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INTRODUCTION

Marilyn Bowler

In an author’s note at the end of his novel, *I Shall Wear Midnight*, Terry Pratchett dedicates his work to George Ewart Evans, a post-war oral historian who collected stories of East Anglian country life.

In his dedication, Pratchett remarks that ‘Mr Evans was a wonderful man who helped many of us learn about the depths of history over which we float. It is important that we know where we come from, because if you do not know where you come from, then you don’t know where you are, and if you don’t know where you are, then you don’t know where you’re going. And if you don’t know where you’re going, you’re probably going wrong.’¹ It might seem strange to quote a fantasy novelist in an introduction to a historical journal, but fiction can contain as much truth as non-fiction, and all historians not only need to ensure that their works contain as much truth as possible, but also be able to imagine themselves into the past.

Weston Bate’s obituary of Melbourne journalist, historian and RHSV member Keith Dunstan speaks of his ‘unusual objectivity’, ‘his generous spirit’ and his ‘sensitive judgement’: qualities to which all historians should aspire.

Since I wrote the introduction to the November journal, the issue of what history should be taught has once again been raised with the Education Minister Christopher Pyne stating that he ‘was not worried about sparking a fresh round of “history wars” by claiming the national curriculum favoured progressive causes’.²

The American-British historian, M.I. Finley, in his introduction to the works of Greek historians, wrote: ‘Politicians have always created the history they need.’³ Finley himself was well aware of the vagaries...
of politicians, having been fired by Rutgers University after he took the Fifth Amendment while appearing before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. In this issue, Fred Cahir, in his article on Indigenous resources available through the Royal Historical Society of Victoria’s manuscript collection, reminds us that colonial victors also created the histories they needed, but that another perspective can be gained by careful perusal of original sources. Similarly, Douglas Wilkie cautions us to never take anything on trust and to always go back to primary sources, when he examines the apparent outrage in Sydney when Port Phillip and La Trobe turned away convicts on board the Hashemy—an event that Wilkie’s research of primary documents argues very convincingly never actually happened. Andrew Burbidge’s article on the antecedents of Westbourne Grammar and Williamstown High School follows up this theme, by suggesting that both schools have a claim to the heritage of Williamstown Borough Grammar School. Another re-examination of the past in this edition is John Daniels’ detailed recalculating of John Batman’s route to his meeting with the Woiwurrung and the signing of the ‘treaty’ with them.

Susan Priestley, in her response to Marjorie Theobald’s article in the November journal, discusses our responsibilities to the families of those whose lives we investigate. For me, this raises questions about whether we leave out or ignore findings because living descendants may not be aware of their ancestors’ less praiseworthy activities. And if we do, where do we draw the line? Not mention a pre-marital child, but include a forebear’s involvement in a massacre?

Anne Marsden and Marcus Langdon’s article on early Melbourne entrepreneur George Porter has the subtitle, Across Two Worlds, in Porter’s case, Penang and Melbourne, reminding us that you cannot study a country’s history in isolation, particularly if your country is one like Australia, where the majority of the population is descended from migrants. Richard Turner’s article on Richard Seddon, an English miner on the Victorian goldfields, a worker in the Williamstown Railway Yards and ultimately, prime minister of New Zealand speaks of the influence of experiences in one colony that affected a political career in another. Benjamin Wilkie explores another area of Victoria’s multicultural history with his investigation of the Victorian Scottish Regiment.

With objectivity, a generous spirit and sensitive judgement, like Keith Dunstan and Terry Pratchett, let’s explore where we came from, so that we know where we are and where we’re going.
NOTES


JOHN KEITH DUNSTAN 3.2.1925–13.9.2013

(Courtesy of David Dunstan.)

KEITH DUNSTAN WAS A WONDERFUL MAN, a great journalist and a fine historian. First for the Sun, later for the Age, he displayed unusual objectivity, combined with a generous spirit that gave his work an elusive charm, never judgmental, but full of sensitive judgment. R.G. Collingwood might have praised his eye for the inside of events—for the characteristics (or quirks) of the people whose behaviour and
situations he watched with great interest, sympathy and candour. Rare among journalists, Keith valued context. Notably, I think, that quality showed when, as ‘Batman’, he achieved Alastair Cook-style columns about Melbourne for the Sydney Bulletin. To call himself ‘Batman’ implies a nice sense of the nuance around who founded the southern city and also undertones of the mythical cartoon hero.

In The Paddock that Grew, his history of the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Keith was a keen participant-observer. The ebbs and flows of test cricket appealed to his sense of drama, augmented by the atmosphere in the members’ stand. Cricket was esoteric, unlike the partisan passions surrounding the ground’s great benefactor, Australian Rules football. He liked that game, but not Melbourne’s obsession with it. So, with tongue in cheek, Keith joined journalist friends over their ritual drinks to found what they later called ‘the real AFL’ (the Anti-Football League).

You can also understand Dunstan’s history of Brown Brothers Milawa winery as the work of a participant, a close friend of the proprietors, Pat and John Brown. Many the hours this strong, but unathletic, man devoted to his own grapes at Red Hill and to the Chloe label, inspired by devotion to her portrait at the Young and Jackson’s journalist watering hole. He was always thinking and reading about wine and used his experiences to fill his column with vintage Keith. Take the piece he wrote about shivering Chloe needing Marie’s (his wife’s) electric blanket on very cold nights. The wine-making was shared with his historian son, David, who writes impressively about Australian wineries.

I knew Keith in the RAAF, when we were trainee pilots at No. 11 Elementary Flying School, Benalla. Shame to say, I thought him a wimp. In terms of capability, of course, he claimed in his autobiography, No Brains at All, that he was probably the RAAF’s worst pilot. Yet, how wrong I was about the man, who rode across the USA on a bicycle with his young wife. It obviously prepared him for a lifetime on two wheels, riding to work in town, riding about at weekends, riding with friends around the countryside—vineyard to vineyard maybe. It all led to his presidency of Bicycle Victoria.

No Brains at All, a quote from his science teacher at Geelong Grammar School, is a beautiful first volume of his account of his journey. It is modest and objective, covering an interesting childhood, adolescence and early manhood. Keith was the second son of Bill Dunstan VC, a colleague and a friend of Keith Murdoch, who helped to set our Keith’s sails on his life’s
voyage by sending the young man, with his bride (Murdoch insisted on that blessed state), to New York as the *Herald Sun* representative.

It seems natural that Keith Dunstan, with his eye for social issues and behaviours, should have tackled the history of Victoria’s *Wowsers* and *Knockers* in which his love of the bizarre and his distrust of self-righteousness combined to provide sharp and readable volumes.

Keith was a member and supporter of the RHSV, as well as the Prahran Mechanics Institute and the Melbourne Club. He was as much at home in the grassroots as in the treetops. Wherever, the potential for interesting and meaningful observations fed his romantic streak, though it was always cut through by a powerful sense of irony.


**His Place is in The Sun**

Keith was as famous
As his father, Bill Dunstan VC,
Who, at Lone Pine,
Threw deadly enemy bombs
Back at the Turks.
For, Keith has been as bold
As his heroic genes could manage,
Though in a different situation.

His bombs weren’t lethal.
They didn’t even explode like fireworks
In the sky above the city,
But on paper,
Igniting the hearts and minds
Of people at breakfast tables,
Or myriads on trains and trams.

They opened no wounds
As they enlarged our days,
In columns that revealed
The life of Melbourne,
Exploring hidden corners
To nurture fun and wisdom.

Sometimes, Keith stirred his own pot
To cook up stories.
He was a saboteur,
Mocking the national game,
Inciting fellow puncturers
Of flying Sherrins.

In their company,
At Young and Jackson’s,
He went much further
Than other devotees of Chloe,
Asking her favours
For his Pinot Noir.
He wanted a bottler label
For a strawberry blonde
Who had stolen his heart.
She took it calmly.

Keith’s vintaging fed his column
And made Marie jealous,
When, one winter,
He stole her electric blanket
To comfort the fermenting wench.

Marie, programmed to heal,
Has been a peerless comforter,
And great companion.
Their tandem cycling feats,
Not just across the endless USA,
Are representative of deep currents
At the junction of rivers
Of emotion and thought.

That all began when Keith was told,
By a larger Keith, to find a wife
And write New York into the Herald Sun.
He shone from then,
Was always on the prowl
To find an essence or a quirk,
That opened minds to marvel
At unending complexities,
Complicities or lurks.

No wonder Barry Humphries
Was his fellow-traveller friend.

This family man
And staunch adviser,
Benefactor, sage,
Was a priestly presence
At their dining table,
Where David and Jane,
Kate and Sarah sat,
Until they wed
And then brought children back
To share the joy
Of Keith and Marie playing host
At their prodigious festive board.

Salute the man,
Whose science teacher thought the boy
Was lacking any brains at all.
Keith made that empty vessel
Shout and sing,
And even spit a bit,
In Wowsers, Knockers
And a stream of works
That print his image
On admiring minds.

Characteristic, you might say,
Of how his life is linked
To life itself, and wine,
Is Keith’s portrayal of the dynasty
Of Browns at Milawa.
His many interests underpinned
This understanding of the bravery
Of John and Pat and all their tribe.

His mind was an instrument
So tuned by time
That it engendered elemental art.

Weston Bate
15 October 2013
Finding Indigenous History in the RHSV Collections

Fred Cahir

Abstract
This paper is a fuller version of a lecture delivered at the RHSV for the Annual Melbourne Day Lecture in 2011, which focused on locating Aboriginal history in the Royal Historical Society of Victoria (RHSV) collections. This paper highlights some of my finds within the RHSV archives over the years—sometimes just a rakish sentence, and other times a major peeling back of the historical onion. In addition, the strengths and challenges of researching Aboriginal history, and specifically at the RHSV, are discussed, providing a greater indication of the enormous worth of the RHSV manuscript collection in adding to our knowledge of the impact of Aboriginal Victorians on the development of the colony.

In recent years, there has been a surge of interest in the study of Victorian Aboriginal history and culture. This upsurge has resulted in the publication of many books and journal articles, and the completion of many theses. Whatever the reasons, a major contributing role in providing a database for these studies has been played by the Royal Historical Society of Victoria (RHSV), particularly through its holdings of source material in the form of manuscripts. I wish to focus on a select number of RHSV manuscript sources that date from 1830–1900 and show how our understanding of Aboriginal history, especially from a post-
contact perspective, can enrich our understanding of our shared history. The RHSV’s manuscript collection holds many documents of Victoria’s pastoral and mining eras—pastoral workers’, squatters’ and miners’ diaries, memoirs, correspondence and station records. They represent a body of sources that enable a reconstruction of the development of race relations in that period (1830–1900) and allow an analysis of many of the issues currently demanding scholarly attention. These range from studies of Aboriginal social formation, modes of production, population density, territoriality and spatial organisation, to Aboriginal attitudes and reactions towards the colonists and their invasion, the squatting mode of occupation, and the morality of conquest.

In the 1960s, Australian historians, and ergo the RHSV, were criticised by W.E.H. Stanner for being the ‘high priests’ of a cult of forgetfulness, for neglecting Aboriginal history, and for excluding a whole section of the landscape from their research. An analysis of Victorian goldfields history publications reveals that Stanner was right—that historians writing on Victoria’s history had at times been content to leave the study of Aborigines to the anthropologists—and then to ignore the anthropologists. My own survey of historical literature on the subject of the Victorian gold rushes revealed that:

> [a] potent silence drawn down upon Victorian Aboriginal people and their presence on the goldfields, especially in regional histories of the north-eastern and Gippsland regions is singularly evident. Many have totally expunged the existence of Aboriginal people or effectively excised them by offering only a rakish sentence or two … some senior historians have written some of the most perfunctory treatments of Aboriginal people in their analyses of Victorian regional centres and goldfields.

This situation has mostly come to an end. Historians, Attwood noted in 1989, have learned that:

> a painstaking search of conventional documentary sources—e.g. parliamentary inquiries, official correspondence of government bodies such as the Victorian Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, diaries and journals of ‘explorers’ and pastoralists, letters and reports of missionaries, and writings of ethnographers—can yield a considerable quarry of material in which not only European but also Aboriginal voices can be heard.

More recently, there has been a national consciousness of, and even an acknowledgement of, the importance of Australia’s colonial invasion history to the present and future of our society, particularly with regard
to social and economic relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Harrison argues that one response to this desire for an inclusive Australian nationhood has been to engage with the shared or cross-cultural aspects of post-contact places and to interpret how this longstanding cross-cultural dialogue has had a significant impact on the development of Australian national identities. According to Goodall, the key to ‘sharing histories’ is a wider recognition of history, not as a product, but as a process in which the teller, the audience and the time of the telling are understood as variables affecting the story. Similarly Batten, writing about Australian heritage interpretation, particularly in relation to museums, has noted the importance of how ‘when dealing with Australia’s [Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal] shared past, museums need to acknowledge multiple perspectives and avoid the notion of there being only one “true” interpretation of the past’. Rather, given the diversity of the Australian nation, there are many perspectives of different events. Moran has alluded to the complexities of such a paradigmatic shift, positing that indigenising settler nationalism represents an important emotional shift for settler Australians.

It involves a reaching out to embrace the Indigenous (and their Aboriginality) as full moral members of a shared Australian nation. The claim is that through such an act the Australian nation would become less a settler nation than a ‘tapestry’ nation with the Indigenous accorded a central, identity-giving place.

According to Nettlebeck, in the midst of the history wars, the notion of ‘shared histories’ has produced a ‘fragmentation of national historical consciousness, creating a very public polarization between Australia’s orthodox foundational story of European settlement and progress, and its counter-narrative of invasion and violent Aboriginal dispossession’. Taking a small sample of the RHSV’s manuscript collection as its focus, this article highlights the richness of the shared stories—the Aboriginal side of Victorian post-colonisation history—and shows that its previous exclusion from this story was not due to a lack of material. On the contrary, the exclusion of Aboriginal experiences from Victorian history writing was based on the opinions and choices of the people writing the histories. This was previously expounded by Reynolds, who noted that: ‘The barriers which for so long kept Aboriginal experience out of our history books were not principally those of source material … but rather those of perception and preference’. Careful inspection of these excerpts from
the RHSV collection gives readers a strong sense that Victorian history cannot be properly understood without the realisation that the colonisers and Aboriginal peoples have been, and remain, deeply entangled in the events that have shaped Victoria.

Essential to understanding the nature and history of contact between non-Indigenous and Aboriginal people is an awareness of what activities and industries brought the colonisers to the frontier. Aboriginal people did not have contact with an entity called ‘Western society’, but with certain sections of it. However, these sections not only consisted of isolated individuals acting independently; they also shared capitalist and colonialist ideologies. The colonists’ commonality also emanated from their interventionist relationships with Aboriginal people. Early colonists such as Charles Griffith, writing in 1845, noted how ‘many persons’, when arguing on the subject of the ‘proper mode of dealing with the aborigines of Australia … turn around and say, “Well, after all, I do not see what right we have to come and take away their country from them”’—an argument vehemently disputed by Griffith and others. Griffith’s retort was that British superiority necessitated the ‘white man’s right to occupy the country’. He also vigorously argued there was a moral imperative to ‘frame such a code of laws as may at once afford protection to the native and financial security to the settler’. The crux of colonial expansion and subsequent intervention in Victorian Aboriginal society hinged upon British industrial capitalism. Naturally, the manifestations of the intervention differed in significant ways according to settlers’ differing reasons for being on the frontier and their various labour and resource needs. Moreover, the measure of colonists’ ecological and social impacts, the range and scale of economic activities and the various policies, philosophies, beliefs and practices of individuals at the very edge of the frontier also changed considerably over different economic periods.

Some historians have only recently come to view Aboriginal people as conscious actors, as active participants in Australia’s economic history, rather than as mere victims of non-Indigenes, or pawns in another culture’s game. Consensus on this matter is non-existent amongst historians. As recently as 1998, Jim Hagen and Robert Castles argued that Aboriginal involvement in the non-Indigenous economy was minimal and that their motivation was primarily externally driven. Hagen and Castles insisted that Aboriginal people generally did not seek to involve themselves in the colonists’ economy and that ‘More usually Aboriginal people neither
sought nor were given the opportunity to adapt or to participate in the white economy’. 

Historian Henry Reynolds was one of the first and most prominent scholars to repudiate this non-participatory paradigm at a macro level. Reynolds, along with Ann McGrath, Kay Saunders and Jackie Huggins, was responsible for activating discussion on the economic relationships that Aboriginal people developed with white colonisers. The subsequent historical research at a micro or regional level has invariably revealed that the nature of Aboriginal culture and the responses made to the colonisers not only influenced the nature of non-Indigenous colonisation, but was also consistent with the Aboriginals’ own cultural imperatives.

Arguably, one of the critical factors that has greatly hampered a more balanced representation of Aboriginal people’s involvement and influence in colonial Victoria’s economic history is how non-Indigenous writers and historians have portrayed them as workers. Richard Broome has argued that the Aboriginal people have often been depicted as lazy or indifferent workers. In recent years, historians have begun to query this interpretation of Aboriginal–non-Indigenous work relations in Australia and in Victoria. Much of the research that has led to this re-evaluation has focused on the northern frontiers, but increasingly, a significant number of studies are focusing on the south-eastern frontiers as well and there is a growing recognition by a number of historians that the use of Aboriginal labour in Victoria had always been greater than previously realised. Moreover, there is a mounting recognition of the extent of the influence exerted by Aboriginal people in the development of Victoria.

It needs to be stated that there is no doubting that for Aboriginal people living and working under the yoke of British rule in the Port Phillip District of New South Wales (now Victoria), the frontier was catastrophic for life and culture, and these unpleasant truths need to be articulated. Many archival documents attest to the brutal and offhanded ways in which Aboriginal people, and workers in general, were treated. A reference in Patrick Coady Buckley’s journal, which he kept for almost 30 years (1844–1872), includes a remarkably heartless reference on 20 December 1858: ‘John Bourke died apparently of apoplexy whilst going from my dairy to home, a little showery and windy.’ Buckley also duly noted hurting his foot by kicking ‘his black’.
The value of the RHSV manuscripts

Cover labels from Isaac Batey, Reminiscences, 1840–1870, of Settlement of Melbourne and the Sunbury District, RHSV MS Collection, MS 000035, Box 16 [2–3] & Caleb Collyer, Reminiscences, RHSV MS Collection, MS 066, Box 6–7. (Courtesy of the RHSV manuscript collection.)

The RHSV manuscripts provide a valuable and unique variety of sources for any historian who undertakes the task foreshadowed by Reynolds—to reconstruct Aboriginal history from the sometimes fragmentary accounts that exist. The manuscripts set forth the experiences and reflections of a number of colonists. Some of these people were sensitive observers of race relations; others, such as David Wilsone, who held the first licence of Ingliston pastoral run on the Werribee River (1840–1841), were self-confessed would-be mass murderers. Wilsone, in a letter to his brother held in the State Library of Victoria, another manuscript source for reconstructing Aboriginal history, complained about the plundering of his hut by Aborigines (presumably Wathaurung) and concluded: ‘I do not know what blame was attributable to the hutkeeper but if he had done his duty some of them would or should have been shot … Nothing will do I am afraid but to shoot a good many of them.’
As Critchett in her valuable work on the Western District frontiers has demonstrated, the squatters and Aboriginal peoples were living in ‘close proximity’ to one another. Evidence of this longstanding living-together, living-apart relationship can be gleaned in a letter written by Governor La Trobe in 1842 where he noted how ‘the savage tribes are not only upon our borders, but intermingled with us in every part of this wide district’. Clark, and later I myself, argued that, given that squatters and some miners ‘had long periods of contact with Aborigines, and frontier life gave them many opportunities for observing Victorian Aboriginal society, this source material would be expected to prove most valuable’. However, Clark warns that searching for source material about Aboriginal culture in manuscripts written by colonists is by its very nature going to be unsatisfactory to some degree.

Unfortunately most of the writers reveal more about their own, or the local or prevailing, attitude to Aboriginal culture. Many of these sources contain little more than accounts of conflict between Europeans and Aborigines or anecdotes about particularly colourful characters. One disappointing feature is the failure of some writers to give the clan and tribal names of the Aboriginal groups they are describing or even the precise location of the area itself. Another problem confined to reminiscences and memoirs, is that they are written long after the events and occurrences that are described. In these cases it is difficult to counter the possible distortion and selectivity of the writer’s memory.

The RHSV manuscripts, like all source material for the reconstruction of Aboriginal history, should not be used uncritically. In a paper about reconstructing of Aboriginal history using non-Indigenous manuscript sources, Clark cautions researchers to be aware of the ideological context in which writings in the colonial period, or indeed any period, were produced. Clark further posits that by ‘examining the categories of thought it is possible to identify colonial writers’ selectivity and silences’. These can be exposed, he suggests, by asking questions such as:

What aspects of the total lifestyle and culture are recorded? Why do we learn so little about the activities of women and their role in Aboriginal society? Why so little about food gathering, daily camp activities, tool making, and exchange, compared with tribal fights, burial customs, and certain ceremonial customs? However, despite these silences and shortcomings, Clark is confident that ‘a meticulous sifting of this source material not only demonstrates
the existence of not just conflict, but a measure of co-existence between Aborigines and colonists’ and also enables discussion of the nature and extent of adaptation on both sides of the frontier.\textsuperscript{25}

Regarding the information contained in the RHSV manuscript collection, there are three aspects that make it valuable for generalist historians and Aboriginal studies historians alike. The first of these is that the observations in the manuscripts are made in a wide range of locations. Taking the reminiscences of George Sugden as a representative example, from them, it is possible to gain a glimpse of his outlook on outback stations during the 1840s to 1860s in the Wimmera, in the Western District of Victoria, on the goldfields of central Victoria and on pastoral properties in New South Wales. We are privy to anecdotes relating to his early life at Ballarat and Geelong, and his descriptions of survival and loneliness in the bush as a child, adolescent and adult. His experiences with Aborigines both in the bush and on stations belonging to Learmonth, Elder, Scott, Turnbull, Budd, Robertson, Samuel Wilson and James Cochran provide researchers with multiple perspectives of not just how George Sugden viewed Aboriginal people, but how differently Aboriginal people were treated on various stations across a large swathe of Victoria.

Reminiscences such as Sugden’s tend to follow a pattern in regard to their depiction of Aboriginal people in colonial Australia. Generally, the portrayal is firstly one of fear towards nameless Aboriginal people and of Aboriginal people being an obstruction to the development of their sheep or cattle stations. Typically, the white pioneer will then name and outline how they were befriended by a clan head, learned how to speak the Aborigines’ language and employed them on the stations. The accounts usually include numerous anecdotes of how the whites were tutored in Aboriginal bushcraft. Often the reminiscences will then supply a graphic depiction of the disintegration of traditional Aboriginal culture and a wistful examination of the need to smooth the dying pillow of the Aboriginal race. In early passages of Sugden’s reminiscences, which are located closest to the geographic centre of colonisation, there are several negative images, for example, of anonymous Aboriginal people being blamed for the ‘Black Thursday’ bushfires of 1851 and of how terrified he was of ‘them’ as a child. Sugden reveals how the frontier was a shared space and he notes how ‘we could all speak the black language well’ and how he was given a half-caste named Davis to help him. At other stations, Sugden noted a more master-servant approach adopted by whites towards their Aboriginal
labour force, noting the ‘blacks doing the work [sheep washing] with a white overseer to direct’.  

