Biographical information - Anastasia Leahy

Anastasia Leahy was born in Tipperary, Ireland around 1838 to Thomas and Bridget Leahy. She was described as a general servant when she arrived in Port Philip in 1853. She appears to have been totally blind from the age of 19 years when was admitted to the Benevolent Asylum in April 1857. She remained in the Melbourne Benevolent Asylum for a further sixty-four years, dying at the relocated Asylum in Cheltenham on 16 November 1921.

Anastasia was one of the very large number of blind residents in the Asylum, larger than the number in the Blind Asylum. Because of her longevity we know a little more about Anastasia Leahy than most of the almost 14,000 residents who were treated by the Asylum during its 60 years in North Melbourne as she sometimes featured in articles in the local newspapers.

We know that Anastasia was not keen to move from the familiar surroundings at North Melbourne. *The Argus* of 12 April 1911, reported on the transfer of patients to Cheltenham:

> "Not all viewed the change with composure. For 53 years one woman had been in the institution and to her it had long ago assumed the indelible characteristics of home. She would have been well content to have spent the few remaining years of her life within the sound of the city clocks and the tinkle of the trambells. To her Cheltenham was very far away. But the decree had gone forth that the place was to be demolished since it stood in the way of the growth of North Melbourne.

As the longest serving resident, a special entertainment was held to celebrate Anastasia's 50th anniversary in the Benevolent Asylum in North Melbourne. Another celebration with a concert and a huge cake to feed all the residents was held in Cheltenham in 1917 to mark the 60th anniversary of Anastasia's admission to the asylum.

There is no evidence that Anastasia ever had any relatives in Australia.