of good education, and in manner is not unpleasing. He was dressed in a dark coat and trousers and white waistcoat. His clothes were torn to ribbons by the excited crowd, and he received many severe bruises, his eyes being blackened, his nose swelled very much, and his lips puffed out like those of a negro. According to his own statements -although he says very little and maintains much reticence with respect to himself and his dastardly deed - he is a native of Dublin, but left Ireland at a very early age. He has been in many countries, has spent a considerable time on the European continent, and in America, and about three months ago came from Victoria to New South Wales. He has expressed a hope that the Prince would not die, and says that he did not mean to kill, but merely to "frighten him" - a statement which is absurd on the face of it. Two revolvers were found on him, one of which had not been discharged, and every chamber of which was loaded - the other, the weapon with which the attempt at assassination was committed, was picked up by one of the Galatea's bandsmen after the prisoner's capture. The latter is a small Colt's revolver, such as could easily be carried in the pocket.

Late in the afternoon a rumour was brought to the Legislative Assembly that the Prince was shot. The correctness of the information was doubted, and it was not until a reply to an inquiry was sent from the detective office stating that a shot had been fired at the Prince, and that a person or persons were in custody, that the report was believed. Meantime Superintendent Orridge went up to the House, and reported that a man was in custody, and that he had conveyed him to the gaol. The House was at once adjourned. The Colonial Secretary, Mr. Parkes, proceeded to the gaol and saw the prisoner. He ascertained that his name was H. F. O'Farrell, that he slept on Wednesday night at the Clarendon Hotel, corner of George and Hunter streets. The Colonial Secretary asked him how he came to



## ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

commit such an outrage, to which he replied, "Come, come, it is not fair to ask me such a question as that - the Prince is all right - the Prince will live, you need not fear about him - it's only a side wound - I shall be hanged, but the Prince will." On leaving the gaol the Colonial Secretary, taking with him two police constables, went to the Clarendon Hotel. The people there knew nothing about the affair beyond hearing a rumour that the Prince had been shot. They admitted that such a man as the prisoner was described to be, had lived there, and the room in which he had slept was at once searched. Some articles of wearing apparel were found in a broken box and in a table drawer. In various places (in the drawer and in the pockets of his clothes) were found percussion caps, detonating cartridges, wadding for revolvers, a Douay Bible, and a number of religious books, in which his name was inscribed. Having secured these things, the Colonial Secretary ascertained that O'Farrell had been in Sydney from about Christmas last, and that whilst the Prince has been here whenever the other lodgers in the house spoke of him this man got out of temper and denounced him. He went out on Tuesday evening to go to the ball; but, for some reason, did not get in, and came back. The Colonial Secretary also ascertained that he had lived at Tierney's, Currency Lass Hotel, corner of Pitt and Hunter streets, and to that house they proceeded. Here, in a box, said to belong to O'Farrell, they found a number of articles of clothing and some written papers, from which it was shown that he had resided in Melbourne.

It is almost impossible to describe the sensation which the news of the outrage produced in the city. When first heard it was treated as a mere rumour; many persons saw the police take the prisoner from the Paterson but considered him merely some fellow who had got his clothes torn in a drunken brawl. It was not until the announcement was made in the Assembly, and that the members on retiring mentioned the fact, that the news received any credence. The excitement was intensified by the appearance of a party of mounted police dashing at full speed towards the Circular Quay; a party of foot police, fully armed, followed and took up their positions opposite the landing-stage, where it was reported that the Prince would be landed. Several thousand citizens were assembled about the wharf and on board the vessels lying alongside, where they remained until information was received that the Prince had been taken to Government House. The police then withdrew, and the people dispersed. A member of our staff, who had started from Clontarf to the city directly after the outrage was perpetrated, brought the particulars, which were immediately printed, and some thousands distributed, and eagerly read. The streets were thronged with people, whose sole topic appeared to be the sad event; it was evident that some gigantic calamity, affecting all classes of the people, had taken place, and spread sorrow throughout the entire community. At the Prince of Wales Theatre, where his Royal Highness had announced his intention of being present on the occasion of Mr. Hoskins' benefit, a notice was posted, that in consequence of the dastardly outrage on the person of H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh, the theatre was closed for the night. At the School of Arts Dr. Carr announced that in consequence of the calamity which had fallen upon the colony in the attempted assassination of the Duke of Edinburgh, it would be unseemly for any entertainment being given; the audience at once acquiesced. Up to midnight many persons were assembled at the doors of our office, desirous of learning the latest news, and expressing their sympathy for the Royal sufferer. An immense crowd also assembled at the gates leading to Government House, and anxiously enquired of persons coming from that direction, how the Prince was progressing.



## ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

The Bishop of Sydney, together with the Ministers and other gentlemen, called at Government House yesterday evening, but could not see the Prince. Miss Osborne was in attendance, and one of the nursing sisters remained during the night. His Royal Highness could not lie down. There was no appearance of hemorrhage. The medical gentlemen speak favourably of the case, as the Prince has youth, health, and a good constitution in his favour.

Mr. T. Hales has furnished us with the following account of the outrage: - "I had escorted some ladies to the seats near the beach, and was walking across the green towards the Prince's private tent, when he was passing on my right hand, Sir William Manning on the Prince's left, a well-dressed man came running after the Prince and fired a revolver within a yard of his back. The Prince fell, I lifted him from the ground, when the man fired a second shot. Sir William Manning went towards the villain, who retreated a few paces, and covered him with his revolver very deliberately; fortunately, the pistol missed fire on the third shot, or I think Sir William would have been killed. The Prince on being shot exclaimed, 'my back is broken,' and appeared to suffer severely."

### Notes:

- The RSYS was a significant part of the entourage which attended the picnic at Clontarf.
- The assassin was an Irishman making a statement about Irish Land rights and English rule.