It should be noted that whilst Sugden does not tell us much about Aboriginal material culture or the landscape, his writings tell us volumes about the formation of the Australian pioneer legend and, arguably, how much of this legend is attributable to Aboriginal workers in outback Victoria. Sugden’s experience informs us that white workers were very uneasy in what they saw as an inhospitable and dangerous environment. Sugden quickly adapted by placing himself completely ‘in his [Aboriginal aide’s] hands and knew that as long as I stuck to him I was safe’. Interestingly, Sugden relates a series of events where he acknowledges the vast superiority of his Aboriginal co-workers, and comes to the painful, but pragmatic, conclusion that work and survival in the bush was a great race and class leveller. Sugden also acknowledged (and reiterated) something that is rarely acknowledged in regional history books, but is frequently remarked upon in published Victorian family histories and 19th century manuscripts—that Aboriginal workers in Victoria were eminently more capable than the settlers:

I was given a half caste named Davis to help us. He was a splendid stockman, none better. We lived together and slept in the one tent … Though I did not like cooking for blacks … [Sugden reluctantly ended up cooking for Davis] I saw it was the best way … I never saw a man use a whip like Davis. Within a week Davis had the horses so trained that they would come up to the tent and stand still.

Very frequently, Sugden was ordered to go with a ‘black boy’ and find lost white bushmen and stock. In reality, Sugden was fully aware of who was leading whom. His reminiscences are studded with acknowledgements such as: ‘I was rescued by Sandy the black tracker … rescued by black trackers [again]’.

RHSV manuscripts such as Sugden’s reflect what McGrath and other historians revealed about the northern Australia frontier. McGrath observed that Aboriginal people, especially Aboriginal women, were ‘over-employed’ and that many station lessees conceded the stations could not have survived without Aboriginal labour. Aboriginal people were employed in intense seasonal work on cattle/sheep stations, as well as undertaking their traditional quests for food, performing cultural ceremonial work, and having sexual liaisons with white managers/workers—all during the same period sometimes. McGrath recorded how cattle station managers often
preferred women as stockworkers, because of their reliability in procuring bush foods and, as importantly to the managers, for sexual services and female companionship. Sugden noted that the ‘blacks were doing all the work’ on the cattle station, that the white workers ‘each had black women for housekeepers, and plenty of black men to help them, and they used to keep the white men in plenty of fish’. Patrick Costello records how, keen to utilise an Aboriginal guide’s expertise and thus save himself unwarranted exertion, he asked ‘if he would guide me across the hills … To go across country the distance was only about seven miles, whereas if we took the road the distance was 15 miles. The blackfellow agreed to do so, and we started off and reached the station safely’.

One of the more interesting aspects of Sugden’s manuscript is his reference to the appropriation of Aboriginal material technology. Sugden and many of his contemporaries noted that possum skin rugs manufactured by Aboriginal people were a coveted item. Sugden notes how a ‘blackfellow possessed of a very handsome opossum rug, which the hutkeepers and shepherds endeavoured for a long time to do him out of’. In his reminiscences too, there is an inkling of respect for the Victorian Aboriginal cultural landscape in which he dwelt. He wrote of travelling to the Lower Loddon diggings where he felt privileged to experience a ‘native funeral ceremony to which few white men are admitted … after asking permission’.

The second advantageous feature of the RHSV manuscript collection, a corollary of the first, is the time depth inherent in the documents. Sometimes embedded in the reminiscences, letters and diaries of the people, who displaced or lived with Aboriginal people on what had been Aboriginal lands in those peoples’ lifetimes, are snippets of evidence that demonstrate how colonists positively viewed the value of Aboriginal participation in colony building. Isaac Batey at Sunbury, whose ‘recollections cover a period extending over sixty years’, (ca 1840–1900) and whose ‘first acquaintance with blacks began when I was a mere child on the Plenty’, had heard it said ‘there were some squatters who preferred blacks as stockmen’.

Research into Aboriginal people’s contribution to the colonial economy, guiding people and stock across the river systems of Australia, confirms Reynolds’ argument that Aboriginal guides smoothed many of the pioneers’ potentially calamitous moments. Some representative examples of this ‘smoothing’ by using Aboriginal technology, especially canoes, are to
be found in RHSV manuscripts. Diaries by early colonists such as Jane Macartney can provide researchers with a reminder of how dependent many colonists were on Aboriginal skills in the early period of colonisation—not just for their labour, but for transport. Macartney’s diary entry for 27 January 1859 tells how she and her family, in order to survive dangerous flood waters, were ‘obliged to cross the creeks one by one in a boat made of a small piece of bark and only holding the native beside, who paddled it’. This experience of being dependent on Aboriginal people’s canoe making skills was not unique. Colquhoun, a long-time postmistress of Mitta Mitta, provides a detailed account (ca 1850–90) of local pioneers such as the Paton family, who came to the district after crossing ‘the Murray River in a bark canoe’. Similarly, in the Orbost district, an Aboriginal (presumably Kurnai/Gurnai) named Joe Banks rescued a sick colonist during the floods by ‘making a canoe out of a sheet of bark from the roof and placing the sick man in it, swim through the turbulent waters, towing the canoe and its helpless occupant to safety’. Frederick Burchett (ca 1843–1900) wrote that, during floods, ‘we had to carry rations to outstations in a bark canoe … manufactured by the blacks in a very few minutes’. George Sugden (ca 1840–70) recorded how overlanders would commonly ‘get over [swollen rivers] in blacks dugouts’ and how the ‘drays [were] ferried over by blacks’.

The third noteworthy aspect of the RHSV manuscripts is the descriptions which some writers provide of Aboriginal beliefs, events and practices, particularly regarding the colonists—and also the speed with which Victorian Aboriginal people assumed agency in their social and economic affairs. In six years of travel and observation (1849–54), Samuel Clutterbuck was witness to a wide range of economic and ceremonial practices, for some of which there is little or no extant material evidence. Clutterbuck recounted several instances of Aboriginal people instructing him on the subject of Aboriginal beliefs regarding what became of them and whites in the afterlife:

I told him of poor Wight’s death. Aha! Said he [Murray, an Aboriginal] ‘Mr Wight, quamby alonga [camp or live here] this, (pointing to ground) come up black fellow, bye and bye.’ This is their tradition of the final state of white men and vice versa of their own people.

Samuel Clutterbuck noted with some displeasure how money had clearly displaced barter in dealings with non-Indigenous people:
The blacks took their departure, Simon promising on his next passing, to bring me a new opossum rug and one each of their different implements of war and hunting. I asked him if I should give him a fine shirt in return. He replied ‘Borag [No] shirt, give it plenty white money’. I may here state, that the ‘amor munni’ [love of money?] is as strong with the aborigines as their paler faced brethren.\textsuperscript{44}

Some colonists such as Burchett wrote of Aboriginal attitudes towards rescuing the whites, noting how the remedy for a snake bite was entirely dependent upon your friendship with local clans people: ‘if black snakes bite you you’re sure to die, unless you cut the wound out with a sharp knife, and then get a native to suck the venom out, which they will sometimes do if they are particularly friendly with you. You can’t persuade them to do it for money unless they like you very much, it makes their lips swell to an enormous size’.\textsuperscript{45}

Some of the scenes described in RHSV manuscripts were unique, including the detailed recounting by George Bishop of a corroboree held at Essendon, Melbourne.

I have witnessed several corroborees, between eight and fourteen, but the one before last, in 1868, saw two northern tribes from Ballarat [presumably Wathaurung] and Bendigo [presumably Dja dja wurrung], coming by different routes, arriving in Essendon at the same time. As they were friendly they camped near one another and Mr. Jamieson and others asked them for their usual display and they gave a double performance—first the men and then the lubras. A very large number of the residents were present and as I have a retentive memory and have preserved my notes, I will give a description of the dance and its surroundings as they occurred.

It took place about halfway between Lincoln Road and Mount Alexander Road and on the other side of the first of two gullies, at eight p.m. on a dark night as a moon would spoil the effect. The spot chosen was where three large gum trees were close together facing east. They placed saplings against the trees to a height of 8 or 10 feet and two feet apart and covered them very thickly with boughs which had left a fine dark background. They had two large stacks of wood about thirty feet apart ready to light soon as they begun to dance. They always dance by firelight and no moon. In those days, with the exception of a loin cloth they are stark naked. This is supposed to be a war dance before having a tribal fight. They go to a lot of trouble to paint their bodies with red, white and yellow clay and their bodies were marked and lined off in a very fantastic manner. I may say that they had great objection to white women being present, so they were excluded …
The spectators had a good two hours enjoyment and all that was required to make these poor aborigines happy was white money, so Mr. Jamieson went round with the hat and distributed the takings among them.46

The sixty years of Batey’s recollections were vitally important ones in relations between Europeans and Aborigines, and the inevitable disruption to Aboriginal culture. Batey’s memory of the fury of the dispossessed is an illustration of how colonial Victorians were made aware of the anger and sensitivity that Aboriginal people felt about having their lands wrested from them:

Of a day as we were having dinner a lubra styled Big Mary coming to the hut, poked her head through the modern shutter and gave Martin Batey her opinion of him in the choicest Billingsgate [profuse swearing]. Young as I was it is clearly remembered that she was foaming at her mouth with rage. She cursed him uphill and down dale, wanting to know why he had come to her country and stigmatised him as hot as her vocabulary would admit. 47

During the mid-19th century, there were dramatic cultural adaptations in Aboriginal culture taking place in the face of increased European numbers and widespread alteration to their traditional environment. Some of these can be reconstructed from manuscript references made in the same districts, but at different times. The cultural interchange or transmogrification that occurred on the Victorian frontier too is evident, albeit in a muffled way. Historian John Hirst argued that there is also evidence of a merging or influencing of white culture by Indigenous people. It is, Hirst admits, the ‘boldest claim in the long business of assessing the Australian character’. 48 Though controversial, there are slivers of evidence, for example, Caleb Collyer’s statement that ‘the making of damper was a test of skill and the best I have seen made was made and baked by aborigines’. 49 Often there are little testaments to the rigours of colonial life contained within the manuscripts, which reinforce the notion that the social life of Victoria was a shared space. Elsewhere in his reminiscences, Patrick Costello’s reminiscences about station life near Bet Bet (circa 1848–52) recall a violent incident and a colonist’s response:

a gin whose husband had been shot and who had two children, was taken by Mrs. Allen out of pity and she kept her about the station … [a] black tried to make love to the lubra and as she would have nothing to do with him, he gave her a terrible beating … the gin told Mrs. Allen that the black had beaten her. 50
Occasionally, we are afforded non-British perspectives on race relations in Victoria. Charles, a French miner who wrote about his experiences on the central Victorian goldfields, considered that the ‘natives were more civilised than many miners’ and explained that, at Skipton in 1855, on his way to the Ballarat diggings, he was ‘humbugged by King Jimmy of the tribe of Emu Creek’ for some tobacco, and so in ‘order to remain on good terms with the natives we gave him all the tobacco we had’. The French miner also confessed to being too tired after a long day’s travel to wait

*Caleb Collyer (1844–1916), Reminiscences of Caleb Collyer, 1854–1905. (RHSV Manuscripts Collection, MS 66 B.)*
for the end of a corroboree staged for their benefit and added that he and his party had followed the conventions of other miners by ‘camping at a gunshot’s distance from the natives [Wathaurung], in that way imitating the English and the Americans who did not like to feel themselves too close to the coloured people, however inoffensive they were’.  

More often, the manuscripts offer us Eurocentric accounts by pioneers who had a personal hand in the bloody frontier, for example, those found in the letters and reminiscences of Caleb Collyer. Collyer’s personal recount of frontier violence against Beeac, a Gulidjan Elder and his clans people is one of brutal retribution, justified by Collyer on account of the Aboriginal people being ‘thieves’ and predatory spoilers of pioneers settling on Aboriginal lands.

Beeac was the predacious leader of a rustler’s band and were noted plunderers. Scarcely had white settlers pitched camp on the SE corner of Lake Colac before trouble began … the whites were away rounding up their stock. Beeac and Co. came on the camp during their absence. Samson an African black was the only one in charge. The Blacks tied him up—gave him a most severe branding—plundered the camp and departed … at night they [the whites] climbed the big hill and discerned the location of the thieves away among the
ti-tree. Early next morning they surrounded the natives, got back the bulk of their goods scattering the plunderers in the scrub … Beeac received a similar dose by way of punishment to that which he had given the guardian of the camp. Immediately he was liberated he grasped his spear retreated a short distance and then turned on the whites threatened them who thereupon gave him a dose of shot in the legs. They penetrated and remained as a reminder for the rest of Beeac’s life. The effect on the whole tribe was a due respect for the Colac camp of pioneers.53

Implications for Historians

The infiltration of an Aboriginal past into the centre of regional pioneering stories is arguably very disturbing for many historians. Carter, commenting on the nexus he believes has been reached between Aboriginality and Australian modernity, describes the implications of revisionist history writing as not simply adding another layer to the nation’s history or culture: ‘It starts to change the whole picture. The very foundations of earlier stories of the nation seem to be their weakest point: the heroes begin to look like villains, the past begins to leak into the present releasing quite different odors.’54 Clark warns that historical discourses that draw conclusions about interracial violence on the frontier, without assessing the responses of individual clans or individual clan members, are in danger of being too simplistic and not contributing fully to our understanding of interracial relations on the frontier.55 Furthermore, Clark notes that much of the fabric of any society consists of non-material elements—beliefs, ideas, language and personal expression. In literate societies, these aspects often achieve a material (i.e. written) form and can be studied as such; in non-literate groups, the material expression is often in a transitory form which does not survive.56 In this context, a repository of information on such a wide range of non-material aspects of post-contact Victorian Aboriginal life (such as the RHSV manuscripts) is a boon for researchers. It enables historians to locate and apply the fine brushstrokes of historical detail to a large canvas.

Conclusion

This discussion has provided a brief overview of the issues besetting Victorian Aboriginal historiography and revealed some gems of the RHSV manuscript collection, which refute the idea of Victorian Aborigines as passive non-participants in colonial society. Some of the sources tell us much more about the colonisers’ attitudes to Aborigines, than about the culture they were observing, but that too is part of the story. Some offer
valued glimpses of the Aboriginal experience of white occupation.

These sources take a variety of forms, depending on the circumstances of their compilation. They include firsthand observation by colonists and visitors, sometimes recorded from memories of events which occurred decades earlier. The range and depth of information on Aboriginal culture in the RHSV manuscript collection give it an enormous importance for a huge variety of studies. The colonists’ observations were not without bias (both conscious and subconscious) regarding Aboriginal culture and its worth. So, as with all other ethno-historical sources, allowance must be made for the ethnocentric and egocentric perspectives of the writers. However, these sources have the advantage of an immediacy of recorded observations, and a temporal and spatial range that is invaluable in reconstructing Victorian shared histories.

NOTES


13 Griffith, p. 172.


26 George Sugden, *Reminiscences*, RHSV MS Collection, MS 000301, Box 115–6, n.p.


29 Sugden, n.p.


31 Ann McGrath, pp. 68–94.


33 Patrick Costello, *Patrick Costello: Narrative of His Life as a Port Phillip Pioneer*, RHSV MS Collection, MS 776, n.p.
36 Isaac Batey, Reminiscences, 1840–1870, of Settlement of Melbourne and the Sunbury District, RHSV MS Collection, MS 000035, Box 16 [2–3].
38 Jane Macartney, Diaries, RHSV MS 12929, Box 166, n.p.
39 Mary Gilbert, Personalities and Stories of the Early Orbost District, 1972, p. 8.
41 Sugden, p. 21.
43 Samuel Clutterbuck, Diary 1849–1854, RHSV MS Collection, MS 11230, Box 36–2.
44 Clutterbuck, n.p.
45 Clutterbuck, [typescript version], p. 50.
46 George Bishop, Memoirs of George Gregor Bishop, RHSV, VF 34, n.p.
47 Batey, n.p.
49 Caleb Collyer, Reminiscences, RHSV MS Collection, MS 066, Box 6–7, n.p.
50 Costello, n.p.
51 Charles Eberlie, Diary, RHSV MS Collection, MS 034, Box 16/1.
52 Eberlie, n.p.
53 Collyer, n.p.
The Convict Ship Hashemy at Port Phillip: a Case Study in Historical Error

Douglas Wilkie

Abstract
The story of the convict ship Hashemy arriving at Sydney in June 1849 after being turned away from Melbourne has been repeated by many professional, amateur and popular historians. The arrival of the Hashemy, and subsequent anti-convict protest meetings in Sydney, not only became a turning point in the anti-transportation movement in Australia, but also added to an already existing antagonism on the part of Sydney towards its colonial rival, Port Phillip, or Melbourne. This article will demonstrate that the story of the Hashemy being turned away from Port Phillip is based upon a fallacy; investigates how that fallacy developed and was perpetuated over a period of 160 years; and demonstrates that some politicians and historians encouraged this false interpretation of history, effectively extending the inter-colonial discontent that began in the 1840s into the 20th century and beyond.

This article will show that the story of the convict ship Hashemy being turned away from Melbourne and sent to Sydney in 1849—an account repeated by many historians—is based upon a fallacy. The article investigates how that fallacy developed and was perpetuated by historians over a period of 160 years, and demonstrates that politicians and historians used this false interpretation of history to feed an enduring antagonism felt by Sydney towards its colonial rival, Port Phillip
or Melbourne. The wider implications of this case study touch upon the credibility given to historians in their interpretations of historical events.

The stories written by historians are interpretations of the past, and most historians write credible, well-written historical interpretations. But these stories can sometimes inadvertently misrepresent the past—even though the historian undoubtedly believes they have presented a credible interpretation. Indeed, if the historian writes well enough, their ‘well-written history can lull us into thinking that it is the only possible story’.¹

What follows is a case study in how an error in Australian colonial history has been perpetuated by historians, whether deliberately, for political motives, or through careless methodology—and how the stories they wrote in turn became quoted as secondary sources, causing the error to be repeated—eventually entering the realm of popular historical myth.

Convict Transportation in the 1840s

In 1849, the British government was still transporting large numbers of serving convicts to Van Diemen’s Land, but the transportation of convicts to New South Wales had been discontinued since 1840. Since 1846, however, smaller numbers of ‘exiles’ were being sent to the Port Phillip District of New South Wales. Exiles were generally young convicts who had served two years of their sentences, supposedly learning useful trades at prisons such as Millbank, Parkhurst or Pentonville, and who were then given the option of serving the rest of their sentences in prison or of being sent to Port Phillip where they would immediately be given a conditional pardon and allowed to live an essentially free life—the condition of their pardon being that they were not to return to Great Britain until the term of their original sentence had expired. Many of these so-called ‘exiles’ went on to live good and productive lives, but there were sufficient numbers who caused trouble that they soon became known as ‘Pentonvillains’. By 1849, the program of sending exiles was not only opposed by most residents of Port Phillip, but also by Superintendent Charles La Trobe, who had originally, if hesitantly, supported the scheme to help address a shortage of labour. Growing opposition to the exiles was compounded when many thousands of ex-convicts moved to Port Phillip from Van Diemen’s Land during the late 1840s. Again, many of these ‘expirees’ went on to live honest and productive lives, but there were enough badly behaved expirees for public opinion to become polarised against convicts of any description.
While opposition to transportation was growing in Australia, W.E. Gladstone, the colonial secretary in London, had other ideas and, in 1846, suggested that a ‘modified and carefully regulated introduction of Convict Labourers into New South Wales or some part of it’ would be desirable—and cheaper than building more prisons in Great Britain. The proposal immediately stimulated the formation of an anti-transportation movement in Sydney. But, in 1847, a committee of the New South Wales Legislative Council tentatively agreed to the idea, as long as the men were sufficiently of good character to be deserving of tickets of leave, and that the convicts’ wives and children, as well as an equal number of free immigrants, should also be sent out. Although the committee did not represent the views of the majority of the population, Governor Charles FitzRoy misleadingly told London that the scheme would be given broad support, and, in September 1848, Earl Grey, Gladstone’s successor, announced that serving convicts would again be sent to New South Wales. The ships chartered for the task were the Hashemy and the Randolph.

In her 2011 study, From Convicts to Colonists: the Health of Prisoners and the Voyage to Australia, 1823–1853, Katherine Foxhall made the statement: ‘In 1848, Lord Grey re-introduced transportation to New South Wales. Rejected by colonists at Port Phillip, the Hashemy would be the first convict ship in a decade to sail to Sydney. Historians have vividly described the mass opposition that the Hashemy received as it arrived in Melbourne and Sydney, but the circumstances of its departure from Britain were equally traumatic.’ Foxhall’s work is an excellent account of the role of surgeons on convict ships; however, it is her statement about the relationship between the Hashemy and Port Phillip that raises questions.

Foxhall gave her sources for the Hashemy statement as Kirsten McKenzie, Scandal in the Colonies; Robert Hughes, The Fatal Shore; and A.G.L. Shaw, Convicts and the Colonies. A check of these sources reveals that, in 2004, McKenzie wrote of how the Hashemy arrived at Sydney in June 1849 ‘having nearly provoked riots in Melbourne en route’. This appears to have its origins in Shaw’s 1966 work—‘in May the Hashemy and in August the Randolph almost provoked riots [at Port Phillip] and had to be sent to Sydney’. However, Hughes’ 1987 Fatal Shore states that Earl Grey dispatched the Hashemy ‘direct to Sydney’. So which historians ‘vividly described the mass opposition that the Hashemy received as it arrived in Melbourne’—or did the Hashemy actually sail direct to Sydney?
In his 2003 *History of the Port Phillip District*, A.G.L. Shaw stated: ‘When the *Hashemy* arrived three months after the *Eden* [that is, in May 1849], La Trobe, fearing trouble sent her on to Sydney with her passengers still on board—to arouse protests there. In August, when the *Randolph* reached Port Phillip, the *Argus* prepared for action again.’ Shaw stated that ‘my “original” sources have been the correspondence between officials in Melbourne, Sydney and London’. Indeed, he referred to his own *Convicts and the Colonies*—which does cite the correspondence; and to Alan Gross’s 1956 *Charles Joseph La Trobe*, and Ernest Scott’s 1911 article ‘Resistance to Convict Transportation’—neither of which referred directly to primary documentary sources regarding the *Hashemy*.

Scott’s 1911 article stated: ‘when in May, 1850, the *Hashemy* arrived in the bay, she was at once directed to proceed to Port Jackson’ by Charles La Trobe, Superintendent of the Port Phillip District. Scott repeated this in his 1918 *Short History of Australia*. How Scott concluded the *Hashemy* arrived at Port Phillip in May 1850 is unclear, as it arrived in Sydney on 10 June 1849, left again on 10 August, and was back in England by May 1850, preparing to sail to Western Australia. If it was simply a mistake in writing 1850, instead of 1849, then the *Hashemy* would have been the ‘first vessel’, rather than the ‘second vessel’. Nevertheless, Scott’s error was subsequently repeated by numerous historians over the next 60 years.

In 2003, A.G.L. Shaw moved the 1850 date back to May 1849, but still had La Trobe sending the *Hashemy* ‘on to Sydney with her passengers still aboard’.

