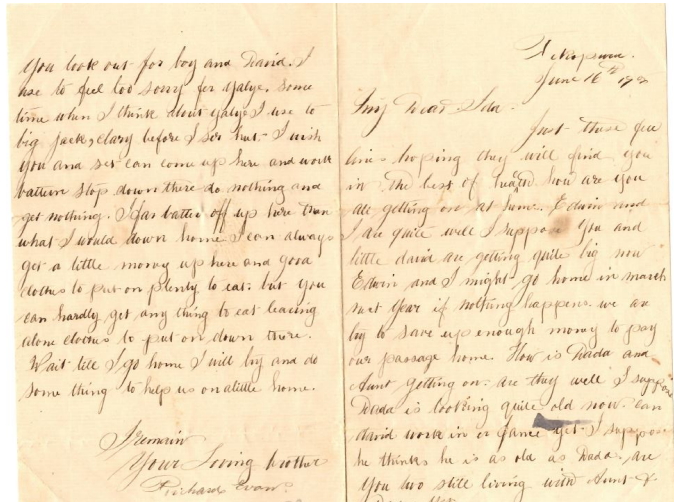


INTERESTING ITEMS FROM THE COLLECTION

The upcoming September School Holiday Program gave the Museum an opportunity to dig deeper into a number of letters held within the Norfolk Island Museum Trust (NIMT) Collection.

One fascinating collection included thirteen letters related to the Olsson family spanning the period 1900-1919. The collection included a double sided letter written by Richard Evans to his sister Ida Evans circa 1908. Richard was the eldest son of George Rowland St Clair Evans and Emily Evangeline Buffett. His mother passed away in 1899 and two of his younger siblings Ida and George (known as David) was raised by their



Aunty Eva at No.7 Quality Row. Ida was later to marry Oscar Olsson and ran a general store on the same premise in the 1930s. At the time of the letter, Richard and another brother Edwin are working in New Zealand.

Richard's writing is very fine, but the transcription of the handwriting still had its challenges. The date on the letter appears to read June 16th 1908 which would make Richard 25 years old and his sister Ida eighteen years old. Unlike many letters in NIMT collection, Richard includes Norfolk words and phrases in his correspondence. While yorlye, or yolye as Richard spells it, is a common word most newcomers will recognize, Richard also makes reference to a 'fance' or garden, 'ser hut' meaning hurt. 'Big Jack' was a difficult word to figure as it is known as a weed on Norfolk Island, but in this context it is referring to crying. The Bishop Montgomery noted in 1896 that John Evans was well known for tearing up and therefore his nickname 'big Jack' became synonymous with crying. The meaning of the sentence 'I use to big jack, clary before I ser hut' remains confusing in its meaning, but Richard seems to be communicating sorrow his siblings could not join him in New Zealand as he believed living conditions were tough on Norfolk Island.

Locals are most welcome to read the facsimile in the museum and see if they can crack the meaning of the sentence. Below is a transcribed copy of the letter. The museum would like to thank Millie Walden (Ida Olsson's granddaughter), David Buffett, Mary Cooper and Eddie Hooker for their aid in unraveling the letter's context, connections and meanings of Norfolk words.

Takapuna
June 16th 1900 (?)

My dear Ida

Just these few lines hoping they will find you in the best of health. How are you all getting on at home? Edwin and I are quite well. I suppose you and little David are getting quite big now. Edwin and I might go home in March next year if nothing happens. We are try to save enough money to pay our passage home. How is Dada and Aunt getting on? Are they well I suppose Dada is looking

quite old now. Can David work in a fance yet? I suppose he thinks he is as old as Dada. Are you two still living with Aunt and Dada yet?

I am going to Auckland to pass an examination for an Engineer certificate in September than I am come home for a trip in ~~June~~ March. I don't know if I am coming back or not. I will wait and see when I get down there.

You look out for boy and David. I use to feel too sorry for yolye. Some time when I think about yolye I use to big jack, clary before I ser hut, I wish you and sis can come up here and work. Battern stop down there do nothing and get nothing. I far batter off up here than what I would down home. I can always get a little money up here and good clothes to put on plenty to eat but you can hardly get any thing to eat leaving alone clothes to put on down there. Wait till I go home I will try and do something to help us on a little home.

I remain your loving brother

Richard Evans

You can read facsimile copies of Richard and one of Ida's later letters upstairs at the Pier Store. If you would like to view the full collection of letters please feel free to ring 23788 or email us at info@museums.gov.nf to organize a time.

References

Peter Muhlhausler, Rachel Nebauer-Borg, Piria Coleman, 2012, *Ucklun's Norfolk: Words as a memory of our past*. Studio Monarch, Norfolk Island Museum Trust, p.59.

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11/09/21