

He lacked a, gracious bed side manner, but on his retirement the Sydney Gazette 6 September 1826 commented, "*his experience and skill made ample amends for an apparent absence of overflowing politeness.*" Distained by many as an emancipist, Redfern was always ready to reply brusquely to men like Bigge and Bowman who were offensive to him. In 1827 he horse whipped Robert Howe for attacking him in the Gazette, and was fined 30 shillings. He was one of the greatest of the early medical practitioners of the colony, the first to receive an Australian qualification, the first teacher of Australian medical students and the author of important reforms in the convict transports. Nevertheless, as a result of his youthful actions at the Nore, which however justified, were naturally resented by government, his later important services in New South Wales were ill requited.

**Selected Bibliography:**

Historical Records of Australia Series, Vol 6-10; E Ford, The life and work of William Redfern (Sydney 1953); N.J.Dunlop. William Redfern, The First Australian Medical Graduate, and His times, Journals and proceedings (Royal Australian Historical Society).

# HISTORY *of* Dr. William Redfern

***Australia's first qualified doctor & surgeon  
Born Canada 1774 - Died Edinburgh, Scotland 1833***



***Convict, Grazier, Emancipist, Magistrate, Public  
Servant, Penal and Health Reformer.***

**Redfern, William (1774 - 1833)**

**Birth:** 1774, *Canada*

**Death:** 1833, *Edinburgh, Mid-Lothian, Scotland*

**Cultural Heritage:** *Canadian, English*

**Occupations:** *Convict, Emancipist, Grazier, Health Reformer, Magistrate, Penal Reformer, Public Servant, Surgeon.*

*REDFERN, WILLIAM (1774 - 1833)* surgeon was born probably in Canada and brought up at Trowbridge, Wiltshire, England, where his brother lived later. His letters show a command of English and acquaintance with the classics which suggest that he was well educated. In June 1797 after passing the examination of the London Company of Surgeons, the predecessor of the Royal College of Surgeons, he was commissioned surgeon's mate in the navy. He joined H.M.S. Standard whose crew a few months later took part in the mutiny of the fleet at the Nore, which followed the success of the mutiny of the Channel Fleet at Spithead. In the course of the trouble Redfern advised the men to be more united among themselves, so he was included among the mutiny leaders to be tried by court martial. On the 27th August a scrupulously fair court sentenced him to death, but because of his youth he was reprieved. He was kept in prison for four years until sent to New South Wales in the *Minorca*, on whose indent his name is bracketed with thirteen others as Mutineers. On board he helped the surgeon and reached Sydney on the 14th December 1801.

The delegation was successful and the position was rectified by the New South Wales Act of 1823.

While in England Redfern prepared an indictment against Bigge and a book criticizing his methods of inquiry, but did not publish it. After a sojourn in Madeira for his health he returned to New South Wales in the *Alfred* in July 1824, received a further grant at Campbell Fields and acquired land near Bathurst and Cowra. He lived at *Campbell Fields* and devoted more time to his farming activities, which included cultivating the vine as well as fine wool and cattle; he gradually withdrew from his medical practice, which he entirely gave up in September 1826. Two years later he took his son William to Edinburgh to be educated. Though he intended to return, he died there in July 1833. He left 23,190 acres in New South Wales including 6296 acres at Alrds and 11,362 at Bathurst.

When Redfern came from England in 1801 he was single. When he returned from Norfolk Island in 1808 in the schooner *Estramina*, according to the passenger list he was accompanied by his wife, but no other record of his marriage is known. On the 4th April 1811 he married Sarah Wills of Sydney and had two sons, William Lachlan Macquarie (b1819). In June 1834 Sarah married James Alexander of Glasgow and returned to Sydney. Redfern had great forcefulness and independence of character, Bigge, who found in him a proud and inflexible opponent, said he was the only person in the colony to resist his authority. He had kindness and integrity, attributes that gained for him the support and enduring friendship of Macquarie, which was fastly maintained in the face of bitter opposition from those who detested the rise of ex convicts.