Some, such as T.A. Coghlan, were not so sure, and avoided giving a specific date—‘the ship *Hashemy* arrived in Sydney … a landing having been refused them at Melbourne in accordance with Governor Fitzroy’s promise’. Others, like Margaret Kiddle, enhanced the description: ‘The crowd which collected to prevent the landing of the men looked so ugly that La Trobe, watching anxiously, ordered the captain [of the *Randolph*] to proceed to Sydney with his unwanted cargo. When a second ship the *Hashemy* arrived a few months later he followed the same procedure.’ Kiddle cited the *Argus* of 9 August 1849, which referred only to the *Randolph*, and said it was ‘the first of the polluting ships’; and the *Argus* of 22 August, which referred to an anti-transportation meeting, but said nothing about the *Hashemy*. Her source for the ‘ugly men’ was not given.

Because of Ernest Scott’s influence, it must be asked where he got the idea that the *Hashemy* came to Port Phillip? Historians of the late 19th
and early 20th centuries were divided in their opinions about whether the Hashemy visited Melbourne. In the 1883 edition of his History of Australia, G.W. Rusden, after observing that ‘Melbourne as usual was demonstrative’ about transportation, simply said the Hashemy arrived at Port Jackson in June, with no mention of a stop at Port Phillip, and went on to describe the arrival of the Randolph in August. However, by 1897, Rusden had changed his mind and also claimed the Hashemy came to Port Phillip before being turned away. Likewise, in 1906, Philip Gibbs claimed the Hashemy ‘entered Port Phillip’. In 1904, Henry Gyles Turner clearly stated the ‘Hashemy was ordered to Sydney and the Randolph to Port Phillip’. Similarly, in 1905, Arthur Jose made no mention of the Hashemy calling at Port Phillip. In 1917, Robert Thomson said the Randolph was bound for Melbourne and the Hashemy for Sydney.

Primary Sources
To understand the development of this confusion about the Hashemy, we must go back to the primary sources of 1849 and look at contemporary reports and correspondence.

In Convicts and the Colonies, A.G.L. Shaw said he had referred to original correspondence. Most of the letters relevant to the 1849 convict ships are contained in Further Correspondence on the Subject of Convict and Transportation (In Continuation of Papers Presented February and July 1849) presented to both houses of the British parliament on 31 January 1850. However, nowhere in this correspondence is there a reference to the Hashemy calling at Port Phillip. FitzRoy’s letter to Earl Grey dated 27 June 1849 reported on the arrival of the Hashemy at Sydney and the distribution of the convicts, but made no reference to it being diverted from Port Phillip. Letters from La Trobe to Deas Thompson dated 4 and 17 December 1849 refer to the diversion of the Adelaide to Sydney in a similar manner to the Randolph—but ignore the Hashemy. When Grey replied to FitzRoy on 18 April 1850, he approved of the diversion of both the Adelaide and Randolph and made no mention of the Hashemy. In 1850, Joshua Jebb presented his Report on the Discipline and Management of Convict Prisons and referred only to the departure of the Hashemy from England and its arrival in Sydney. In presenting the case for a Bill for the Better Government of Convict Prisons to parliament in March and April 1850, Grey referred to the arrival of the Hashemy in Sydney, but made no reference to Port Phillip. In his original despatch to FitzRoy on 4
December 1848, Earl Grey said that the Hashemy convicts ‘will be sent to New South Wales’, which normally meant Sydney, rather than Port Phillip. Indeed, the despatch arrived in Sydney with the Hashemy. If the official correspondence regarding the arrival and diversion of convict ships made no reference to the Hashemy coming to Port Phillip in 1849, what did contemporary newspapers say?

First rumours of the despatch of the Hashemy appeared in the Hobart Courier on Saturday 24 February 1849, when it was reported the Hashemy was to sail from Woolwich to Hobart. Nothing more was heard until 4 April 1849, when the Courier reported its destination was Sydney. In the meantime, Governor Charles FitzRoy arrived in Melbourne in March 1849 and promised the people of Port Phillip, and Superintendent Charles La Trobe, that, should any convict ships arrive at Port Phillip, they could be diverted to Sydney. At the time, all that was known was that London intended sending convicts—the actual names and destinations of the ships were unknown, apart from the rumours that the Hashemy had already left England. News was slow in arriving—the Sydney Morning Herald of 12 April reported: ‘The Hashemy and other ships with convicts; being expected to arrive at this port from Great Britain, it has been directed by the Port Officer that the distinguishing flag for the same to be hoisted at Fort Phillip Signal Station, shall be the pendant No. 0, (being blue with white ball in centre), placed between the ship flag and the pilot’s report.’

Fort Phillip—not Port Phillip—was the signal station on Windmill Hill, above the Rocks in Sydney. On 17 April, Henry Parkes and the Anti-Transportation Committee in Sydney met to prepare for the arrival of the convict ship at Sydney. On 20 April, the Sydney Morning Herald listed the Hashemy as being ‘expected in Sydney from London’, and, on the same page, ran a sustained criticism of FitzRoy’s promise to divert other convict ships from Port Phillip. A few days later, the Anti-Transportation Committee was demanding an explanation from FitzRoy. Criticism of both FitzRoy’s promise, and Port Phillip’s wishes, was also expressed in the Legislative Council in May. Nevertheless, the Herald continued reporting the Hashemy being bound for Sydney throughout May and June, and its arrival on 8 June. It reported the ship made only one stop during the voyage—at the Cape of Good Hope on 26 April—and had been ‘looked for from day to day’ in anticipation.

Despite the claims by A.G.L. Shaw and others that the Hashemy had stopped at Melbourne, a careful reading of the Argus for May 1849 shows
that the only mention of the ship was on 21 May when it reported that the *Hashemy* had left Portsmouth on 7 February.\textsuperscript{42} Melbourne knew nothing about the *Hashemy*’s voyage or arrival until 15 June, when the *Argus* carried the news from Sydney.\textsuperscript{43} It is clear that there was no public expectation that the *Hashemy* would be calling at Port Phillip, and when the *Argus* of 15 and 18 December 1849 reported that the *Adelaide* had been diverted to Sydney, in a similar manner to the *Randolph* in August, it made no mention of the same happening to the *Hashemy*.\textsuperscript{44} Indeed, in anticipation of the *Hashemy* passing by on its way to Sydney, settlers near Twofold Bay had applied in advance for an assignment of one hundred of the convicts.\textsuperscript{45}

When the *Randolph* arrived at Port Phillip on 9 August 1849, the *Argus* proclaimed: ‘Colonists of Port Phillip! The hour has come and the men! … the convicts are in the bay, and it behoves us to see that they obtain no footing here.’ Henry Gyles Turner recalled that, although the newspapers expressed some degree of animation, ‘the public did not evince any excitement’, and two days later, the ship was on its way to Sydney.\textsuperscript{46} The diversion of the *Randolph* in August was without precedent. If the story that the *Hashemy* had already been rejected by Port Phillip in May came from neither the official correspondence, nor the contemporary press, where did it originate?

The story originated in Sydney when the separate issues of FitzRoy’s promise to Port Phillip in March, and the arrival of the *Hashemy* in June, gradually became merged. After the *Hashemy* arrived at Sydney, a protest meeting, planned several weeks earlier, saw Robert Lowe, Henry Parkes and Archibald Michie among the leading speakers—but none referred to the *Hashemy* having been diverted from Port Phillip, and when Mackinnon, MLC representing Port Phillip, addressed the crowd, he was greeted with cheers.\textsuperscript{47} On 30 June, FitzRoy wrote to Earl Grey, submitting the petitions drawn up at the meeting, and describing many of the protesters as the ‘idlers’ and ‘mob of Sydney’.\textsuperscript{48} The repercussions would be felt over twelve months later when the despatch was eventually published in the Australian press in August 1850. Indignation erupted in Sydney at the governor’s apparently dismissive attitude. Gideon Lang wrote to the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 14 August 1850 and engaged in a long discussion of the issues surrounding the arrival of the *Hashemy*, and FitzRoy’s promise to Port Phillip. Although Lang did not connect the two, the juxtaposition of the issues set the pattern for linking the *Hashemy* with FitzRoy’s promise. The *Bathurst Free Press* took the connection a step further on 17 August 1850,
when it criticised FitzRoy’s ‘notorious despatch’ and complained of ‘his unaccountable blundering in the partiality he showed for the Port Phillipians in his disposal of the Hashemites’. By late 1850, many in Sydney imagined a direct connection between FitzRoy’s March 1849 promise to divert ships from Port Phillip, and the arrival of the Hashemy in June.

When Isaac Aaron wrote to the *Herald* on 19 August 1850 in response to Lang’s letter, he correctly made the point that while the Hashemy was unwelcome, it was actually the Randolph that was sent to Sydney ‘in pursuance of Sir Charles’ promise to the Port Phillip people’. But hostility towards both FitzRoy and Port Phillip had become entrenched, and, on 30 September 1850, the idea that the Hashemy had originally been intended for Port Phillip was presented to the New South Wales Legislative Council during a debate on transportation. W.C. Wentworth, who supported a limited resumption of transportation and was opposed to Port Phillip separation, observed that, during the late 1840s, Port Phillip employers had been happy to receive ‘exile’ labour. However, Wentworth complained, after free emigration satisfied Port Phillip’s labour needs, the exiles became ‘bounceable’, and the residents delivered a petition to ‘prevent their community from being contaminated by the convicts expected to arrive in the Hashemy’. On this point Wentworth was wrong—as shown above, Port Phillip was not expecting the Hashemy, and did not know it had arrived until news came from Sydney. Nevertheless, always looking for an excuse to criticise Port Phillip, Wentworth concluded: ‘It would have been far better had they received the people by the Hashemy … than have been receiving … thousands of much worse fellows from Van Diemen’s Land.’ Wentworth, like many in Sydney, wanted to blame the arrival of the Hashemy on Port Phillip.

Thus began the myth that Sydney only received the Hashemy convicts because Port Phillip had rejected them. But the myth could have soon died out—most subsequent contemporary historians of Victoria and Van Diemen’s Land either ignored the Hashemy or reported it going directly to Sydney—and despite his error in having it come to Port Phillip, in his 1911 article, Ernest Scott said: ‘the Hashemy incident belongs rather to the history of New South Wales than Victoria’.

In 1852, John West wrote *The History of Tasmania* and made passing reference to the Hashemy in Sydney and the Randolph in Melbourne, but did not suggest the Hashemy went to Melbourne first. In 1858, Thomas McCombie’s *History of the Colony of Victoria* described how the Randolph sailed into Hobson’s Bay.
in August 1849, and La Trobe ‘wisely averted bloodshed’ by diverting the ship to Sydney.\textsuperscript{54} Despite not previously giving any account of the Hashemy arriving at Port Phillip, McCombie curiously noted: ‘On the 11\textsuperscript{th} June, a violent meeting was held at Circular Wharf, Sydney, in consequence of the arrival of the Hashemy [sic] from Port Phillip.’\textsuperscript{55} Nevertheless, when William Fairfax published his \textit{Handbook to Australasia} in 1859, he mentioned FitzRoy’s promise and the Hashemy arriving at Sydney separately, but drew no connection between the two.\textsuperscript{56}

While the early historians from Victoria and Van Diemen’s Land generally kept the Randolph diversion from Port Phillip separate from the Hashemy incident in Sydney, it is clear that some in Sydney preferred to connect the two, and they might have taken heart from press reports of William Kerr’s address to an anti-transportation meeting in Melbourne on Monday 23 October 1854. The \textit{South Australian Register} reported Kerr as saying London ‘had tried direct transportation in the shape of the Randolph and the Hashemy’ and the people had proclaimed—‘The convicts by the Randolph and the Hashemy shall not land on our shores’.\textsuperscript{57} The Argus reported the same speech with the words—‘the ships Randolph and Hashemy had arrived with convicts. But these ships had also been obliged to leave our shores’.\textsuperscript{58} On the morning of the October meeting, the Argus had presented a case for no transportation: ‘In 1849 our tone was decided enough to secure the sending away of the convict ships Hashemy and Randolph. It would be a poor spectacle indeed for Victoria of 1854 to take lower ground than that achieved by the Port Phillip of 1849.’\textsuperscript{59} But the Argus was presenting a case against transportation to the whole of Australia, not just Victoria, and Kerr’s inclusion of the Hashemy and Randolph in the one slogan was rhetoric rather than fact, and his address came after one by Archibald Michie in which the opposition of ‘all the colonies of the Southern Hemisphere’ to transportation was being expressed.\textsuperscript{60} Michie had moved to Melbourne in 1852 after being involved in the Hashemy protests in Sydney in 1849.

On 16 May 1856, the Argus observed that the current edition of \textit{Melbourne Punch} had published a satirical cartoon depicting ‘the resistance offered by Mr La Trobe and our fellow colonists to the landing of convicts brought by the Randolph and the Hashemy’.\textsuperscript{61} In fact, the illustration in Punch, depicting La Trobe as Boadicea fending off the Romans, was simply entitled \textit{La Trobe and the Chieftains resist the landing of the convicts}, and made no mention of the Hashemy or Randolph.\textsuperscript{62} Further reinforcement of
the myth occurred in July 1863 when the former editor of the *Argus*, Edward Wilson, wrote from London on the subject of transportation and mistakenly recalled: ‘In 1849 when Lord Grey sent to Port Phillip the *Randolph* and the *Hashemy* … we adopted as our motto “The Convicts shall not Land” … and Mr. La Trobe sent the ships away again.’ Wilson wrote again in August and repeated the same statement. Despite Wilson’s version, on 20 August 1864, the *Argus* published a history of transportation and clearly stated that, in 1849, “it became known that the British Government had chartered two ships, the *Randolph* and the *Hashemy*, to proceed to Melbourne and Sydney respectively with convicts. With the former vessel the people of Melbourne were chiefly concerned—and when the *Randolph* arrived in Melbourne “The convicts shall not land” was the watchword.”

Nevertheless, the myth persisted, and the 1866 *Handbook to Sydney and Suburbs* informed newcomers: ‘In 1849, the Home Government, of their own motion and without reference to the wishes of the colonists, despatched from England the “Hashemy” convict ship, with orders to disembark the convicts at Melbourne’, and La Trobe sent them on to Sydney. And again,
on 15 October 1881, the *Clarence and Richmond River Examiner* claimed, in an unsourced story:

> In the reign of Governor Fitzroy an attempt was made to arrest transportation from England to Australia, and in the height of excitement the ship *Hasemy* [sic], with convicts, arrived in Hobson’s Bay, when the residents of Victoria refused to allow them to be landed, and Governor Fitzroy ordered the vessel on to Port Jackson.67

This was clearly from a writer more closely aligned with Sydney. A few years later, in his *Chronicles of Early Melbourne*, Edmund Finn, who was in Melbourne in 1849, described the *Randolph* being diverted to Sydney in August 1849 and the *Adelaide* in December, but made no mention of the *Hashemy*.68

By the 1890s, memories were fading. In 1890, James Sheen Dowling, a Sydney barrister in 1849, remembered the *Hashemy* ‘with upwards of 200 convicts not allowed to land at Melbourne, coming to Sydney to discharge her objectionable cargo … It was on this occasion that Robert Lowe made a brilliant oration which stamped him as an orator’.69 Robert Lowe, another barrister and a leader of the anti-transportation protests in Sydney in 1849, was the subject of two biographies published in 1893—one by James Francis Hogan, the other by Arthur Patchett Martin. An extract from Hogan’s work was widely published in the Australian and New Zealand press during 1893 and described the day the *Hashemy* arrived at Sydney after supposedly being driven from Melbourne—‘so intense and demonstrative was the popular fury that the captain did not dare even to attempt to discharge his repulsive living cargo’.70

The second biography, by Arthur Patchett Martin, claimed the *Hashemy*, ‘being unable to land her cargo at Melbourne, sailed for Port Jackson with a view to depositing them in Sydney’, where Lowe protested that FitzRoy had ‘rescued Port Phillip from the infamy of receiving a criminal cargo, which he now wished to inflict upon Port Jackson’.71 In 1883, Patchett Martin left Melbourne ‘under a cloud … embittered by friends shunning him’.72 In return, he complained that the ‘best informed writers in Victoria … entirely overlook, or rather, have quite forgotten, the magnificent stand which Robert Lowe made in Sydney’ on their behalf.73 Martin was especially critical of George Rusden’s 1883 mild account of anti-transportation sentiment in Melbourne—‘Melbourne, as usual was demonstrative’—and claimed that ‘There were men … among the “demonstrative” early colonists, who marched down to Hobson’s Bay with the view, if necessary, of preventing
by force the landing of this first batch of Earl Grey’s criminal hordes’. Dismissing Rusden’s account, Martin said he preferred the version given in an 1868 lecture by Archibald Michie in which Michie recalled how ‘a large body of spirited colonists … marched down to Sandridge, resolved that a newly arrived cargo of convicts, per ship Hashemy, should not land here’. 

Martin ignored the fact that Michie’s 1868 lecture had been criticised by the Argus as betraying ‘the lecturer’s political bias’; of indulging in ‘abstract arguments and theoretical doctrines which might or might not apply to existing circumstances’; and of making statements that were ‘altogether untrue, and nothing more than the every-day experience of a Victorian resident is required to show their complete fallacy’. In addition to this criticism, Michie’s account of marching down to Sandridge to send off the Hashemy in May 1849 simply could not have happened—as a Sydney barrister, he was involved in an important court case in Sydney during May 1849; he was giving lectures in Sydney; and he was a prominent speaker, along with Robert Lowe, at the protests against the Hashemy in Sydney on Monday 11 June 1849. He may have marched down to Circular Quay, but he certainly did not march down to Hobson’s Bay.

With two biographies of Robert Lowe circulating, and both Lowe’s and Michie’s flawed versions of the Hashemy affair being given prominence, those who wrote new histories or those who tried to remember old histories had a new source upon which to draw. In 1895, Edward Jenks told how ‘the unfortunate Hashemy was driven with her convict cargo from Melbourne to Sydney’. In 1897, G.W. Rusden, undoubtedly conscious of the criticism of his earlier work by Patchett Martin and others, revised his 1883 History of Australia to reflect a similar version of events. But not all were so influenced—in 1904, Henry Gyles Turner and Alexander Sutherland clearly stated that, ‘Of the two ships which had been chartered, the Hashemy was ordered to Sydney and the Randolph to Port Phillip’. Nevertheless, by the first two decades of the 20th century, the story of the Hashemy was evenly divided between those who claimed it had sailed to Port Phillip first—Scott, Coghlan and Gibbs—and those who claimed it sailed directly to Sydney—Turner, Sutherland, Thomson and Jose. The opinions of later historians seem to have varied depending upon which of these secondary sources they preferred.

Charles Bateson’s 1959 The Convict Ships 1787–1868 has been described by Foxhall as ‘the only substantial study of convict voyages’ despite being ‘over half a century old’, and by popular historians as ‘the
definitive guide to Australia’s period of transportation’—thereby giving credence to anything listed by Bateson—and he listed the Hashemy as arriving at Port Phillip in May 1849. How he came to this conclusion is uncertain, although he claimed to have referred to captains’ and surgeons’ journals—but he clearly could find no conclusive evidence, and simply listed the Hashemy being at Port Phillip sometime during the month of May, whereas he gave every other ship a specific date of arrival.

An exact date of arrival is given in a curious document compiled a few years after the Martin and Hogan biographies of Lowe, the Rusden second edition and the Jenks history had all reinforced the story of the Hashemy stopping at Port Phillip. Nineteen-year-old James Cripps was part of the military contingent on board the Hashemy in 1849 and was on his way to join the 99th Regiment in Van Diemen’s Land. In 1906, 57 years after the Hashemy arrived at Sydney, he wrote his Reminiscences and claimed to have arrived at Hobson’s Bay, Port Phillip, on 1 June 1849. Cripps related how, after stopping at the Cape of Good Hope, the Hashemy set sail ‘bound for Melbourne; where we intended to land our prisoners’.

There was nothing particular occurred during the voyage from the Cape to Melbourne worth recording. We arrived in Hobson’s Bay on the evening of 1st June 1849. When it became known that the convict ship Hashemy was in the harbour, it aroused the inhabitants of Melbourne to the highest pitch of indignation, and so intense and demonstrative was the popular fury, that the Captain did not dare even attempt to discharge his living cargo… Physical force was threatened but it was probably the kind heart rather than the fears of Mr Latrobe which induced him to insist that the Hashemy should proceed to Sydney. The Captain was therefore ordered to clear out with all possible speed, which was immediately complied with.

There are major problems with Cripps’ narrative. If this really happened, we would expect the official correspondence and the press of the time to have mentioned it—but there is silence. When James Cripps died in Melbourne on 24 March 1917, an obituary appeared in the Argus.

Sergeant-Major James Cripps, who died on March 24, aged nearly 88 years, formed an interesting link in Australian history. He was born in Ireland May, 1829. In 1848 he enlisted in the 99th Foot, and sailing as one of the guard on the Hashemy, the last convict ship to come here. He saw the angry, threatening crowds on Circular Quay, Sydney, whose deputies drew up the historical “Protest” in June, 1849. Sergeant Cripps served at Hobart, Norfolk Island, Melbourne, first at the time of the gold discoveries, and two years later, and
at Ballarat twice, the first time just missing the Eureka affair. The term of his enlistment ending, in January, 1860, he was appointed drill instructor of volunteers, a position he held until 1884.\footnote{84}

We might assume that some mention of the Hashemy being turned away from Port Phillip—if it happened—would have been of greater interest to Melbourne readers than the Sydney protest meeting—but again, there is silence.

The question must be asked whether Cripps included the stop at Hobson’s Bay in his Reminiscences of 1906 simply because that is what a number of historians at the time were saying had happened. Indeed, his choice of words betrays his inspiration—‘so intense and demonstrative was the popular fury that the Captain did not dare even attempt to discharge his living cargo’. Compare this to the phrase used by James Francis Hogan in his biography of Robert Lowe—‘so intense and demonstrative was the popular fury that the captain did not dare even to attempt to discharge his repulsive living cargo’. Hogan’s account had been widely circulated in the Australian press, and, apart from one word, Cripps’ phrase is identical.\footnote{85} Nevertheless, Audrey Oldfield, in The Great Republic of the Southern Seas, accepts Cripps’ story and adds, without further reference, that ‘La Trobe, on Fitzroy’s orders, ordered the Hashemy to Port Jackson’.\footnote{86}

Finally, if many of the secondary sources are unreliable, and the supposed firsthand witness account of James Cripps is suspect, we might ask whether the master of the Hashemy, Captain John Ross, the surgeon, Colin Arrott Browning, or the religious instructor, John Henderson, had anything to say about Port Phillip. The journal kept by Captain John Ross mentions passing Cape Otway and Wilsons Promontory early in June, but makes no mention of a detour into Port Phillip Bay.\footnote{87} Nicholson’s Log of Logs combined the Cape Otway and Wilsons Promontory entries in Ross’s journal into ‘Port Phillip’—which is technically correct as they were both in the Port Phillip District—but the Hashemy was passing Port Phillip on 1 June 1849, not stopping there as Cripps claimed.

Surgeon Colin Browning, not only compiled the required surgeon’s report for the voyage, but also wrote The Convict Ship, in which he described the Hashemy’s departure from England and its arrival at Sydney—neither document made any mention of stopping at Port Phillip.\footnote{88} Indeed, the health officer’s report clearly responds to the question, ‘At what Ports have you touched on your passage?’ with a single port—‘Cape of Good Hope 26\textsuperscript{th} April 49’.\footnote{89} Katherine Foxhall quoted extensively from Browning’s report...
as surgeon to the *Hashemy*, but did not detect the discrepancy between his account of the voyage and those of the historians she cited.

John Henderson, the religious instructor, kept a diary during the voyage. He described the arrival at Cape Town on 19 April, and being ‘sorry at leaving the land’ on 26 April. By 1 June, Henderson registered the ship’s location as 39.26° south and 131.44° east, which is south of South Australia; by 4 June, they were at 39.12° south and 142.22° east—‘Entered Bass Straits between Cape Otway & Kings Island in the afternoon … sailed on under easy sail but going pretty fast’; the next day, 5 June, they were close to Wilsons Promontory at 39.31° south and 146.11° east—‘beating about in the eastern part of Bass Straits the wind being unfavourable for passing out’; by 6 June—‘beat out of Bass Strait’; 7 June—‘Sailing along the coast of Australia all day’; and on 8 June—‘Coasting along, arrived between the heads at dusk … find that the people are averse to the reception of the prisoners’. Not a word about a visit to Port Phillip—indeed, from 1 May until 7 June, the *Hashemy* maintained an almost unavailing course along 39° south latitude.

**Conclusion**

In 1966—the year Shaw wrote *Convicts and the Colonies*—Joan Ritchie submitted her Master of Arts thesis on Charles Joseph La Trobe to the University of Melbourne. After discussing FitzRoy’s visit to Port Phillip in March 1849, Ritchie referred to the *Hashemy* arriving ‘a few weeks later’, citing Turner—who actually said the *Hashemy* went directly to Sydney—and Gilchrist—who vaguely said the people of Sydney and Melbourne protested ‘so the vessels were ordered to Sydney and Moreton Bay’. However, in a footnote, Ritchie expressed reservations about the accuracy of the secondary accounts. Ritchie’s thesis was not published and her concern about the secondary sources was not made known—but Shaw’s article was published, and his statement about how ‘in May the *Hashemy* and in August the *Randolph* almost provoked riots and had to be sent to Sydney without unloading their “passengers”’, was subsequently cited by many historians, both amateur and professional. For example, Gregory Woods said, ‘The *Hashemy* arrived, first at Melbourne, where Governor Latrobe refused it permission to land: it proceeded to Sydney and arrived in Port Jackson on 8 or 9 June.’ Francis Crowley claimed the arrival of the *Hashemy* ‘roused great public alarm in Sydney and Melbourne’. Anthony Baker—‘When the Hashemy arrived in Melbourne
in 1849 with a band of “exiles”, a tumult prevented their disembarkation.\footnote{Russell Ward—‘When the convict ship, Hashemy, arrived in Melbourne in 1849, the Superintendent of the Colony, Charles Joseph Latrobe, prudently ordered her to Sydney.’\footnote{And so the list goes on.}} Perhaps most significant in disseminating the error to genealogists was Keith Clarke in his 1999 \textit{Convicts of the Port Phillip District}, where he cited Shaw’s statement as his only source for claiming the \textit{Hashemy} ‘arrived in Port Phillip Bay and La Trobe defied the Imperial Government by refusing permission for the convicts to land. After a delay the \textit{Hashemy} was sent on to Sydney’.\footnote{Clarke was wrong on two counts—not only did the \textit{Hashemy} not stop at Port Phillip, but La Trobe had the governor’s approval to divert them had they done so. Such errors are easily perpetuated and multiplied in popular literature, and even more easily on the internet. A popular ‘convict website’, \textit{Convicts to Australia}, claims the \textit{Hashemy} ‘arrived in Sydney on June 9, 1849, but not before discharging her surviving Parkhurst boys in Victoria in May 1949’\footnote{The website gives its source as Ian Nicholson’s \textit{Log of Logs}, and Paul Buddee’s \textit{Fate of the Artful Dodger}. Perhaps in an attempt to correct such errors, the official \textit{Guide to Convict Records in the Archives Office of New South Wales} states the ‘Prisoners did not disembark at Port Phillip but were sent on to Sydney’. Only partly correct—the prisoners did not disembark at Port Phillip because the ship was never there. Fortunately, there are some, such as Peter Cochrane, who do not included Port Phillip in the voyage of the \textit{Hashemy}.\footnote{The secondary sources on the \textit{Hashemy} incident are often unreliable and contradictory, and many cite other equally unreliable secondary sources as their sole evidence. The primary sources—not only the correspondence between La Trobe, FitzRoy and London, but also the journals left by the master, surgeon and religious instructor on the \textit{Hashemy}, and contemporary press reports and shipping lists—provide clear and conclusive evidence that the \textit{Hashemy} did not stop at Port Phillip in May 1849 before arriving at Sydney on 8 June.} Of course, we could ask does it matter whether the \textit{Hashemy} went to Port Phillip or not? It matters partly because historians should correct mistaken perceptions when new evidence is found; when the old evidence itself is valid but belongs to a different puzzle; or when what was thought to have been valid evidence is found to have been fabricated or imagined. It is also important because many people in Sydney came to believe the arrival of the \textit{Hashemy} was a direct consequence of FitzRoy’s promise that...
La Trobe could divert convict ships from Port Phillip. That belief, together with FitzRoy’s failure to fully explain the reasons for his promise, led to a dramatic escalation in the already bitter antagonism towards Port Phillip. In the atmosphere of such hostility, it was easy for politicians, journalists, and ultimately historians, to write about and perpetuate myths that suited their own parochial prejudices—for example, Arthur Patchett Martin’s account of the Hashemy voyage combines not only Robert Lowe’s prejudice against convicts and Port Phillip, but also Michie’s mistaken recollections of a protest against the Hashemy in Melbourne, as well as Martin’s own bitterness against former friends in Melbourne.

During the 1840s, the Middle District of New South Wales, based on Sydney, was heavily reliant on wealth from the Port Phillip District. Since the late 1830s, the independence-minded people of Port Phillip had blamed Sydney for appropriating revenue that should have been spent in Port Phillip—and they were justified in that complaint. But Governor Gipps complained that if Port Phillip’s money was spent solely on Port Phillip, Sydney would not be able to pay its bills. By 1849, Port Phillip’s imminent independence, cutting off Sydney’s major revenue source, was bad enough—but the idea that Port Phillip had persuaded the governor to transfer the Hashemy convicts to Sydney was just too much. The people of Sydney blamed Port Phillip not only for their loss of revenue, but also for an influx of new convicts. They were wrong on both counts. Charles Joseph La Trobe was entitled to wish that Port Phillip revenue should be expended in Port Phillip alone, and he did not send the Hashemy to Sydney. That idea originated from and was perpetuated mainly by people such as W.C. Wentworth in Sydney itself, and repeated by historians ever since.

NOTES


These despatches are reproduced in New South Wales Parliament, *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council during the Session of the Year 1849*, vol. 1, Sydney, 1849; Shaw, p. 324.


6 Shaw, pp. 317, 318 & 324.


9 Shaw, *History of the Port Phillip District*, p. xvi.


11 Scott, p. 133.


13 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 August 1849, p. 2; *Perth Inquirer*, 30 October 1850, p. 3.


15 Shaw, ‘Victoria’s First Governor’, p. 89.


18 *Argus*, 9 August 1849, p. 2; 22 August 1849, pp. 2 & 4.


25 ‘Further Correspondence on the Subject of Convicts and Transportation (In Continuation of Papers presented February and July 1849)’, House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (HCPP), 1850 [1153] [1285].

26 FitzRoy to Earl Grey, 27 June 1849, HCPP, 1850 [1153] [1285].

27 La Trobe to Deas Thompson, 4 December 1849; 17 December 1849, 49/735, HCPP, 1850 [1153] [1285].

28 Earl Grey to FitzRoy, 18 April 1850, HCPP, 1850 [1153] [1285].


30 *Empire*, 6 February 1851, pp. 3–4.

31 Earl Grey to FitzRoy, 4 December 1848, HCPP, 1850 [1153] [1285]; *Argus*, 15 June 1849, p. 2; 19 June 1849, p. 1 supplement; Shaw, *Convicts and the Colonies*, p. 324.


33 *Hobart Courier*, 4 April 1849, p. 2.

34 *Hobart Courier*, 24 February 1849, p. 2; 4 April 1849.

35 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 April 1849, p. 2.


37 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 April 1849, p. 2.

38 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 April 1849, p. 2.
40 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 May 1849, p. 2; 2 June 1849, p. 2.
41 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 June 1849, p. 2; 12 June 1849, p. 2.
42 Shaw, *History of the Port Phillip District*, pp. 208–9, p. 294 n. 36; *Argus*, 21 May 1849, p. 1 supplement; *Maitland Mercury*, 6 June 1849, p. 2; *Colonial Times*, 12 June 1849, p. 4.
43 *Argus*, 15 June 1849, p. 2.
44 *Argus*, 15 December 1849; 18 December 1849.
45 ‘Report of the Principal Superintendent of Convicts of the Arrival, Inspection and Disposal of the Convicts by the Ship “Adelaide” 14 January 1850’, enclosure with FitzRoy to Grey, 17 January 1850, HCPP [1253] [1285].
47 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 June 1849, p. 2.
48 FitzRoy to Earl Grey, 30 June 1849.
49 *Bathurst Free Press*, 17 August 1850, p. 4.
50 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 August 1850, p. 2.
51 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 October 1850, p. 2; 7 October 1850, p. 3.
52 Scott, ‘Resistance to Convict Transportation’, p. 133.
55 McCombie, p. 176.
56 William Fairfax, *Handbook to Australasia; Being a Brief Historical and Descriptive Account of Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, New South Wales, Western Australia and New Zealand*, Melbourne, W. Fairfax and Co., 1859, p. 165.
57 *South Australian Register*, 1 November 1854, p. 2.
58 *Colonial Times*, 1 November 1854, p. 2; *Argus*, 24 October 1854, p. 5.
59 *Argus*, 23 October 1854, p. 5.
60 *Argus*, 24 October 1854, p. 5.
61 *Argus*, 16 May 1856, p. 8.
63 *Argus*, 14 September 1863, p. 5.
64 *Argus*, 13 October 1863, p. 6.
65 *Argus*, 20 August 1864, p. 4.
67 *Clarence and Richmond River Examiner*, 15 October 1881, p. 2.
70 *Hobart Mercury*, 6 March 1893, p. 3; For example, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 April 1893, p. 10; *Colac Herald*, 14 March 1893, p. 4.
76 *Argus*, 19 September 1868, p. 4; *South Australian Advertiser*, 3 October 1868, p. 2; *Hobart Mercury*, 9 October 1868, p. 2.
77 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 May 1849, p. 2; 19 May 1849, p. 2; 6 June 1849, p. 3; 12 June 1849, p. 2.
83 Cripps, ‘Reminiscences’.
84 *Argus*, 27 March 1917, p. 8.


89 Health Officer’s Report, *Hashemy*, State Records Authority of New South Wales: Shipping Master’s Office; Passengers Arriving 1855–1922.

90 John Henderson, ‘Diary Kept by an Unidentified Person, Believed to be Mr Henderson, during the Voyage of the Convict Ship Hashemy from England to Australia, 20 Nov. 1848–8 June 1849’, MS 7902, National Library of Australia, Canberra.


93 Shaw, *Convicts and the Colonies*, pp. 317, 318 & 324.


103 Shaw, _History of Port Phillip District_, pp. 238 & 195; _Hobart Courier_, 15 January 1841, p. 2; _Argus_, 1 August 1848, p. 2; ‘Petition to Earl Grey’, _Argus_, 8 August 1848, p. 2.

104 Gipps to Stanley, 31 January 1841, cited in _Argus_, 17 July 1846, p. 2.
WILLIAMSTOWN HIGH SCHOOL: VICTORIA’S FIRST GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOL?

Andrew Burbidge

Abstract
Williamstown High School (WHS) celebrates its centenary as a state high school in 2014. However, Williamstown Council established and controlled a school on the site from 1867 until 1914, when it was given to the State. It is argued that WHS, in many fundamental respects, was the continuation of the local government secondary school and has, at least, equally as strong claims as Westbourne Grammar to having started in 1867. Some comparisons are made between establishment dates of other early Victorian secondary schools to discern in what sense WHS can be said to be the oldest government secondary school in Victoria.

WILLIAMSTOWN IS ONE OF THE OLDEST European settlements in Victoria, reported to have had a fixed population of 43 persons in 1836.1 Many of the schools established in the area opened well before the Victorian Government’s Education Act 1872 (The Act) under which the Victorian Government undertook to provide free, compulsory and secular education up to Grade 8. Before 1872, most secondary schools were established by churches—Wesleyan, Catholic, Church of England and Presbyterian—or by private individuals.

The school that opened in Williamstown in 1867, Williamstown Borough Grammar School (WBGS), however, was an exception to this pattern. Historian Ada Ackerly maintains that this school is a unique initiative in local government involvement in secondary education: “Believed to be the
only Grammar School in Victoria to be established by a Borough Council.” In setting up this secondary school, Williamstown Council was also acting well in advance of Victoria’s Education Act 1910, which marked the State’s serious involvement in the provision of secondary education.

This article examines the relationship between the council school and its successor on the site, Williamstown High School (WHS), by examining evidence that WBGS was a local government initiative in secondary education; by exploring the circumstances and uncertainties surrounding the gift of the school to the State in 1914; by examining continuities and changes to assess the extent to which the relationship between WBGS and WHS provides support for the proposition that WHS may properly be regarded as a continuation of the school established by the council; and by assessing how this local government/community initiative in secondary education relates to other early Victorian secondary schools.

**Williamstown Borough Council’s Establishment of a Secular, Secondary School**

The school then generally known as ‘the Grammar School’ was created by, and responsible to, the Williamstown Council. The Council made application for land from the Victorian government, selected the site for the school, organised the finance required for its construction and held the land in trust. The Council also exercised oversight of the school’s Committee and Trustees and maintained that control until it gifted the school to the State of Victoria in 1914.

At least three published histories—a history of education in Victoria, a history of Williamstown, and a history of WBGS point to both the existence of a school on Pasco Street before WHS, and to that school having been established by the local council, to which it was responsible.

Les Blake, editor of *Vision and Realisation*, a history of State education published by the Victorian Education Department, states that ‘prior to 1915, the school [WHS] had a long and less certain existence as a locally sponsored grammar school. In June 1867 portion of the present site was reserved under the trusteeship of the Williamstown Council’. In *Port of Many Prows*, Wilson Evans writes: ‘Williamstown High School commenced as Williamstown Borough Grammar School. Initial steps towards establishment of this school were taken at a Council meeting of 27 March 1865, by Councillors Charles Franklin and Richard Dowman.’
However, it is Joseph Johnson, in his history of a private school, *The Westbourne and Williamstown Grammar Schools*, who provides the most authoritative and comprehensive record of the steps leading to the opening of WBGS and the eventual separation of the school into a State government high school and a private school for preparatory and primary students. Johnson does not explicitly examine the relationship between WBGS and WHS, but by including his history (of the school set up by Williamstown Council) in the history of what is now known as Westbourne Grammar, he has contributed to public perceptions that Westbourne Grammar is basically a continuation of the WBGS. The factors showing continuity and changes for both Westbourne and WHS are examined later in this article.

Johnson provides a convincing picture of the desire of (at least the better-off) Williamstown residents for a higher quality of education for their children. He points to community dissatisfaction with available primary level schools in the area and a wish for a local secondary school leading to university and the professions.

The wish of parents for a better education for their children than that offered by the Common Schools is very understandable. Under the Common Schools Act of 1862 the retrogressive payment-by-results system had been introduced into Victoria. Teachers were paid on a sliding scale according to their ability to ram the Three R’s into their pupils, so classrooms had degenerated into crude factories in which rote learning and recitation of facts, parrot-style, had replaced the acquisition of learning skills … This was not the sort of education desired by the burghers of Williamstown, who were hoping to fit their children out for university, or for careers in business or the public service.

Clearly, as there were already a number of state-subsidised denominational schools in Williamstown in the mid-1860s—Roman Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian—the founders of the grammar school were also looking for a secular alternative. Augmentation of salaries on the basis of documented attendance by enrolled students was another feature of payments at Common Schools in the 1860s. *Vision and Realisation* notes that some teachers falsified rolls and attendance returns in order to avoid reductions in salary. An investigation in 1863 found that seventy per cent of the rolls in one district were incorrect. In consequence of this level of falsification, measures were introduced that required all attendance returns to be sworn before a magistrate as being correct. Copies of all attendance records were accordingly required, imposing a considerable additional burden on the teachers of the day.
unsurprising that the morale of the teacher cohort in the Common Schools system was not high.

Those supporting the establishment of a grammar school in Williamstown were aiming for a school that would provide a standard of education appropriate to qualify its alumni to progress to university and into the professions. That aspiration necessitated both primary and secondary education of superior quality to that provided by the Common and local Denominational Schools.

Johnson states:

[Williamstown people] have always sought to provide their own amenities rather than be required to make the journey to Footscray, Melbourne or ‘over the other side’. Consequently in the mid 1860’s when education was becoming a big social and political issue in Victoria, the citizens of Williamstown decided that the borough should have its own grammar school. The grammar schools of Melbourne and Geelong had both opened their doors in 1858. There was strong local feeling that Williamstown deserved a similar facility.

The Grammar school project was first raised publicly in a motion carried at the Williamstown borough council meeting of 27 March 1865, that application be made to the Hon. the Commissioner of Lands and Surveys for a piece of land to be reserved in Electra Street near the Mechanics Institute on which to erect a Grammar School for educational purposes. The motion was moved by Councillor Charles Franklin and seconded by Councillor Dowman.8

The Town Clerk, George Smith, in his letter of 22 May 1865 to the Commissioner of Lands and Surveys applying for land, stated that there is:

a very generally expressed wish by parents that there should be some school in Williamstown in which their children could receive an education superior to that obtainable in the ‘Common Schools’ and where there would be other advantages not at present available … The Council beg to suggest a site next to the Mechanics Institute, or at the intersection of Ferguson Street with Melbourne Road.9

After the Commissioner of Lands initially refused the Council’s request, the Town Clerk on 27 July 1865 wrote a second letter to the Commissioner. This illustrates the extent to which the Council at that time was confident of community support for the initiative and was itself prepared to be responsible for the school.

He urged that the application be reconsidered … [as] the school would be self-supporting and would require no aid from the government or the Board
of Education; that the inhabitants of Williamstown were prepared to erect a suitable building within a reasonable time; that the property should be vested in the borough council as trustees on behalf of the people of the area. In September 1865, permission was granted to council to select land. The council established a subcommittee, which inspected a number of possible sites for the school. On the first Saturday of October, the subcommittee ‘chose the land in Pasco Street on which Williamstown High School now stands’ as the most suitable for the proposed school. The Council was responsible for selection of the site for the school, applying for land on which the school would be built, and, as shown below, had involvement in its funding and control.

The reservation of a little over two acres was approved on 4 December 1865 and gazetted on 12 December 1865. In 1867, a further grant brought the land held by the school to approximately three acres. By comparison, Melbourne Grammar was granted 15 acres on St Kilda Road in 1856.

In his history of Williamstown, Evans provides more detail on the role of the Williamstown Council in the funding for its construction. In April 1866, Council voted £200 towards the cost of erection, contingent upon a further £400 being raised by ratepayers within a year. This was reported as accomplished on 11 October 1866. Johnson notes:

The council grant’s proviso—that £400 be raised by ratepayers within twelve months—proved to be no problem at all. The Honorary Secretary of the school committee, W. Collins Rees, wrote to the Mayor on 11 October informing him that the money had been raised. In fact it had been oversubscribed in less than half the prescribed period.

A sum of £516 11s 6d was collected in subscriptions and a £200 shortfall of receipts in relation to cost of construction and fencing was advanced by a ‘gentleman’ at 10 per cent interest, repayable in two years. Two fundraising concerts were well supported and helped raise finance for the school.

The grammar school prospectus was published in the Williamstown Chronicle on 8 June 1867. It was laid down, under the conditions for the government of the school, that:

the instruction will be purely secular and will embrace an extended course in all branches of a complete English, Mathematical, Classical and Commercial Education, qualifying pupils, as may be desired, either for Matriculation at the University, the learned professions, the Civil Service or Mercantile life.
Andrew Burbidge — *Williamstown High School*  

The school will divided into upper and lower forms … No scholars to be admitted under eight years of age.

[Elsewhere it was laid down that] No boy shall be admitted a pupil, who has not previously received the first rudiments of education, and is able at least to write correctly, ordinary sentences from dictation.\(^{16}\)

The prospectus also stipulated that shortfalls in the number of trustee members ‘shall be supplied by members elected by the Borough Council of Williamstown’. The prospectus thus makes clear the intention that the WBGS be secular and responsible to the Williamstown Council.

Not all members of the public or councillors were in favour of the Council’s grant for the school or, as later opposition showed, of the use of the land for education rather than development. The establishment of the school was keenly debated in the 1867 Council elections. Candidates who supported the school argued that ‘children would be able to acquire locally a first-class education at a reasonable sum’.\(^ {17}\) The contrasting positions of two of the candidates can be seen in a *Williamstown Chronicle* report of a public meeting to hear the views of the would-be councillors. Speaking in favour of the council’s decision, Councillor Mason reported on the impact of a book he had read:

[called] the ‘School Days of Great Men,’ and I found that nearly all of those illustrious individuals whose names had been recorded on the scroll of Fame were indebted to public schools for their education and the great learning they possessed (applause). Some of these were the leading statesman of Great Britain, the greatest orators of the day, and the greatest heroes of the age, both military and naval … I contend therefore that if these schools are needed at home, they are needed here … Gentlemen, I hope to see the time when the children of the working men of Williamstown will rise to positions of honour and trust … And ought we to begrudge a few pounds in the Noble endeavour to establish such a school at Williamstown? (Cheers and cries of “No, no.”)

Mr Moxham, a former councillor standing for re-election, took exception to the council’s expenditure on the school:

respecting the Grammar School, he was of the opinion that it was one of the most illegal acts that was ever done on the face of the earth (groans and cheers). He wished it to be understood that he was not opposing the Grammar School … If he had his will he would make those gentlemen who signed the cheque for the £200 to pay the money back to the Council out of th out of their own pockets (cheers and groans).\(^ {18}\)
Johnson comments: ‘Former councillor James Moxham, a publican, carried the case against the school with all that woolly assertiveness which characterises the politician who makes his appeal to the lowest common denominator … Once again the voters delivered their verdict. Councillors Franklin and Mason were re-elected. Moxham came in last.’

The WBGS started classes on 22 July 1867. Designed by architect William Solway, it was reputedly constructed within the space of a few months in late 1866 and early 1867 by the local building firm of Hopkins and Goss. Isaac Hopkins lived in Williamstown in a house he had built (Rheola), which has many of the Italianate features of the school.

Johnson’s account of the ensuing years records only one major break in the school’s continuity. Following the passage of the Education Act in 1872 and the resignation of Headmaster Charles Steedman in 1877, WBGS was closed for seven years. Johnson attributes the closure both to continuing opposition to the school from sections of the Williamstown Council and the provision of free state education up to Grade 8. There is nothing in the surviving accounts to suggest that the school once again fell on hard times after that. ‘But by the middle of 1876 it was obvious that the halcyon days of Steedman’s early tenure were over’. Steedman spent some of the ensuing years teaching in New Zealand.

Johnson recognises that the passing and implementation of the Education Act 1872, providing free, compulsory and secular education to Victorian
children up to age 14, ‘would have had a marked effect on enrolments at the grammar school’.\textsuperscript{23} Evans reports that the \textit{Chronicle} had labelled the school an institution of snobbery, but ‘the “snobs” deserted in favour of free education after the introduction of the free education system’.\textsuperscript{24}

The \textit{Education Act 1872} had widespread effects on all types of Victorian schools dependent on the fees of primary students as it abolished state aid to church schools as well as providing free primary education through the new Education Department. Blake reports in \textit{Vision and Realisation}: ‘As parents no longer paid fees nor contributed to the cost of buildings, attendance figures soared from an average of 66,439 in December [1872] to 99,783 in March [1873] when the total enrolments exceeded 144,000. By the end of the year the gross figure was 207,826.’\textsuperscript{25} The impact on the enrolments and finances of fee-charging primary schools was considerable. ‘Over 300 private schools closed between 1872 and 1875, while many children were withdrawn from the remaining private and church schools. The department took over 453 Common schools, began negotiations for the purchase of 590 denominational schools and embarked on an ambitious building program.’\textsuperscript{26}

WBGS remained closed for seven years until Steedman returned from New Zealand in 1884 and negotiated with trustees for the reopening of the school. (The site was rented to the Mayor Isaac Hopkins, for his construction business.) However, the school was not disbanded as an entity and appears to have reopened under the same terms and conditions when Steedman returned.\textsuperscript{27}

This temporary closure does not invalidate the claim of Westbourne Grammar, or the potential claim of WHS, to have been established in 1867. While closures affect any claims to continuous provision of education services, periods of closure do not necessarily invalidate the claim that WHS has been providing government secondary education longer than any other school in Victoria.

It seems uncontroversial in the published literature that the original school (WBGS) was created by and was responsible to the local government authority in Williamstown. One exception is an article published by WHS for its 75\textsuperscript{th} anniversary that recognises that ‘there has been a Secondary School in the current location of WHS since 1867’, but later describes it as a ‘private institution’.\textsuperscript{28} The approach of WHS centenary as a state high school, however, has awakened new interest in its earliest origins and in improving the accessibility of its history archives.
Williamstown Council Gives the School to the State

After a history of sporadic strained relations between the Council and WBGS, pressures from developers to acquire the land, agitation from parents for a government high school, and a health certificate declaring the buildings unfit for use, the Trustees and Council decided to give the school to the State for establishment of a high school. Final approval for the transfer of the school to the State was provided on 28 April 1914 by the Williamstown Council. This supports previously cited evidence that the school, from 1867 to 1914, was a (local) government school.

The reasons for the transfer of control of the secondary school at Pasco Street from one level of government to another are complex and interwoven. There is evidence that there was pressure from local developers, some councillors and the local newspaper to allow the land to be reassigned for other purposes. *Williamstown Chronicle*, for example, seems to have adopted a firm position in favour of development. It reported: ‘Following on our condemnation of the Grammar School on account of its insanitary and neglected state … In its place there is room for some fine villas, which would give revenue in rates, or the position might be made an ideal one for municipal chambers.’ In a later news item on the school, the editor added a footnote: ‘We still maintain that the land should be sub-divided and sold for residential purposes.’

Other reports indicate longstanding opposition to the school among Williamstown councillors, although it is not clear how far this opposition coincided with those wanting residential development. Johnson writes of Headmaster Gerity: ‘No one would have known better than he, after seventeen years as Headmaster, that the apathy and obduracy of the Williamstown Council would prevent it from becoming a thriving institution.’

School trustee Cr Woods spoke of the hostile attitude of the Council towards the school, while Henry Hick (another trustee) ‘expressed his regret, as many of the school’s trustees had done before him, that the Williamstown Council … was not disposed to cooperate with trustees in an effort, not only to maintain the school but to develop it so that it would become a centre of light, and a source of self-improvement’.

Another pressure appears to have come from parents who would prefer to send their children to a local state-supported high school instead of the more expensive WBGS. Johnson reports:
Moreover, there were plenty of votes to be won in supporting the establishment of a local high school. The Essendon High School had opened the previous year. Already a number of Williamstown parents who could not afford the grammar school fees were sending their children there. They quite rightly resented the fact that Williamstown did not possess such a facility.\(^{33}\)

As Johnson comments, the school’s trustees were in an invidious position, caught between the developers’ lobby and the high school lobby.\(^{34}\)

However, in the debate over the role of the State in secondary education, church schools had fought hard against the entry of the state into what they considered their domain. When, in 1910, parliament finally accepted responsibility for providing secondary schooling, a clause in the Act specified that no state high school could be established where there was adequate provision for secondary education in the district. Obviously, the existence of a thriving council secondary school would be a major obstacle to the establishment of a state high school in Williamstown.\(^{35}\)

Another reason given was the adverse report on the state of the buildings. This claim warrants exploration.

In 1914, following a health certificate stating that the school was unfit for habitation, the Council gave the school, worth more than £3000, to the State government.\(^{36}\)

The *Williamstown Chronicle* of 7 February 1914 reported that Dr Maclean, the Council Health Officer, had condemned the Grammar School as unfit for use and that he was ‘shocked and scandalised’ at the condition of the building. However, the report was not available to the press or public and the *Chronicle* asked, ‘What is the reason for secrecy on the part of Councillors?’\(^{37}\) Even today, the whereabouts of the report on the inspection of the school is still a mystery, despite enquiries and scrutiny of council minutes.

Council minutes of 3 February 1914 show that the report on the school had not been prepared by Dr Maclean but, instead, by the Town Inspector/Dog Registrar, Harry Jenkins.\(^{38}\) It appears that the Health Officer issued the certificate stating that the school was unfit for human occupation or habitation without himself having carried out an inspection of the school. This certificate was considered by Council in early February.

The Town Inspector’s Report dated February 3 1914 was received. In connection with the report on the Williamstown Grammar School the Health Officer submitted a certificate to the effect that the building was unfit and unsafe for human occupation or habitation.
Resolved that a copy of the Inspector’s report and the Health Officer’s certificate be forwarded to the Trustees with an intimation that the school must be made fit for occupation, otherwise the Council will make an order under Section 98 of the Health Act 1890 forbidding the use of the same.\textsuperscript{39}

The reported poor condition of the school was disputed by several people, including the school’s trustees and the headmaster.

Mr H. Hick [trustee] “said no school was being carried on at the time [the report] was served, and the most important requirement of the school, namely, the sewerage, was at the time in the hands of the contractor.\textsuperscript{40}

Cr Woods [another trustee] rather warmly repudiates the assertions of disrepair spoken of in connection with the school. He asserts that the building is generally in good repair, save for a bit of plaster here and there.\textsuperscript{41}

Principal Gerity, the head teacher, states that there is very little wrong with the school, and that for ventilation and other attributes it is one of the best buildings in which he has ever taught.\textsuperscript{42}

Some months later, moreover, the state of the premises and buildings did not appear to concern inspecting officials. In April 1914, the Minister (Sir Alexander Peacock) and the Director of Education, along with the Mayor and others, inspected the grammar school and the Central State School and made some comparisons between them. According to the local papers:

The Mayor (Cr J.J. Liston) said that the classrooms at Central State were not equal to those of the [Borough] School and the lighting and ventilation were both inferior.\textsuperscript{43}

The Minister and Director concurred that no school so well situated and equipped and in going order had come into the possession of the Department since the Secondary Education Act had been in operation.\textsuperscript{44}

Sir Alexander [expressed] his delight at the handsome gift bestowed upon the department by the trustees: absolutely the best ever received by them.\textsuperscript{45}

Rather than being a response to the ‘scandalous’ condition of the school, the Council’s gift of the school to the State could be seen as a shrewd response by the Trustees and the Mayor to mounting pressures to close the school: it foiled the ambitions of developers, overcame opposition to the school among councillors and enabled a State high school to be established in Williamstown. As the Mayor (Cr J.J. Liston) said of the transfer:
Certain local influences had been at work to get the land subdivided and sold, but he was glad the interest of the public had prevailed over the greed of land speculators, and that the land was to be used for the purpose for which it had been originally reserved.\textsuperscript{46}

\textbf{Changes and Continuities: Two Different Schools Sharing a Common Origin}

What followed the division of WBGS into primary and secondary schools? This section outlines the changes and continuities between the WBGS and the WHS and concludes that the principal continuities establish a strong case for maintaining that the High School was, to a large extent, a continuation of WBGS. For WBGS, 1914 marked the transfer of control of the school at Pasco Street from one level of government to another, not the establishment of a new school. In addition, some comparisons are made with the primary school, which was established by Miss Molland, also in 1914. The school which evolved from the primary school, Westbourne Grammar School, states on its website and its school badge that the school was established in 1867. The school’s commissioned history also adopts WGBS as the precursor to what has become Westbourne Grammar school.\textsuperscript{47}

Several of the changes were to be expected from the division of WBGS into a high school and a primary school. WHS was without primary classes, while Miss Molland’s school went only to Grade 6 until 1978.\textsuperscript{48} The two schools adopted new names. In her letter seeking registration of her private school, Miss Molland proposed calling it the \textit{Preparatory Grammar School}, but she soon changed the name to \textit{Strathmore, Williamstown Grammar School} (because of her admiration of the Earl of Strathmore).\textsuperscript{49} This school had further name and location changes in ensuing years and subsequently became Westbourne Grammar.

However, WHS shares several fundamental continuities with the school that opened in 1867. The High school remained on the Pasco Street site and continued to use the existing buildings. Another continuity of consequence is that WHS remained a government school, responsible, and accountable through various formal structures, to the elected government. Miss Molland opened a private school, which was essentially responsible only to Miss Molland from 1914 until 1956, when a private company was formed and a board of management established. As Johnson writes:

A company was to be formed, limited by guarantee, so that money could be raised to finance the school’s move. Control of the school, for so long the
function of Miss Molland herself, was to pass to a board of management
elected by parents and past pupils ... The school was formed into a company
in 1956, and Miss Molland signed over control to a board of management.\textsuperscript{50}

\textit{Drawing of the 1867 Pasco Street school façade—
still part of Williamstown High School.}
(D.J. Griffiths (a student of WHS), first published in
High Tide, Williamstown High School, 1949, p. 2.)
A further continuity between the old grammar school (WBGS) and WHS is that both are secular. As shown previously, the prospectus for WBGS stated that its instruction was to be purely secular.\textsuperscript{51} While the WBGS was secular, Miss Molland’s school developed informal, but close, religious links with the Church of England when she moved the school to the Holy Trinity Hall in 1915. According to Johnson, there was a close relationship between Miss Molland’s school and the local Anglican Church:

It was the ambition of almost every clergyman in those days to have his own little school. In attracting Miss Molland to Trinity Hall the Rev. Lynch had the best of both worlds. He had his school, but he had none of the responsibilities that would have been his if the school had been officially Anglican. The relationship between the grammar school and the church was a loose one, but close.

The Rev. Lynch took religious instruction classes, chaired the annual speech nights, and generally took the school under his protection.\textsuperscript{52}

In summary, the continuities between the WBGS and WHS are considerable. WHS remained secular, secondary, under government control, and on the same site. The Headmaster of WBGS, Mr Gerity, stayed on as Deputy Headmaster after the school’s transfer to the State. On the basis of these strong continuities, WHS has a strong claim to being considered a continuation of the government secular school established on the same site in 1867.

\textbf{Comparing Williamstown High School to Other Early Secondary Schools}

How does the Williamstown local government/community initiative in secondary education relate to other early Victorian secondary schools, particularly in relation to the question of whether it is the oldest government secondary school in Victoria? Table 1 below compares nine schools.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Date of first secondary classes</th>
<th>Date on present site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Williamstown High School</td>
<td>22 July 1867</td>
<td>1867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne High School</td>
<td>1905 as the Continuation School 1912 named Melbourne High School</td>
<td>1927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University High School</td>
<td>1893 as private school 1910 University Practising School, 1913 named University High School</td>
<td>1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geelong High School</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>1915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essendon High School</td>
<td>4 February 1913 as higher elementary 4 March 1914 as high school</td>
<td>1913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coburg High School</td>
<td>30 January 1912 as higher elementary 1916 as high school</td>
<td>1916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotch College (private)</td>
<td>1851</td>
<td>1916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geelong Grammar (private)</td>
<td>1855</td>
<td>1914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne Grammar (private)</td>
<td>7 April 1858</td>
<td>1858</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant dates for WHS and other long-established Victorian secondary schools.53

There are a number of private secondary schools (for example, Scotch College) that predate the secondary school established by the Williamstown Council, so it is not the oldest secondary school in Victoria. However, what
should be the ranking of WHS amongst government secondary schools?

Melbourne High School can trace its origins back to 1854 with the opening of the Melbourne Model School. However, the Model School was for primary students and infants (and, for a time, it also provided teacher training)—it was not a secondary school.\textsuperscript{54} The Continuation School provided the first Victorian government secondary education after the Model School was closed in 1904:

\textit{[Melbourne High} was originally named the Melbourne Continuation School. The intention was to cover the gap between state schools (which may have had classes up to year 8) and the University of Melbourne, hence the expression ‘Continuation’. Prior to 1905, post year 8 or secondary education was the sole domain of private church schools.

Melbourne High School took over the Model School building, which was constructed in 1854. The Model School closed at the end of 1904.\textsuperscript{55}

This is supported in Blake’s \textit{Vision and Realisation}: ‘The opening of the Melbourne Continuation School … in the old Model School building, Spring St, on 15\textsuperscript{th} of February 1905 marked the beginning of Victoria’s State Secondary school system.’\textsuperscript{56}

As a government secondary school, the Williamstown school, still on the original site in Pasco Street and using the original buildings, easily predates Melbourne High (1905), University High (1910), and Essendon High (1914), all of which have State heritage classification.\textsuperscript{57}

\textbf{Conclusion}

Williamstown High School began in 1867 as a local government school: secular, responsible to local government and providing both primary and secondary education. It was transferred to the State education system in 1914 as a secondary school.

Its origins and vicissitudes as a rare (possibly unique) locally initiated and controlled government school may provide fertile soil for history students, educationists and policy-makers seeking evidence of local autonomy and responsibilities for school councils and principals.

As the continuation of a local government secondary school commencing in 1867, Williamstown High School can justifiably claim to be the oldest government secondary school in Victoria. As the oldest government secondary school in the State, Williamstown High School deserves recognition as being of State significance.
However, Williamstown High School is classified on the Victorian Heritage Register as (only) of local significance. Furthermore, it has no foundation stone to indicate the date of its establishment and to acknowledge its place in the history of Victorian education. Both these matters, and a complete account of the history of the school are long overdue for review.

NOTES

4 Blake, p. 237.
5 Evans, p. 67.
7 Blake, vol. 1, p. 123.
8 Johnson, p. 3.
9 Johnson, p. 4.
10 Johnson, p. 4.
11 Johnson, p. 5.
12 Johnson, p. 5 & p. 12.
14 Evans, p. 167.
15 Johnson, p. 6 & p. 10.
16 *Williamstown Chronicle*, 8 June 1867, pp. 5–6.
17 Johnson, p. 5.
18 *Williamstown Chronicle*, 10 August 1867.
19 Johnson, p. 12.
20 Johnson p. 9 & p. 11.
21 Johnson, Appendix, Principals.
22 Johnson, p. 22.
23 Johnson, p. 23.
24 Evans, p. 167.


Williamstown Council Minute Book, 28 April 1914, Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV), Ref. 2133 0 007, p. 105.


Johnson, p. 43.

*Advertiser*, 2 February 1914.

Johnson, p. 42.

Johnson, p. 42.

Johnson, p. 42.

Williamstown Council Minute Book, 28 April 1914.


Williamstown Council Minute Book, 3 February 1914, PROV 2133 0 007, p. 82.

*Advertiser*, 14 February 1914.


*Advertiser*, 25 April 1914.

*Advertiser* 25 April 1914.

*Williamston Chronicle*, 25 April 1914.

*Advertiser*, 25 April 1914.

Johnson, p. 46.

Johnson, p. 148.

Correspondence between Miss Molland and the Education Department, 4 October 1914, PROV 10249 0 200; *Williamston Chronicle*, 26 December 1914, p. 105.

Johnson, p. 73 & p. 76.

*Williamstown Chronicle*, 8 June 1867, published the prospectus.


54 The Model School, Melbourne High School, viewed 26 September 2009.


56 Blake, vol. 3, p. 441.

57 Melbourne High School, University High School, Essendon High School, Victorian Heritage Database.
WARRIORS OF EMPIRE: POPULAR IMPERIALISM AND THE VICTORIAN SCOTTISH REGIMENT, 1898-1938

Ben Wilkie

Abstract
Through a case study of the Victorian Scottish Regiment, this article investigates the way in which imperial experiences influenced cultural identities, and explores Scotland’s military traditions and their relationship with Scottish culture in Australia. As organisations that operated under the auspices of the government, Scottish regiments competed with emerging Australian nationalism and, therefore, offer us the chance to place Scottish identities in their early-twentieth century Australian cultural context. While many celebrations of Scottish culture were harmless and sensible in relation to Australian politics, culture, and society, the regiment’s maintenance of Scottish identity was often far more assertive. Instances where the state was involved with Scottish cultural maintenance, therefore, complicate and nuance our understanding of how identity and culture was constructed and maintained among Scots in the diaspora.

Introduction

ON THE CENTRAL SHRINE of the Scottish National War Memorial, opened at Edinburgh Castle in 1927, are the words ‘The Outposts of Empire’ and the crests of each British dominion are displayed. On one pillar, a plaque states that the memorial is dedicated to ‘Scotsmen of All Ranks who Fell while Serving with Units of the British Dominions and Colonies, 1914–1918’. The memorial reflects a moment in
the history of Scottish identity when the relationship between Scotland and
the Empire was still strong enough for a claim to be laid for recognition
of Scotland’s contributions to Britain’s imperial project.¹

In the same year that the Edinburgh memorial was unveiled, trustees
of Scots Church in Melbourne granted space in the church’s grounds for
the erection of a memorial dedicated to soldiers of the Victorian Scottish
Regiment (VSR) who had died in service to the British Empire within
the Australian Imperial Forces during the First World War. Over the next
year, £1,000 was raised among the Scottish community in Melbourne and
Victoria, and the monument was unveiled at a special service at Scots
Church on Armistice Day in 1928.² What these two memorials draw
our attention to is how, within the British world, the four nations of the
British Isles had their own unique relationships to the imperial project,
and how the intricate connections between Scotland and the Empire were
not only reflected and reinforced at home, but also abroad in the colonies
and dominions of Britain. Australia was a stage on which the relationship
between Scotland and the British Empire was acted out through the
nineteenth century and into the twentieth century.

Military prowess formed a central pillar of Scottish national identity
in the nineteenth century. Although Scottish Highland regiments had been
prominent in the British military forces from the early eighteenth century,
their fame and public profile increased in the Victorian era, and they became
even more celebrated as Scotland’s national icons.³ As a core ideological
focus for British imperial identity, militarism took on distinctive national
characteristics in Scotland during the nineteenth century. The regiments
attracted huge publicity in British imperial artworks, advertising, and in
the press; they were the most celebrated of imperial soldiers. The growing
‘Victorian cult of the Highlander’ in the nineteenth century was also a
result of the royal patronage and Scotophilia of Queen Victoria, who took
a special interest in the Scottish Highlands and ‘her’ Highland regiments.⁴
Scottish military activity became increasingly ‘Highlandised’, and, in 1881,
even Lowland regiments were outfitted with Highland dress—although
some had adopted pipe bands and Highland regalia in previous decades.⁵

The cult of the Highlander spread with the global Scottish diaspora
towards the end of the nineteenth century. Scottish units in the
Commonwealth nations, argues Wendy Ugolini, aligned themselves and
drew upon a tradition of Highlandism and a ‘global politics of military
Scottishness’ that was well-established by the nineteenth century.⁶
Numerous Scottish regiments formed part of voluntary and part-time defence forces in Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, and Australia from the 1860s. The last British forces withdrew from Australia in 1870 and, in their place, the colonies raised their own armies and militia. Numerous Scottish units were established, including the Scottish Company of the Adelaide Regiment of Volunteer Rifles (1866), the Duke of Edinburgh’s Highlanders in Sydney (1868), and the Sydney Reserve Corps of Scottish Rifles (1885). The Scottish Volunteer Rifle Corps of Queensland emerged in 1896, and the South Australian Scottish Company in 1899, while there were Scottish detachments of militia units in Western Australia throughout the 1890s. The subject of this article, the VSR, was established in 1898 and existed until well after the Second World War.

Popular imperialism formed a central part of Scottish cultural identity at home and abroad in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Through a case study of the Victorian Scottish Regiment, this article investigates the way in which imperial experiences influenced cultural identities, and explores Scotland’s military traditions and their relationship with Scottish cultural activity in Australia. Additionally, as organisations that operated under the auspices of the government, Scottish regiments competed with emerging Australian nationalism and, therefore, offer the chance for us to place manifestations of Scottish identities in their early-twentieth century Australian cultural context.

In the same period, from the late-nineteenth century to the early-twentieth century, Scottish associational culture flourished in Australia. In Victoria alone between 1902 and 1910, 31 new Scottish organisations were established. Malcolm Prentis has suggested that this surge in Scottish cultural activity can be attributed to a combination of periods of increased immigration and responses to the emergence of Australian nationalism, thus providing impetus to the formation of specialised cultural preservation organisations. Whatever the underlying causes of an upsurge of Scottish cultural activity, from the late nineteenth century in Australia, Scottish associations proclaimed a hybridisation of Scottish and British loyalties. Like Scottish regiments, these societies and organisations belonged to a broader movement of British and imperial culture throughout the Empire, although it is worth noting that Scottish groups also emerged in non-imperial areas of settlement. In any case, Scottish associational culture has received much attention from historians in recent years, and studies
of Scottish ethnic organisations are at the forefront of much research on the Scottish diaspora.\textsuperscript{12}

This article extends these understandings of Scottish ethnic associations. Examined within the same category as St Andrew’s associations, Caledonian societies, Burns clubs, and so on, it is clear that Scottish regiments in Australia drew their culture and identity from a distinctly imperial tradition. While they organised Burns suppers, ran pipe bands, took part in Highland games, and partook in various other Scottish cultural and sporting activities, at the core of Scottish regiments was a romanticised martial tradition that emerged from, and was sustained by, the British Empire.

The unit considered in this article, the VSR, was outwardly Scottish, but it was also explicitly, and functionally, imperial and British. As Devine noted, Scottish regiments ‘were imperial units but their soldiers, strikingly distinctive in dress and appearance, were recognisably and unambiguously Scottish, champions of the nation’.\textsuperscript{13} Additionally, as Hew Strachan has observed, the modern tourist icon and shorthand symbol for Scotland—the kilted, feather-bonneted piper—is also a military symbol. He observes that it is a cultural artefact and a ‘Victorian reinvention of a Highland way of life’ that was preserved largely due to its incorporation into the British military forces.\textsuperscript{14} Strachan also argues that much of Scotland’s national identity was derived from ‘victory—and defeat—on the battlefield rather than through the vigour of its political institutions’.\textsuperscript{15} Indeed, during the First World War, he notes, ‘perceptions mattered’, and, in joining up to the British Army’s Scottish regiments, young men ‘confirmed their Unionism, and even more their identification with the empire’.\textsuperscript{16}

Scottish regiments were, therefore, both Scottish and British, manifestations of both national and imperial identity. Malcolm Prentis wrote that the military traditions of Scotland ‘were cultivated for the benefit of the British Empire and the Scots’. He further notes that ‘émigré communities of Scots continued these traditions wherever they settled’.\textsuperscript{17} Of such regiments in South Africa, John MacKenzie and Nigel Dalziel have demonstrated the role Highland regiments had in shaping southern African society in ways distinct from the influences of other settler groups from Britain.\textsuperscript{18} Jonathan Hyslop has explored the way that the relationship between Scotland and Empire was discernible in the British armed forces while stationed in South Africa during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.\textsuperscript{19} His study demonstrates that Scottish traditions, including immediately identifiable ‘Highland’ cultural expressions, as well as Scottish
militarism and martial culture in a broader sense, within the British military were a patent manifestation of the Scots-Empire relationship during Britain’s presence in the colony. He notes that, ‘as the military prowess of the diasporic Scots was part of Scotland’s claim to recognition within the British polity, an assertion of Scottishness in the military sphere could be used by colonists in southern Africa to reinforce their own claim to be recognised by the imperial centre as an important part of the Empire’. Elizabeth Buettner covered similar territory in her study of private and public celebrations of Scottishness in late-imperial India. She argued that ‘the Scots had expressed satisfaction that their patriotisms, for Scotland and for Empire, were compatible and mutually beneficial’. This article adds an Australian example to these studies, and extends the discussion by focusing on the regiment’s role in the wider milieu of Scottish cultural and social activities.

The Australian Scottish regiments provide a useful comparator with units in other imperial destinations. Canada’s military, for instance, has always had a high number of distinctively Scottish units. Australia has never had any ethnic units in its wartime defence forces; the VSR and other Scottish regiments were peacetime militia units. Furthermore, setting them apart from other Scottish cultural associations, Scottish regiments operated under the auspices of the Australian government. The VSR had to compete directly with emerging Australian patriotism reflected in the government’s own increasing tendency towards promoting an ‘Australian’ identity at Federation and especially during the flowering of nationalism in the aftermath of the First World War. Many celebrations of Scottish culture were innocuous and pragmatic in relation to Australian politics, culture, and society. The regiment’s maintenance of Scottish and imperial identities was both supportive of, and oppositional to, Australia’s own burgeoning imperial culture.

**Australian Nationalism and the VSR, 1898–1919**

The VSR was established in August 1898 following calls from the Scottish community and various societies—including the Scottish Thistle Clubs of Victoria, Footscray, and Williamstown, and the Caledonian Society of Melbourne—for the raising of a Scottish military unit in the colony. The VSR became a militia unit in Victoria’s colonial volunteer military forces. Immediately after Federation, when there was still little appetite for a standing army and reluctance to allocate funding to national defence,
the regiment became part of the volunteer Citizens Military Forces (CMF) from 1903.\textsuperscript{24} Its first formal commanding officer for six years was Sir Malcolm McEacharn, then the mayor of Melbourne.\textsuperscript{25} From the outset, the VSR met opposition from some government and military officials concerned with the national unity and identity of Australia’s armed forces. In 1897, the Caledonian Society of Melbourne had unsuccessfully called on the military commandant of the Victorian colony, Major General Sir Charles Holled-Smith, to establish a Scottish regiment, but he would not sanction its formation. The Minister of Defence, William McCulloch, told the Scottish Thistle Club of Victoria: ‘he was not sure that it was desirable to create national distinctions in this colony where we are properly one nation.’\textsuperscript{26} Nonetheless, McCulloch eventually agreed to the formation of a Scottish corps. This was despite the Council of Defence’s disapproval on the grounds of the regiment becoming a financial burden, but McCulloch argued: ‘it was sentiment and not a question of trifling pay … which actuated [Scottish men] in becoming members of the corps.’\textsuperscript{27} Holled-Smith wrote to McCulloch in July 1898 asking the Minister to reconsider his approval of the regiment, and asked, ‘if a Scottish Regiment were formed, why should there not be an English, an Irish, and an Australian corps?’\textsuperscript{28} Opposition to the proposal from the government continued up until the regiment’s establishment in 1898. Debating the matter in the Legislative Assembly, one member said he ‘could not see the wisdom of forming a Scottish regiment in Australia. Scotsmen, Irishmen, and Englishmen were all Australians here’.\textsuperscript{29} On another occasion, one objector was concerned that ‘the Scottish regiment would introduce sectional differences, and there would soon be a movement for an Irish regiment, and there would be something of the Orange and Green trouble over again’.\textsuperscript{30} The military commandant, Holled-Smith, continued to oppose the creation of the regiment, and his response to the proposal reflects emerging desires to construct a cohesive Australian identity and contribution in the British Empire. Federation and the federal movement was not ‘the mature expression or consummation of pre-existing Australian nationalism’.\textsuperscript{31} Rather, as Ken Inglis notes, Federation did little to heighten understandings of what being Australian meant, but politicians hoped it would generate a ‘quasi-religious sense of common purpose’ among the people of Australia.\textsuperscript{32} Holled-Smith’s letter to the Department of Defence argued:
Englishmen, Irishmen, Scotchmen, and Australians can fight well enough shoulder to shoulder … I hope soon to see these colonies federated, and then if required the troops of whatever nationality will fight as Australian soldiers for the defence of Australia and the preservation of the empire.³³

Nevertheless, on 29 August, the Minister of Defence officially approved the formation of ‘a corps of Volunteers to be designated the Victorian Scottish Regiment’.³⁴ In September 1898, the constitutions and regulations of the regiment were reproduced in the *Victorian Government Gazette*, featuring this requirement: ‘No person was to be engaged unless he was born in Scotland or of Scottish descent and between the ages of 18 and 35.’³⁵ One member of the regiment, who enlisted in 1899, remembered that a certain lieutenant ‘did not care whether men were long or short, but they had to be fully Scottish or of parents who were both Scottish’.³⁶ In 1901 and 1904, when the federal government transferred the volunteer system of unpaid colonial military forces to a system of partially paid militia, the VSR became part of the Commonwealth Military Forces under the framework of the *Defence Act 1903*.³⁷ The regulations and constitution of the regiment, however, remained intact.³⁸

The membership base of the VSR in the first years of its existence was diverse. The president of the Caledonian Society of Melbourne, Malcolm McEacharn, was the regiment’s first commander and was also a prominent businessman and Melbourne’s lord mayor between 1897 and 1900, and again from 1903. Donald Percy, the son of a Dundee construction worker, joined the regiment in 1910. After the First World War, he worked as a baker for the Victorian Railways until he retired in 1957. James Stewart made a career of soldiering and joined the VSR as soon as it was established—he was a ‘king and country man with a passion for soldiering’, and was commander of various units until, during the Second World War, the defence forces would no longer allow him to enlist due to his age.³⁹

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the regiment became a part of the broader Scottish cultural landscape in Victoria. It participated in sports meetings and hosted concerts, and the regimental pipe band performed at various social events. One of its first major engagements was a march at Flemington racecourse in May 1901, on the occasion of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York’s visit to the newly federated colonies.⁴⁰ In 1909, the VSR asserted its Scottish identity in relation to other non-ethnic CMF units and replaced the standard Victorian militia motto, *Aut pace aut bello* (‘In peace and in war’), with the motto of the famous Highland
Black Watch Regiment (Royal Highlanders), *Nemo me impune lacessit.* Loosely translated, the motto means ‘No one attacks me with impunity’.

In 1911, because of a growing sense of the need for a larger, more credible military force, the Australian government introduced a compulsory training scheme for all able-bodied men between the ages of 18 and 21. Subsequently, in 1911, the VSR was re-designated the 52nd (Hobson’s Bay) Infantry. Unlike other colonial units, such as the New South Wales Lancers, that ‘resented losing their identities’ in the reorganisations of the early twentieth century, the VSR retained its unique identity and continued to wear the Scottish dress for which they had become known. By 1913, they were still called upon to provide entertainment and spectacle at Highland Gatherings and other Scottish cultural events around Victoria. From the beginning, therefore, the regiment had undertaken dual roles as a government military unit and a Scottish cultural organisation.

Provisions of the *Defence Act 1903* precluded the conscripted men of the CMF from overseas service when the First World War broke out in 1914. However, pre-war attempts to raise an expeditionary force included proposals to impose certain criteria on men who had enlisted in the existing ‘national regiments’ of the militia. St George’s English Rifle Regiment, the New South Wales Irish Rifle Regiment, the New South Wales Scottish Rifles, and the VSR were all considered such ‘national’ units. The Inspector General of the Military Forces of Australia, Major-General George Kirkpatrick, proposed in 1911, and again in 1912 and 1913, that these regiments should be able to retain their ‘racial character’, including their distinct uniforms, and should ‘be allowed to enrol their nationals from all areas within reach of battalion headquarters’. One condition of serving with these units, however, was that recruits would have to ‘agree to serve outside the limits of the Commonwealth’.

Edward Millen, who became Minister for Defence in 1913, was broadly sympathetic to the idea of Scottish regiments and believed in their retaining their uniforms. John Stewart, the secretary of the Highland Society of New South Wales, wrote Millen a letter in 1913 explaining that the distinctive uniform of Scottish regiments ‘was symbolic of the loyalty and patriotism towards the Empire of Scotsmen and their descendants throughout the world’. Millen was ‘entirely sympathetic’ and was ‘anxious to see the kilt retained’. Later in 1913, the Australian parliament passed a resolution that ‘it is undesirable that the distinctive national uniform of certain regiments should be abolished in connection with the military forces of Australia’.
However, Millen’s eventual successor as defence minister in 1914, George Pearce, was opposed to the idea of ethnic units and believed that the military forces should embody a uniquely Australian identity. Indeed, the president of the Victorian Scottish Union said in June 1913 that he ‘fears that Senator Pearce does not intend to carry out the terms of this resolution’.47 In September 1913, at a meeting of the Victorian Scottish Union in Colac, members commended Millen’s sympathy for their cause and ‘condemned the action of [Pearce] in taking upon himself such a responsibility regarding a matter which was so dear to all hearts of Scotsmen’.48 Pearce later argued in December of 1913 that one ‘advantage of the present system is … that we have practically the same uniform for all arms’. He told the Senate that it was their job to ‘create a national feeling’ and that Millen’s sympathy to the Scottish regiments was ‘going to break that down’ by promoting separate ethnic identities. Pearce said that to support and retain ethnic units such as the VSR would ‘make men look upon themselves as Scotchmen, Irishmen, Englishmen, or Welshmen, instead of being, as we want them to realize, what they are—Australians, and proud of the fact’.49 Indeed, echoing the concerns of those opposed to the original formation of a Scottish regiment in 1897, Pearce said:

> What does an army fight on? It fights on the sentiment that animates the individuals who compose it. If our men are going to fight for this country, we want them to fight for it because it is a country which they love and are proud of. We want them to be proud because they are Australians, not because their fathers and mothers were Scotch, Irish, English, or Welsh. I am the son of an Englishman, but I am proud to be an Australian, and I never want to be called anything else.50

Ultimately, Pearce became Minister for Defence in 1914, and his sentiments were more broadly reflected in the rationalisation of Australia’s armed forces at this time and the disappearance of many ethnic units. His stance against the distinct uniforms of Scottish regiments had been evident during his earlier tenures as Minister for Defence from 1908 to 1909 and again from 1910 to 1913. For example, Scottish societies in South Australia and New South Wales tried to resist the abolition of the kilt in their regiments under Pearce. The Caledonian Society of South Australia and the Highland Society of New South Wales attempted to avoid the eradication of kilts in the Scottish units that were destined to become absorbed into the Commonwealth forces. To the societies’ dismay, between 1910 and 1913, the G Company (Scottish) of the South Australian Infantry Regiment
disbanded and the New South Wales Scottish Rifles was merged and was absorbed into the CMF and no longer wore a Scottish uniform, ‘owing to the radical alterations in the military system’.

With widespread support, the Victorian Scottish Union and its associated societies and organisations across the state protested in favour of retaining the VSR and its uniform. Indeed, even the Caledonian society from the small rural town of Charlton in north-west Victoria filed a written protest with the Department of Defence, arguing against the abolition of kilted regiments. The VSR managed to retain its distinct Scottish identity relative to other CMF units, in spite of opposition from government figures in the defence ministry such as Pearce, and was unique in this regard in the 1910s and 1920s.

In accordance with the provisions of the 1903 Act, instead of calling up the militia units as they already existed, the voluntary Australian Imperial Force (AIF) was raised at the outbreak of the First World War. While Scottish regiments did not serve per se, the 5th Battalion AIF was a common destination for members of the VSR; in order to maintain a degree of esprit de corps, men from certain militia units were often paired with specific AIF battalions. In the case of the VSR, along with its soldiers, it also transferred its traditions and uniform to the new battalion. The war diary of the 5th Battalion notes that it was recruited from the ‘Territorial Area of the 13th Brigade and from past members of the old Victorian Scottish Regiment and the Victorian Rifles’. Furthermore, the battalion’s headquarters were ‘fixed at the Sturt Street Drill Hall, South Melbourne’ where the VSR had also been headquartered.

The New South Wales Scottish Regiment and the 30th Battalion AIF, and the South Australian Scottish Regiment and the 27th Battalion AIF were all examples of new expeditionary forces that similarly recruited from, and informally maintained, the traditions of militia units in this manner. The 5th Battalion was raised in the VSR drill hall, and both officers and other ranks of the original VSR brought their Scottish uniforms with them when they went to sign up for the new battalion. The 5th Battalion’s official historian, Frank W. Speed, wrote that ‘nearly the whole of the A Company and part of the B Company were old Scottish men, and the skirl of bagpipes was heard in their lines—much to the torment of neighbouring companies’.

The 5th Battalion’s first commanding officer was Lieutenant Colonel David Sydney Wanliss of the original VSR, and under him the unit eventually served at Gallipoli and on the Western Front. Wanliss’s
biographer, Bill Gammage, wrote: ‘like his father he was proud of having been born in Scotland’. When he was appointed commanding officer of the 5th Battalion on 18 August 1914, he ‘tried to fill it with men of Scottish ancestry’. Wanliss was successful in recruiting approximately a quarter of the battalion from the VSR and from men with Scottish surnames. Speed wrote in the official unit history: ‘naturally, the non-Scottish majority were horrified at the thought of wearing the kilt.’ Nearly a quarter of the first AIF were born in Britain, and over one-tenth of the early recruits were Presbyterian, indicating a strong Scottish element among the overseas-born soldiers.

During the course of the war, the battalion amalgamated with others and formed the 57th Battalion of a newly expanded AIF. Despite the rationalisation of Australia’s defence forces, the VSR maintained its traditions; throughout their service, it was reported that former members of the VSR continued to wear their distinctive Glengarry caps. After the war, when the government disbanded the AIF in 1921, militia units were reorganised and re-designated according to the AIF units that had fought. Consequently, the VSR became the 5th Battalion and inherited that unit’s battle honours. Four years later in 1925, permission was granted for the 5th Battalion to adopt the traditional title of the unit—the ‘Victorian Scottish Regiment’.

Thus, throughout its formation, peacetime activities, and active service, the VSR maintained its distinct Scottish traditions in relation to other, non-ethnic CMF units, in spite of the Australian identity promoted by military officials and members of parliament.

After the war, as before, the regiment faced an increasingly assertive Australian nationalism embodied in the country’s own armed forces. Popular media and war correspondents invoked the landing at Gallipoli—and later deeds in France and Palestine—and the qualities of Australia’s soldiers throughout the war to build a national identity. From the moment news reached Australia of the assault of the Dardanelles in 1915, says historian Ken Inglis, Australians ‘were told that their country had attained nationhood’. The involvement of the AIF in battle was a ‘baptism of fire’ for Australia and it was popularly believed that the nation had come of age in war. The perceived qualities and spirit of Australian soldiers in Europe became the ideal prototype for all Australians at home. Of course, the values embodied in the Anzac tradition are not unique to Australia. As Inglis writes, ‘it is easier for inhabitants of an island continent than for other human beings to imagine that their values are peculiar to themselves’, and
we find many features of the Anzac mythology in other national stories, such as those of Canada, Italy, Turkey, and the United States.66

During the 1920s and 1930s, the Anzac legend was both imperial and national, thus providing competition for Scottish nationalism and notions of the Scots’ place within the empire. Although the legend celebrates egalitarianism and—by consequence of their being perceived to be the antithesis of this—a disdain towards upper-class English officers, the tradition was not commonly anti-British, at least until the after Second World War.67 Allusions to Empire were ubiquitous. Australia’s expeditionary army was the Australian Imperial Force, and the title became a badge of honour when (some) survivors joined the Returned Sailors’ and Soldiers’ Imperial League of Australia. Others, so disillusioned by the experience of an imperial war and perceptive of the anti-authoritarian streak in the Anzac tradition, rallied the legend to campaign for the rights of workers and lament the oppression of the labouring classes.68

Notions of identity in Australia were still linked strongly with ideas of Britishness during the interwar period. The Age said in 1926 that Australia arose ‘into full bloom of nationhood’ at Gallipoli. The Australian soldiers ‘had proved themselves worthy of the highest traditions of the British race’.69 Additionally, the story went, while the Australian nation was born on 25 April, it was because Australians had secured their position in the history of the British Empire. Thus Peter Board, the NSW Director of Education, said that Australia ‘became an active partner in a worldwide Empire … On 25 April history and Australia’s history were fused, and fused at white heat. Never again can the history of this continent of ours stand detached from world history’.70

In the 1920s and 1930s, schools, churches, and governments perpetuated the stories and values embodied in the legend. The Anzacs were memorialised in public spaces and on honour rolls in every town and city in Australia, where Anzac Day services began within a year of the landing at Gallipoli.71 Intertwined with the Britishness of early twentieth century Australia, the Anzac legend became the national birth story while simultaneously giving rise to Australia’s own warrior mythology and imperial military identity.72 In such an environment, the Scottish regiment in Victoria pressed on, and, with some setbacks, continued to assert its martial and cultural traditions.
The VSR and Cultural Maintenance, 1919–1938

The years between the disbanding of the AIF and the outbreak of the Second World War were relatively austere for the VSR and the CMF in general. In addition to reduced government funding of the defence forces, the Scullin Labor government ended the compulsory training scheme that had provided the militia units with a constant flow of recruits, and the financial impact of the Great Depression led to fewer volunteers and fewer training opportunities. Nevertheless, the VSR and the 5th Battalion continued to operate and participate in public ceremonies and cultural activities.

The experience of the First World War added a further dimension to the regiment’s activities. In 1922, the VSR established an annual memorial service at Scots Church in Collins Street, Melbourne. In 1924, the service was preceded by a march from the corner of Queens and Collins Streets to the church, which was led by three pipe bands including that of the regiment and the Highland Society. The Argus reported: ‘the large representation of the ‘Fighting Fifth’ … proved that the opportunity to renew the associations formed during the war is welcomed by the survivors.’ The newspaper also observed that the origin of the 5th Battalion in the Scottish militia regiment ‘is a source of pride’. At the service, the senior chaplain, the Rev. D. Macrae Stewart, exemplified the multiple layers of identity coexisting in Australia at this time. He commended the ‘courage, and sacrifice, and heroism’ of the 5th Battalion and the VSR, and said:

Australia through them had been lifted to a new honour … the members of the old Scottish Regiment, who enlisted in the Fifth Regiment … carried their Scottish patriotism into the struggle. They were good Australians because they were loyal to the traditions and ideals of independence and liberty which came to them in their Scottish blood.

Two years later at the 1926 annual service at Scots Church, the Rev. Dr Norman Maclean told the gathered members of the VSR and 5th Battalion that ‘to the dead we owed the existence of the British Empire’. Members of the VSR were at once patriotic Scots, loyal Britons, and ‘good Australians’. It was at this service that moves were first made to erect a monument to those soldiers of the VSR who had died at war.

In 1929 and 1930, the already lean militia decreased in size even further with the decision to amalgamate or disband many units, and, as a result, five infantry battalions and two light horse regiments ceased operation; nine more infantry battalions disbanded in 1931. The official Australian war
historian, Gavin Long, wrote that service in the militia during the interwar period ‘conferred little prestige … an Australian who made the militia a hobby was likely to be regarded by his acquaintances as a peculiar fellow with an eccentric taste for uniforms and the exercise of petty authority’.  

Around 175 officers, non-commissioned officers, and private soldiers remained after 1929 to establish the new 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Victorian Scottish Regiment). The regiment became affiliated with the Gordon Highlanders in Scotland in 1930 and, asserting its Scottish identity once more, in 1933, it began to wear a rosette of Gordon tartan underneath the official ‘Rising Sun’ hat badge of the Australian defence forces. Soon after, the VSR restored the ‘Rampant Lion’ symbol as its official regimental badge. The regiment gained permission to wear the kilt once more, and Scottish societies clamoured to raise £1,200 to outfit trainees in the new uniform, which also included a scarlet jacket, hose, a sporran, and a Glengarry cap.
Throughout the 1930s, the VSR extended its activities into various social and cultural pursuits. The VSR equalled Caledonian societies as an important institution for the maintenance and perpetuation of Scottish culture and heritage in Melbourne and around Victoria, including provincial towns such as Ararat and Ballarat. Indeed, twenty-six members of the VSR formed a guard of honour in full dress uniform at a wedding at Ararat in 1940. The groom, a member of the regiment, wore his Scottish uniform, as did his best man. With the assistance of the Royal Caledonian Society of Melbourne, the regiment would also frequently hold social functions at its South Melbourne drill hall, with the aim of raising funds for their expensive uniforms. The exclusive Melbourne Scots club sponsored a Highland ball in October 1938 with all proceeds going to the VSR with the aim of

*Victorian Scottish Regiment pipe band with young girl in kilt holding a small West Highland white terrier as a mascot.*

*Argus Newspaper Collection of Photographs, State Library of Victoria.*
funding their pipe bands and uniforms. A Scottish dancing class formed by the regiment in the early 1930s provided Highland dancing classes and concerts, and music was performed at these functions by the regimental pipe band. Many of the features of Scottish associations were evident in the activities of the VSR, which arguably had a similar significance to the various Scottish organisations in Victoria for the maintenance of Scottish culture.

One individual who played an integral role in the cultural activities of the regiment was Pipe-Major Duncan McLennan, the head of pipers of the VSR and of the Victorian Police Pipe Band. The *Australian Women’s Weekly* told readers in 1958 that McLennan was ‘a big, brawny Scotsman’ and that his ‘eyes glow and his Scottish accent becomes broader whenever he is asked to talk about pipes and their music’. He joined the VSR in 1936, after spending five years as the Pipe-Major of the Hamilton Pipe Band from south-west Victoria. McLennan subsequently served with the 2/5 Battalion in World War II, was wounded in Greece and captured in Crete, where he spent four years in a POW camp. After the war, he moved to Ballarat and took up a position as cadet instructor and leader of the Ballarat Highland Pipe Band and the Ballarat Ladies Pipe Band. McLennan was proud of his Scottish blood—his grandchildren were made to wear tartan tracksuits when he visited—and he told the *Women’s Weekly* that his family had been piping since ‘we were made standard-bearers to the Scottish kings’. His involvement in the VSR and in its maintenance of Scottish military tradition is unsurprising.

By the late 1930s, the VSR had expanded well beyond its traditional functions as a militia unit and into the role of maintaining other, non-martial, Scottish traditions. The regiment also took on charitable and philanthropic roles. In 1937, the Victorian Scottish Regiment Welfare Association was established. The association’s aim was ‘Assisting the Commanding Officer in encouraging and developing social and sporting activities, and the welfare generally of the VSR; also to aid in recruiting and securing liaison between the Regiment and the community generally by co-operation of citizens and employers.’ The growth of the VSR’s cultural activities, however, would soon be overshadowed by preparations for combat.

From 1935 onwards, largely due to the looming threat of a new world war, the Australian government increased funding and attention to its armed forces. In 1938, it proposed to strengthen the militia through increased funding and recruitment drives, and by June 1939, the CMF had risen from
35,000 men in 1938 to 80,000 men by 1939. With a renewed emphasis on Australia’s military forces, the VSR ran recruitment campaigns and assessed potential members for their Scottish ancestry, thus continuing with a tradition that seemed to have begun with Wanliss’s selective recruitment of old VSR comrades and men with Scottish names into the 5th Battalion AIF. In 1936, *The Argus* reported of the VSR, ‘every man who enlists must satisfy the regiment sergeant-major that he is of Scots descent’.

The recruiting process seems to have been informal and often conducted in good humour. ‘So far the regimental sergeant-major has been most impressed by a young man who bears the name Fergus Buchanan Macadie’, said *The Argus* in 1936, noting ‘he will be made a cadet lance-corporal on the strength of it.’ Likewise, another applicant, when asked for evidence of his ancestry, said ‘with a burr, that his father spoke Gaelic, drank whisky, and played the bagpipes. He was accepted’. The regimental sergeant-major had a test for doubtful cases: ‘Lapsing into broad Doric, he talks of the fisher girls from Lewis and Harris singing Gaelic songs in the early evening. The Sassenach shows polite interest, but the real Scot, even though he be Australian-born, is unable to conceal a thrill.’ Throughout the 1930s, advertisements for new recruits to the regiment often contained a statement to the effect that potential enlistments must be of Scottish descent.

In response to the outbreak of the Second World War, the Australian government announced on 5 September 1938, that the militia would serve in Australia, and the 5th Battalion (VSR) was sent to Western Australia and then Darwin for garrison duties throughout the war. As was the case at the outbreak of the First World War, the *Defence Act 1903* precluded CMF members from compulsory service overseas. Instead, the government raised a second Australian Imperial Force from volunteers, and the VSR maintained its traditions, including the unit colour patch, through the AIF 2/5th Battalion. In the initial recruiting and training period, the VSR supplied the 2/5th Battalion with its pipes and drums; the music of the battalion was ‘the envy of neighbouring units’, and their performances and parades ‘always attracted a crowd of spectators’. In their final period of training in the Middle East, the battalion presented a memorial chair to St. Andrew’s Church (Scots Memorial) in Jerusalem, and dedicated it to the ‘memory of Victorian Scots who laid down their lives for the deliverance of the Holy Land’. The 2/5th served throughout the war at Bardia and Tobruk in North Africa, Greece, Syria, and finally in New Guinea. The battalion disbanded in early February 1946. While war seemed to have
obliterated ethnic distinctions and assertions of identity, elements of the VSR’s cultural background were retained in the 2/5th Battalion. Indeed, new and old members of the battalion alike tended to refer to it as the ‘Victorian Scottish’ more than they did as the ‘5th battalion’—such was the strength of its origins.

The post-Second World War history of the VSR is beyond the scope of this article, but a brief outline illustrates a continuing engagement with Scottish cultural identity throughout the twentieth century. In 1948, the 5th Battalion (VSR) was re-raised once again as part of the CMF. During the 1950s, Scottish regiments in Australia re-affirmed their alliances with regiments in Scotland; the VSR with the Gordon Highlanders, and the South Australian Scottish Regiment with the Seaforth Highlanders. The 34th Battalion (The Illawarra Regiment) was partnered with the King’s Own Scottish Borderers.

In 1960, the national service scheme was suspended and, as a result, the militia was greatly reduced in size. The VSR disbanded in the reorganisation of Australia’s military forces, and its members were absorbed into the 1st Battalion of the newly raised Royal Victoria Regiment. Over the next two decades, Australia’s army and the CMF would be reorganised multiple times. In 1982, the 5th/6th Battalion, Royal Victoria Regiment (RVR) was raised in Melbourne and continued the traditions of the Scottish regiment established in 1898. On the centenary of the raising of the original VSR in 1998, the 5th Battalion’s colours were laid up in Scots Church, Melbourne, taking their place alongside the memorial that was dedicated in 1928 to soldiers of the VSR that had died at war. In November 2007, a second memorial was unveiled at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital. The plaque commemorates soldiers of the VSR who died in conflict between 1898 and 1960, and reads ‘Disbanded But No’ Deid Yet’. Today, B Company, 5/6 RVR, and its Pipes and Drums, maintains the traditions and uniform of the original VSR.

Conclusion

Despite strong promotion of Australian identity in the military forces, the Victorian Scottish Regiment preserved its martial and cultural traditions for a number of decades. It achieved this in peacetime through its broader engagement with Scottish cultural activity and relationships with other Scottish associations—such as the Royal Caledonian Society of Melbourne—in Melbourne and throughout Victoria. During wars,
battalions maintained a semblance of the regiment’s identity informally through recruitment procedures and by retaining some of the distinctive dress and traditions of Scottish militia units. Much like other Scottish associations, the regiment maintained cultures and traditions in the diaspora and reflected migrants’ own internal identifications with Scottish nationality and British loyalty.

Unlike other Scottish cultural activities and associations, however, the regiment operated under the auspices of the Australian government. It had to compete directly with emerging Australian patriotism reflected in the military’s own increasing tendency towards promoting an ‘Australian’ identity, both at Federation and during the burst of national self-identification in the aftermath of the First World War. While the celebrations of Scottish culture in Australia were often innocuous and pragmatic in relation to Australian politics, culture, and society, the regiment’s maintenance of Scottish identity was far more assertive, especially between 1898 and 1919. Instances where the state was involved with Scottish cultural maintenance, therefore, complicate and nuance our understanding of how identity and culture was constructed and maintained among Scots in the diaspora. The VSR provides an exemplar of how a Scottish ‘imperial’ identity was maintained through martial and cultural tradition in Australia.

NOTES

2 Argus, 14 November 1927; 12 November 1928.

7 Devine, p. 221.


9 Prentis, pp. 197–198.

10 Prentis, p. 201.


15 Strachan, p. 315.

16 Strachan, p. 328.

17 Prentis, p. 143.


20 Hyslop, p. 97.


22 Prentis, p. 146.


27 *Argus*, 20 July 1898.

28 *Argus*, 17 August 1898.

29 *Argus*, 10 August 1898.

30 *Argus*, 25 August 1898.


33 *Argus*, 17 August 1898.

34 Speed, *Esprit de Corps*, p. 3.

35 *Victorian Government Gazette no. 83*, September 9, 1898; Speed, *Esprit De Corps*, p. 3.

36 Speed, p. 6.

37 Grey, p. 69.

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THE APPRENTICESHIP OF RICHARD SEDDON

Richard Turner

Abstract

Richard Seddon, New Zealand’s longest serving Premier (1893 to 1906) led a government that created one of the most radical states in the world. Subsequent mythologising emphasises Seddon’s individual exceptionalism by sidelining family and community. Yet Seddon is a product of a colonising process in which kinship and community ties are prominent. Through exploring Seddon’s journey from Lancashire, at age sixteen, to his becoming mayor of the goldmining town of Kumara, via the Victorian goldfields and the Williamstown Railway Workshops, this article explores the commonality of experience, vision and ambition that drove the British colonial settlers of the ‘New Britains’.

IN 1897, RICHARD SEDDON, New Zealand’s premier, his wife, Louisa, and their two oldest daughters undertook the long sea voyage to England to attend Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee celebrations. They were feted throughout their visit. The daughters wrote that they were ‘simply dazzled’, feeling they had ‘truly arrived in fairyland’. If London dazzled them, it was their father who dazzled London. A London weekly profiled Seddon with the introduction: ‘The fairy tale of Dick Seddon is even more romantic than that of Dick Whittington’. Seddon is quoted:

I thought of that image of Macaulay’s New Zealander when ... I looked out the window yonder on the evening of our arrival and ... put in my mind of when ... I had stood ... a penniless youngster of eighteen, wondering in what corner of the world I should fight the battle of life.
The Sketch finished: ‘as he spoke our eyes involuntarily stole to ... the heap of cards on an adjacent table bearing the names of the most wealthy and powerful personages in the Kingdom.’² How was it that a man of no great wealth, from one of Britain’s smallest colonies, whom Beatrice Webb, the famous English socialist and social reformer, described as a ‘gross, illiterate but forceful man, more like a trade union official in such an industry as steel-smelting than an MP’³, came to command such attention from the wealthy and powerful at the centre of the great Empire?

‘King Dick’ Seddon remains New Zealand’s longest serving premier or prime minister, leading a Liberal government from 1893 until his death in 1906. New Zealand historian Keith Sinclair says the problem the Liberal Government faced when first elected in 1891 ‘may be summed up in one word: misery’.⁴ New Zealand had been mired in depression since 1878. The great achievement of Seddon and his fellow Liberals was to recognise that the realisation of the pioneering dream required political action to regulate economic and social conditions. This led to ‘the amalgam of democratic and humanitarian legislation that made New Zealand for a time the most radical state in the world’.⁵ Webb’s description of Seddon was snobbish, but reflected the prevalent European view that only the educated upper classes could build a stable and orderly society. French political scientists, American radicals, English statesmen and political philosophers made pilgrimages to the distant colony to observe, and came away astonished by the seeming lack of political theorising behind the Liberals’ radicalism. They concluded it was the response of practical men to practical problems and owed nothing to theory. Sinclair argues that this is nonsense and that it is ‘impossible to understand their legislation except in relation to contemporary theory’.⁶ This is true, but the youthful practical experiences of Seddon and of his contemporaries on their colonial journeys are equally vital to the development of the particular brand of colonial liberalism that developed in New Zealand and in Victoria.

Seddon’s government and its political program have been extensively analysed, but little attention has been paid to Seddon’s personal migratory journey from Lancashire, at the age of sixteen. This journey took him through two highly politicised cultures, the Victorian goldfields and the Williamstown Railway Workshops, and onto the West Coast of New Zealand where he began his political career as mayor of the gold mining town of Kumara. Seddon’s sojourn in Victoria (1862–1866) was brief, but he regarded his experiences there as pivotal in developing his theories of
'modern humanitarian government' that would ‘permit the very largest number of its people to be healthy, happy human beings’. This article addresses these neglected years and considers how these experiences contributed to Seddon’s political approach in New Zealand. It also argues that a considerable degree of mythology developed around the political persona of Seddon that obscures the real achievement of this remarkable man.

The myth of Seddon emphasises his individual exceptionalism, by excluding family and community from his biography. Yet Seddon is a product of a wider colonising process in which kinship and community ties are prominent. These settlers’ stories illustrate the success of Anglophone colonialism and its dynamism as it transplanted itself to far-flung frontiers. John Darwin argues in After Tamerlane that, with ruthless energy, settlers transferred and transplanted ‘the apparatus, physical and intellectual, of an industrial civilisation’. This resulted in a ‘dynamic fusion of Old and New Europe which underlay its success’. James Belich describes much the same dynamic processes when discussing ‘the exploding Wests’ in Replenishing the Earth. Seddon’s journey, from his beginnings among a market-oriented, entrepreneurial small farming class in south-west Lancashire to New Zealand where he forged an early political career based around family formation, town building and economic diversification, illustrate the processes discussed by Darwin and Belich.

Settler communities and colonial liberalism across the ‘New Wests’ of the Anglophone world are marked by their sameness, despite the need to adapt to particular environmental situations. There are significant commonalities between settler experience in Victoria, New South Wales (NSW), New Zealand and the American frontier and the liberal programs that resulted. Darwin says that ‘the remarkable feature of the American frontier was not so much the torrent of farmers who moved west, but how rapidly towns followed in their wake’. Towns grew much more quickly in size than the population as a whole in the American West, Victoria, NSW and New Zealand. Gold played a substantial role in initiating this rapid growth, but many of those gold rush towns and cities survived the exhaustion of gold. There is also a growing consensus among historians that earlier frontier myths greatly exaggerated the levels of violence in the American West, and, in particular, on the Californian goldfields, and that the gold rush towns were substantially orderly. This orderliness seemed to increase with the opening up of each successive goldfield culminating on
the West Coast of New Zealand, which ‘by comparison with California and Australia ... was downright orderly’. \textsuperscript{13} Geoffrey Serle argues that, despite a level of violence, ‘it is rather the moderation and continual regard for authority by the diggers which stand out’. \textsuperscript{14} Where violent revolt broke out, as at Eureka Stockade in Ballarat, it was because authorities failed to treat the diggers with the respect they felt due to them as citizens with full and equal rights.

It is this insistence that British colonial settlers of the ‘New Wests’, of whatever class, should enjoy the same full and equal rights that drove men like Seddon, Graham Berry, Victorian premier three times between 1875 and 1881, and Henry Parkes, New South Wales premier five times between 1871 and 1891, and drove their wider kinship, community and friendship networks. This equality of rights took on a distinctly utilitarian outlook. The right to health care, a good education, a secure economic future, and to a share in the new lands was what mattered, not the rhetoric of the European liberal constitutionalists concerned with democratic, but not economic, rights. It is not surprising that all those European political scientists, radicals and political philosophers who made pilgrimages to the distant colony came away astonished by the seeming lack of political theorising behind the Liberals’ radicalism.

In mythologising his individual exceptionalism, Seddon’s biographers have stripped from his story the family, kinship networks and communities that were so influential in the shaping of his humanitarian political program. Furthermore, Seddon has been promoted into the educated middle classes with a grammar school headmaster and classical scholar for a father. Whether this myth was perpetuated by Seddon himself, his family or his biographers, it demonstrates how strongly held were the prejudices, expressed so forthrightly by Beatrice Webb, against someone from the lower orders rising to lead a British government and implementing a liberal reform program as far reaching as his government’s. Graham Berry and Henry Parkes contended with the same prejudices from better educated colleagues and opponents. Yet the enduring popularity and political successes of the three men were anchored in their origins in the entrepreneurial lower classes.

The social status of occupations today is not representative of their status in the first half of the 19th century. Many occupations did not become professions until well into the second half of the century. Richard’s father, Thomas Seddon, is listed in an 1854 trade directory as conducting a school,
but it was not a grammar school.\textsuperscript{15} It was an endowed free school that provided rudimentary reading, writing and arithmetic skills to the lower classes. Gillian Sutherland, in\textit{ Elementary Education in the Nineteenth Century}, describes these schools as little more than ‘child minders’ and quotes a\textit{ Manchester Statistical Society} report which described the male teachers as ‘men whose only qualification for the employment seems to their unfitness for every other’.\textsuperscript{16}

Thomas Seddon’s position was a sinecure secured by Seddon’s grandfather to supplement the income from the family farm. Thomas does not seem to have kept the position very long, as in the 1861 English Census, he is recorded as being back on that family farm.\textsuperscript{17}

Seddon’s grandfather, Richard Seddon Snr, was a tenant farmer from a long line of tenant farmers. His farm was within easy cart distance of the rapidly growing industrial centre of Saint Helens.\textsuperscript{18} Lancashire rural historian Andrew Gritt argues that small tenant farmers survived in Lancashire to a far greater degree than in the rest of England, because they ‘had developed an agrarian regime that was both adaptive to market conditions and highly productive’.\textsuperscript{19} In his essay\textit{ Industrialization and the Small Farm}, Michael Winstanley argues that Lancashire small farmers should be considered as market-oriented entrepreneurs, who used their proximity to growing urban areas to directly sell their products into industrial centres, and combined family and wage labour, and agricultural and non-agricultural employment.\textsuperscript{20} When Seddon was sent to his grandfather’s farm to work at the age of twelve, it was not in the hope ‘he would soon tire of country life, and be glad to get back to Eccleston and his books’.\textsuperscript{21} Like all his peers, he was sent to the farm to earn his keep and replace adult uncles who were selling their labour in non-agricultural employment. However, as much as Richard Seddon’s educated middle-class origins are a myth, it would also be a mistake to relegate his family or neighbouring kin folk to the level of subsistence peasantry. The available records suggest that Richard Snr and his family were prime examples of the resilience and adaptiveness discussed by Winstanley and Gritt.

Seddon’s origins, which he shared with his great friend and Minister of Lands, John McKenzie, were influential in determining the direction his government’s agenda took. The centrepiece of this was a land reform program that offered farms of a viable size, and adequate finance by way of cheap government loans to develop these farms. However, the greatest achievement of Seddon’s government was to turn these small farms
into commercial enterprises by financing the building of dairy factories and freezing works, mainly through farmers’ co-operatives and friendly societies, and establishing rail and port infrastructure for the processing and shipping of refrigerated meat and dairy products to Britain. Australian historian Donald Denoon argues that there developed ‘a population of enfranchised smallholders that constituted a social environment in which science and technology could be best applied’. Seddon and McKenzie had to contend with a significant faction in the Liberal Party who envisioned a country of independent yeoman farmers intensively tilling small blocks of land to produce what was termed an ‘adequate sufficiency’. This vision also dominated successive Victorian responses to land reform well into the 20th century, long after an adequate sufficiency proved to be quite insufficient.

The biographies not only perpetuated the myth of Seddon’s middle-class origins, but also removed family and any wider kinship or friendship group from his story from the moment he emigrated. In his memoir, his son, T.E.Y. Seddon, mentions an aunt in New Zealand in one brief line. Yet, by 1875, Richard had three sisters, two younger brothers, and at least one uncle, Nathan, living on the West Coast goldfields. His father was on his way to join them when he died in Williamstown in December 1871. Though Richard preceded his siblings in migrating, he was following in the footsteps of his Uncle Nathan, and of at least three related Seddons who had preceded Richard to Victoria. In the one existing letter written shortly after he arrived in Victoria, we also have a glimpse of the wider kinship and friendship groups that were also migrating:

so far there is a young chap working here from Bury but he says he worked at Wigan and St Helens both he says he knows you very well his name is Bill Smith or Shirt they go in the name of home the foreman is a Bury man of the name of Harry Houghton and his father has a small shop at Bury so they tell me you know them ... Robert Scott is here from St Helens and is taking little jobs on his own hook ... Jim Cooper to his brother Will has gone home through it.

The timing of the four initial Seddon migrations suggests that it was not the allure of gold that initially attracted them to emigrate, but the allure of fertile and abundant land. Booster literature of the period regularly descended into hyperbole when describing the land available and its mooted fertility. For many Lancashire rural folk, who were increasingly unlikely to realise even the occupancy of a tenant farm, and who did not want to move into the life of a factory worker, these descriptions would
have been as enticing as gold. In Victoria, the scarcity of land for small freeholders became a matter of bitter political dispute in the second half of the 1850s and into the 1860s. In New Zealand, a sense of being cheated embittered a whole class of men and women, including Richard’s Uncle Nathan. Gold provided an alternative route to property ownership for some of these people. They were to discover that panning was like entering the lottery, but industry, capital, and labour co-operatively applied could bring modest prosperity. It was this community that Seddon joined when he arrived in Victoria.

A difficulty in discussing the impact of Seddon’s Victorian years is that there is very little documentary evidence of his sojourn. There is the one letter discussed above. We know that he wooed and won his wife in Williamstown, and that he remained long in the affections of the diggers of Bendigo. Erroneous dating of his arrival and departure also suggests he spent much less time in Victoria than he actually did. All the accounts uncritically follow his first biographer Drummond’s datings. Drummond has Seddon working his passage from Liverpool to Melbourne on a ship named *The Star of England*, shortly after his eighteenth birthday (22 June 1863). Burdon and Hamer support this dating while admitting ‘neither the date of his arrival or departure is recorded’. All three agree that he departed Victoria in February 1866 on the *Alhambra*, landing in Hokitika on 1 March 1866.

However, shipping records held at the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) show that Seddon did not depart Victoria until December 1866. He sailed on the *Rangitoto* in the company of a large party of miners. A late 1863 departure from England raises several questions which Drummond ignored, but later biographers could not. Seddon was apprenticed to Dalgeish and Co., engineers and iron-founders in St Helens, at the age of fourteen. Dalgeish ended his apprenticeship sometime in his sixteenth year. The premature end to his apprenticeship and a late 1863 departure from England suggest he was unemployed for two years. His immediate family, intent on preserving his carefully crafted political image, and Drummond, seem to have considered this disturbing. Later biographers have offered a variety of explanations, some far-fetched. However, there is an obvious explanation for Seddon’s departure from Dalgeish: the great Lancashire Cotton Famine of 1862–1865. In November 1861, 533,950 workers were employed by the Lancashire textile industry. A year later, 62 per cent of these workers were unemployed. This is the probable reason for Seddon’s
apprenticeship being terminated. It would also explain why he ‘would favour every institution and society that enables labour and gives effective expression to its rights’. 29 In fact he did not spend two years in England unemployed. Very shortly after his apprenticeship was terminated, Seddon was voyaging to Victoria as unpaid crew.

Seddon’s arrival in Victoria is recorded in the Release Books for Ships Crew held by the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV). These books demonstrate the port authorities’ distinct discomfort in dealing with the occasional discharge of irregularly employed crew members. This also may explain why Seddon was so vague about when he arrived. Seddon arrived on the Great Britain, on 14 August 1862, and his position is clearly ambiguous. I spotted the information only because one of the two officially discharged crew members was a ‘ship boy’ named James Robinson. 30 Robinson is a pivotal character in Seddon’s story, as this account from William Heinz’s New Zealand’s Last Great Gold Rush demonstrates:

In April 1876, James Robinson, a miner noticed that when Cashman, Connor and Houlihan made occasional visits to Stafford they bought their stores and departed quickly into the bush again. Although they did appear somewhat hard up, Robinson knew, as did other diggers, that if a man found a rich gold area he would conceal the fact for as long as possible ... Robinson set out to track them ... He was astonished to find great heaps of tailings. Realising he had stumbled upon a rich gold field ... he told his friend Richard Seddon what he had seen. Seddon said to him ‘go peg out a claim Jimmy’. 31

Heinz is the only writer who includes Robinson in Seddon’s story. A search of the National Library of New Zealand’s website Papers Past turns up Robinson’s name in association with Seddon’s on a number of occasions. These associations lend support to Heinz’s contention that Robinson was Seddon’s closest friend and longstanding partner. 32

Seddon’s biographers have him finding immediate work in the Williamstown Railway Workshops, then moving onto the goldfields for a brief and unsuccessful few months before returning to the Workshops. Seddon’s surviving letter, which was written in April 1863, rather than 1865 as proposed by Burdon, confirms that they did indeed find immediate work in the Workshops, probably through kinship circles. 33 However, it would seem that the gold fields were where he spent most of his Victorian years. The Workshops probably provided Seddon with occasional seasonal work when a shortage of water prevented large-scale mining operations on those gold fields. 34
There are no existing records from the 1860s on operations or employment at the Workshops. However, in 1869, the Victorian Parliament ordered an *Inquiry into the Management of the Williamstown Workshops*, and evidence presented reveals much concerning the operation of, and culture in, the Workshops. The Workshops’ role was to assemble and maintain locomotives and rolling stock shipped from England. By mid-1863, the first great expansion of the railroad in Victoria was complete, and work at the Workshops was increasingly fitful. Skilled workers were employed on a weekly basis, unskilled on a daily casual basis. Seddon could not have depended on the Workshops for regular employment. Moreover, because the government had suspended payment of wages to government employees as a consequence of the Victorian Upper House refusing it supply, the Workshops were closed for much of the latter half of 1865 and the first half of 1866.

One of the first branches of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers was established at Williamstown Railway Workshops in 1863. This nascent union was politically active and on the radical side of liberal progressive politics. Evidence of its radical activism comes through strongly in the Inquiry. Early exposure to this agitation for a ‘democracy of the working man’ had a significant impact on the teenage Seddon. More than forty
years later, memories of Seddon throwing himself into political agitation at the Workshops were still vivid among workmates:

Dick was always head and ears into it, and would be discovered by old Houghton, our foreman, addressing a crowd of men in one part of the shop or other. Houghton always knew who it was and would say—‘Now then Dick, no more of that!’ And Mr Seddon would reply quite cheerfully, ‘All right Mr Houghton’, but ten minutes later he would be propounding the principles of his favourite candidate to another crowd not very far away.38

This recollection suggests that Seddon was an individual engaging alone in political agitation. By contrast, the Inquiry places emphasis on the foremen, including Houghton, as the leaders.39 Seddon’s first exposure to colonial radical progressive politics was in one of its ‘furnaces’ when political passions were running white-hot.

Seddon’s lifelong pro-labour sympathies gained their hard political edge at Williamstown Workshops. It was on the diggings in Castlemaine and Bendigo that he began his apprenticeship in building sustainable communities. There is no record of when Seddon and James Robinson headed for the diggings, but it is doubtful they would have wanted to linger in Melbourne after travelling halfway around the world to prospect for gold. Seddon says they first went to Forest Creek, Castlemaine. The Bendigo Advertiser enthusiastically claimed Seddon ‘was one of the first diggers at Forest Creek’.40 This is incorrect, as the Castlemaine diggings were opened up in 1851–1852. It is an understandable mistake, because members of the Seddon family had been among the earliest diggers in Castlemaine, and, by the time The Bendigo Advertiser made this claim in 1906, were well-established in the Castlemaine business community. James Seddon, who arrived in 1853, first appears in the 1856–57 Castlemaine Rate Book as a Forest Creek ratepayer.41 By 1869, his brother, John Seddon, owned two cottages in the same area, having established himself as a bricklayer and builder.42 Joseph Seddon, who arrived in 1856, had mining leases at Golden Gully, Fryers Creek, and Dinah Flat in the 1860s.43 Richard and James would have been welcomed enthusiastically into these operations as additional family labour.

The common view is that Seddon arrived too late at the goldfields and discovered they were unrewarding, and quickly departed:

In the early sixties any venture of the kind undertaken by a man without experience could only have been a short and forlorn hope. In Victoria the day
of the prospector had almost gone by; picks and shovels were giving place to
machines. ‘Goldmining was slowly passing from the unorganised eventful
alluvial period to the organised prosaic industrial stage.’ In short, Seddon
paid the penalty for having arrived on the scene about ten years too late.\textsuperscript{44}

It is precisely this experience of the ‘organised prosaic industrial stage’
that was essential to Seddon’s later New Zealand successes as a miner
and politician. Seddon’s first experiences of the diggings were not of the
romantic Wild West panning communities of historical myth, but occurred
during the very period when they were developing into organised industrial
businesses. Puddling was alluvial mining on an industrial scale. It involved
a capital expenditure of two hundred pounds or more, substantial efforts of
labour, movement of large quantities of diggings and water to the puddling
operation, and dispersing of the waste afterwards. Quartz mining involved
the development of even greater organised industrial effort, engineering
and mining skills, and heavy capital input.

Despite the belief that the shallow alluvial mining districts of
Castlemaine and surrounding districts were worked out by 1862, \textit{Mining
Surveyor Reports} for 1863 paint a mixed picture. For instance, at Forest
Creek in January 1863, they report: ‘In alluvial mining no new ground has
been opened, but some good finds have occurred on the old workings.’\textsuperscript{45}
Six months later, they report there had been a substantial increase in
puddling operations, which returned economic yields.\textsuperscript{46} For Fryers Creek,
where Joseph Seddon had mining leases, the surveyor reports are even
more positive: ‘the puddlers who have sufficient water are, as a rule, doing
well.’\textsuperscript{47} All the reports note that ‘sufficient water’ was a critical factor to
achieving economic yields on the diggings.

Water was to play a central role in establishing Seddon as an early figure
of importance on the West Coast goldfields. The panning prospector played
a very limited role in the extraction of gold on these fields. The West Coast
of New Zealand may have one of the highest rainfalls in the world, but
collecting that rain and delivering it in a way that produced the required
power demanded some remarkable engineering and hydraulic ingenuity.
Both Heinz and May tell us that the basic technology was transferred with
miners from Californian and Bendigo and adapted to a new wild country.\textsuperscript{48}
Seddon’s biographers play up his involvement in the building and creation
of the water races. However, all except Heinz, would like us to believe it
was his unfinished apprenticeship at Dalgeish & Co. and his time at the
Williamstown Railway Workshops that gave him this engineering skill and experience.

Seddon’s experience came from the years he spent on the Castlemaine and Bendigo goldfields. Seddon said he left the Castlemaine diggings after about a year. However, he did not return to Melbourne ‘disappointed’, but rather, he says, he went to dig at Commissioner’s Gully in Bendigo. Again there are no records of Richard Seddon in Bendigo. But there are for James Robinson who appears in the 1865 *Bendigo Rates Report*. He is described as occupying a Land Dwelling valued at £2 in Long Gully. Significantly, the owner is ‘the Crown’. Diggers given a licence to mine on crown land were also given the right of residence as part of the licence. Thus it appears James Robinson and others were working a mining lease in the Long Gully area in 1865. Only one name from the partnership would be collected for rates records. Given the close relationship between Seddon and Robinson, starting in Liverpool and moving through to Kumara, it is probable that Seddon was one of the others ‘digging’ the lease in partnership with Robinson.

This is a critical period when Bendigo transformed from gold rush frontier town to settled industrial regional centre. Seddon discussed this in a speech to the citizens of Bendigo in June 6 1906:

> These treasures have helped to make your country and keep it ahead ... laying the foundation for a great nation ... they [the miners] understood that it was their duty to work out their destinies for the good and advantage of mankind, and the promotion of that happiness and that contentment which should be placed within the reach of all.

Then, in a wide-ranging speech that covers the Coliban water scheme, closer farming, health and education, Seddon claims to have witnessed the ways Bendigo used the treasures it had dug up to build a community, a city and a nation that would outlast the gold treasure. It was an extraordinarily optimistic speech and may have exaggerated how much gold actually went back into the building of the Bendigo community. However, it demonstrates that he had developed an early understanding of the relationship between the extraction of mineral wealth and the importance of its application to the communities from which it came.

Seddon’s analysis of building communities on the back of mineral wealth is an analysis that Fahey and Mayne argue in *Gold Tailings* is missing from much of our goldfield histories.
In the popular histories of this golden decade the early rush years take pride of place. These were the years of independent, free spirited diggers ... yet for all their romance the early rushes were ephemeral affairs ... Both deep lead mining and quartz reefing promoted the growth of towns and cities ... Ongoing migration and subsequent family formation sustained the growth of these urban communities.\textsuperscript{52}

They go on to argue that, in the historical analysis of the goldfields experience, the history of family formation and community building that developed with the industrial stage of the goldfield economy has been much overlooked. For Fahey and Mayne, this is the real achievement of Geoffrey Serle’s ‘abstract hyperbole about a demographic revolution’ that reshaped the nation.\textsuperscript{53} Seddon makes this point in his speech to the citizens of Bendigo: ‘A mining community moved in a sphere that sometimes appeared uninteresting to larger centres’, going on to argue their efforts at family formation and community building not only ‘promote and improve the conditions of their fellow men’, but were the ‘very bedrock of the Empire’.\textsuperscript{54}

The years that Seddon was in Castlemaine and Bendigo were also the years when Graham Berry began his march to the leadership of the Liberal factions in Victoria with considerable digger support. He eventually became Victorian premier in 1875 on a radical Liberal platform that called for punitive land taxes on the pastoralists and tariff protection to effect land reform and to finance community development, particularly in areas like health and education. The similarities between Seddon and Berry are striking. Both were from the lower classes in England, though with an entrepreneurial bent. Both had only a basic primary school education and educated themselves in the colonies. Both were shopkeepers prior to entering politics. Both were much derided for dropping their h’s by the colonial elites opposed to their great reforms. Berry was much less successful than Seddon in achieving reform. That was in part due to differences in constitutional arrangements in Victoria, with an elected upper house based on a very narrow, property-based suffrage, and in New Zealand with an appointed upper house. It was also because Seddon learnt from Berry and was ruthless when it came to intimidating those elites into acquiescence. When Berry faced a major constitutional crisis in 1878–1880, he travelled to London to attempt to persuade the Colonial Office to amend the Victorian constitution, but was refused. When Seddon faced his first constitutional crisis in 1893, shortly after becoming premier, he not so subtly threatened those elites with his ‘aristocracy of brawn’,
the miners who had earned their medals on the diggings of California, Ballarat and Bendigo, and who had been his companions in the transfer to the West Coast.

Richard Seddon left Victoria and travelled to the West Coast of New Zealand in December 1866 on the *Rangitoto*. The *Rangitoto* was a small steam mail ship of less than 600 tons, which plied a regular monthly voyage between Melbourne and the South Island ports. The composition of the list of 88 passengers is revealing. Ten were adult females and nine were children. The balance were adult males with 36 per cent being Chinese. All the males gave their occupation as miner. Prior to December 1866, the average passenger list numbered thirty-eight, and no Chinese were recorded among those passengers. Those listing their occupations as miner were a distinct minority. The December passage shows a complete change to an exclusively mining composition. This trend is identifiable through until August 1867, after which Chinese names vanish from the passenger lists, and those listing mining as an occupation decline substantially. In a nine-month period, more than 1,200 miners of Chinese and European extraction transferred their experience, knowledge and skills from the Victorian goldfields to the West Coast goldfields.

It is revealing to discover Chinese so amply represented in this organised transfer. One of the great black marks on Seddon’s Liberal government was its perceived prejudice against Asian immigration. During his premiership, Seddon frequently demonstrated rabid anti-Chinese sentiments: ‘The chow element in New Zealand is like a cancer eating into the vitals of our moral being and slowly and insidiously encompassing the doom of its victims.’ This prejudice, it is argued, was widely shared by European miners across the New Zealand goldfields. However, Belich is not convinced by the existing explanations of a goldfields origin for the prejudices, saying ‘New Zealand Sinophobia ... rose in the 1880s ... after the gold rushes’, and suggests Seddon, ‘that walking opinion poll’, may have been as much ‘populist weather vane’ as genuinely Sinophobic.

Seddon’s son, Thomas, portrays the Chinese at the heart of the Kumara community:

Chinatown, in the lower part of Main Street, was the scene at certain periods of the year of rejoicing and celebrations. The Chinese New Year was marked by feasting, fireworks and gambling. The houses occupied by the Chinese were packed by visiting Chinamen from the goldfields of Greenstone and Stafford—so packed that when Fan Tan or Pakpoo and other gambling games
were in full swing they became veritable dens. No regard was paid to curious men and boys—even young boys—who looked in at this foreign scene. The generous Chinese offered the European visitors ginger, water-melon nuts, peanuts and candied fruit.\[^{60}\]

This brief portrait confirms the argument of Val Lovejoy in *Gold Tailings* that Chinese men did not lack family life, but ‘lived communally with a close network of relatives, friends and mates who fulfilled the functions of family, sharing their daily joys, sorrows and giving support in times of need’.\[^{61}\] In the still predominantly male worlds of the Bendigo and West Coast goldfields of the 1860s, the same description of kinship and mate-ship networks could be said to apply to Seddon and others of the European digger communities. They should be seen as transferring these communal networks along with the industrial mining skills.

It is clear the Bendigo diggers did not let racial or other such prejudices affect their choice of companions when transferring to the new fields. Rather they were made on the pragmatic considerations of who had the expertise, industriousness and capital necessary to wrest from the earth ‘the treasures hidden below’. Those who had any sort of success on the Victorian diggings would have been highly prized for their expertise. Heinz said of Kumara: ‘this field was not a poor man’s rush.’\[^{62}\] This report in the *Lyttleton Times* explains why:

There is an average of six men to a claim and about twenty claims paddocking on the near end of the lead adjoining Seddon Street ... Broderick and party are now in 50 feet with their tunnel but expect to go 450 feet before striking gold. Young Jones and party have bottomed their shaft at 98 feet and are winning a half ounce to the load. Colvell Bros are down 60 feet and getting 9 dwts [pennyweights of gold or silver] to the load.\[^{63}\]

While there were some shallow alluvial fields on the West Coast, the great majority of West Coast gold were contained in eskers, long, narrow winding ridges. Reaching the gold deposited in these eskers required sinking shafts and tunnels, often to considerable depths, through gravel and rubble. The debris was so unstable that large quantities of wooden props, stays and lathes were required to stabilise the mines. Horse-driven windlasses and whims were required to bring the diggings to the surface. Water had to be collected and brought to the fields to wash the diggings.

Those men who had already acquired the expertise and technological skills in similar mining operations would have an advantage over inexperienced miners. Capital would have also been essential to the
successful development of these operations. Heinz and May contend that the technological transfer came from the Californian goldfields, focusing on the growing use of large-scale hydraulic sluicing methods to shift the glacial terrain. However, on many fields, such as Kumara, hydraulic sluicing would never fully replace shafts and tunnelling because of the nature of eskers. The technology used was familiar to the Bendigo miners engaged in deep alluvial and quartz reef mining. It is this technology that the West Coast received with the transfer of Victorian diggers between December 1866 and August 1867.

Seddon, in partnership with Robinson and others, may well have been more successful in Victoria than commonly assumed. He seems to have arrived on the West Coast with enough capital to quickly assume leadership roles in the organising of new mining ventures. Seddon opened a store early in 1867 almost immediately after arriving. Capital was required to ship the supplies into the West Coast and stock this store. It is evidence of forethought, planning, capital and an organised transfer from Bendigo to Waimea. It is also at Waimea that Seddon’s first great achievement is recorded, the building of the Waimea Band of Hope water race in 1867. It is part of the attendant myth that this was solely Seddon’s achievement. It was not. These water races were financed and built co-operatively by several of the different mining partnerships working leases on a field.

Technology was not the only significant transfer made by these Victorian miners into New Zealand. Alfred Deakin, the second Australian prime minister, and the son of a Victorian digger, famously said:

Why do you all but ignore the discovery of gold and its many consequences? You know perfectly well what it meant to us materially ... but have not realised perhaps the extent to which it revolutionised our early politics ... It gave us a large proportion of the best of our population, men with a far wider and more advanced liberalism.

This wider and more advanced liberalism came to the shores of the West Coast of New Zealand with the Victorian miners. These were miners who had played a central role in the radical liberal political whirlwind that shook up Victoria. They were remarkably pragmatic, concerned with creating a level playing field for themselves and their families, the creation of sustainable communities and good, decent family lives. The speed with which well laid-out and organised townships were created on the West Coast goldfields is testament to the political and social expertise the miners had gained in town building and community development.
Thomas Seddon’s description of Kumara five years after it was founded attests to that wider communal expertise:

My father laid out the town on the model of the city of Melbourne with broad streets and in squares. A well-staffed hospital administered to the sick and hurt. Four churches—placed as someone remarked in the form of a cross—the Anglican Church as the head—the Methodist and the Presbyterian churches as the arms and the Roman Catholic Church as the foot—administered to the spiritual cares of the population. The Mayor and Councillors administered the civic affairs, while two schools took care of the younger generation. The model is not so much Melbourne as the Victorian provincial centres such as Castlemaine and Bendigo, which were all laid out on a similar grid pattern by Robert Hoddle and his team of government surveyors in the 1840s and 1850s. The centrality of hospital, schools and churches to this model of township is a deliberate announcement of the importance the townspeople placed on these institutions. Many of the diggers were on their third or fourth goldfield and no longer impetuous youths. Family formation on the West Coast was explosive in comparison to earlier gold-fields experience. Seddon was not the only man who bought a wife across from Victoria. Shortly after Kumara’s founding, the *Lyttleton Times* reports:

With a population of some 2,000 souls, the children seem to run into hundreds, and from the little red-vested rascal in his father’s old boots to the uniformed cadet, from the rosy-cheeked girlie who shook her curls over her face in the terror of joy, to the little winsome maiden just budding into womanhood, all seemed the very best of their kind.

Richard Seddon and his wife, Louisa Jane, had eleven children, nine of whom survived into adulthood. Richard and Louisa, and their many friends and relatives in the West Coast mining communities, had their minds firmly focused on the future of these children. This commitment would continue throughout Seddon’s political career.

In his last election, Seddon proposed extending one of his greatest achievements:

I am not afraid of ridicule by beginning my review with the Midwives Act. The child is father of man, and certainly the earlier the welfare of the infant is considered the better for itself and for the community ... Man begins his life, as he ends it, in helpless dependence upon a nurse, and the better equipped that nurse is, the better for all of us ... the silent martyrs of life are the low-waged workers wives, who keep the cradle full and bear the double burden of poverty and maternity.
All the ideas that culminated in his proudest achievements may be seen emerging in Seddon’s first campaign for a seat on the Westland County Council in 1870. His electoral manifesto had four points: the reform of mining laws to give greater scope for enterprising miners and foster the introduction of capital and labour; agricultural land to be sold more cheaply and on a deferred payment system; the establishment of funded public schools in every population centre; and a redirection of county funds into the construction of roads, railroads and other public utilities that would encourage the further development of mining, industry and agriculture. These were the political programs developed in Bendigo, Castlemaine and the wider Victorian state arena, as they looked to build economic independence after the first flush of the gold rushes.

Seddon’s journey began in south-west Lancashire, as the child of a rural tenant farming class, who, because they were right in the heartland
of industrial Britain, developed the skills and talent to survive far more effectively than most of their class elsewhere in Britain. Seddon’s choice of migration during the great cotton famine was made in the knowledge that family and friends were migrating. On landing in Victoria, he was quickly absorbed into wider kinship and friendship networks that had preceded him. His experience of the goldfields was not of the gold rush period, but during its transition to industrial mining. The political contest brewing during his time in Victoria can be seen as a contest between a newly industrialising settler colony and its pastoralist predecessor fighting a rearguard action to preserve the privileges of a rural oligarchy. His family and friendship networks were expanding and developing as their preoccupations turned to family formation, town building and creating sustainable and diverse economies. When he moved to the West Coast of New Zealand, it was not as part of a disorganised movement of independent individuals rushing a new field. It appears to be an organised transfer of Bendigo goldfields communities, social organisations, tools and technology to new fields to be opened up on an industrial basis. On the West Coast, his experiences and ideas acquired through his life journey developed into a political program. This program cannot be understood except by acknowledging and understanding the needs, desires, and ambitions of the communities to which he belonged and travelled with in the great journey of colonial creation. The commonality of experience, vision and ambition we have observed through exploring Seddon’s personal journey make the case that it was not political theorising that was absent, but that the theorising was of a remarkable practical bent.

NOTES

2 Seddon, pp. 70–1.
4 Sinclair, p. 172.
5 Sinclair, p. 187.
6 Sinclair, p. 188.


26 Burdon, p. 4.

27 Index to Outward Passengers to Interstate, UK, NZ and Foreign Ports 1852–1915, VPRS 3506/ Dec/1866/001, Public Record Office Victoria (PROV).


29 R.J. Seddon, p. 2.

30 Release Books for Ships Crew, 12 July 1862 to 31 December 1862, Mercantile Maritime Office, VPRS 945/P/0000/03, PROV, p. 58.


32 ‘The Discovery of the Kumara Goldfield’, *West Coast Times*, 4 May 1877, p. 2.
33 St Helens Local History and Archives Library, Correspondence and Photographs relating to Richard Seddon of New Zealand and William Melling of St. Helens, St Helens Local History and Archives Library, series MFA/34. Burdon, 48.
38 ‘Sketch of Mr Seddon’s Career’, *St Helens Reporter*, 3 August 1906, pp. 4–5.
40 ‘At Castlemaine’, *Bendigo Advertiser*, Bendigo, 7 June 1906, p. 6.
41 PROV, VPRS 409/P/000/01/1181.
42 PROV, VPRS 409/P/000/02/1211 & 1154.
43 PROV, VPRS 7666, Fiche 153, p. 7; PROV, VPRS 7842, Units 305 and 312, no. 518 and 1293.
44 Burdon, p. 5.
47 Mining Department, *Surveyors’ Reports for Jan 1863*, pp. 8–9.
49 Index to the Bendigo Regional Rates Reports, date 1865, rate no. 3280, Bendigo Regional Archives (BRAC), p. 82.
50 Fahey and Mayne, p. 38.
52 Fahey and Mayne, pp. 7–8.
53 Fahey and Mayne, pp. 6–7.
55 Index to Outward Passengers to Interstate, UK, NZ and Foreign Ports 1852–1915, VPRS 3506, Dec 1866, PROV, p. 001.
56 Index to Outward Passengers, Jan 1865 to Dec 1867.
57 Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, p. 228.


60 T.E.Y. Seddon, p. 37.

61 Fahey and Mayne, p. 111.

62 Heinz, p. 7.

63 ‘Kumara’, *Lyttleton Times*, 21 September 1876, p. 2.

64 Heinz, p. 10–11; May, p. 97.

65 Hamer, p. 2; Heinz, pp. 59–60.

66 Burdon, p. 10.

67 Heinz, pp. 29–30.


70 Drummond, p. 14.

71 R.J. Seddon, p. 2.
IDENTIFYING ELLEN CLACY – A CAUTIONARY TALE

Susan Priestley

Abstract
Evidence is presented to counter Marjorie Theobald’s conclusion that Clacy’s A Lady’s Visit to the Colonies in 1852–3 was not an authentic account, but concocted from newspaper and other sources, while recognising that Clacy did indulge in some deceit about her personal circumstances and her itinerary. The article also highlights the caution needed when examining lives in history. One question raised is how far historians should delve into the personal details of historical figures without consideration for their descendants. Caution must also be exercised in assuming that the extant ‘official’ or public record is either entire or wholly accurate.

A LADY’S VISIT to the Gold Diggings of Australia in 1852–3 by Mrs Charles Clacy was published by Hurst & Blackett, London, and launched in October 1853. Advertised as ‘a practical, uncoloured, and evidently trustworthy description’, it received widespread acclaim in Britain as the best book on the goldfields up to that time.¹ A 1963 edition, with an introduction by Patricia Thompson, was published by Lansdowne Press. Marjorie Theobald’s article in the VHJ, vol. 84/2, November 2013, expands the wavering, sometimes perplexed, debate about whether A Lady’s Visit arose from actual experience, and concludes that it did not. This article offers evidence to counter that view, while recognising that Mrs Charles Clacy did indulge in some glossing of her personal circumstances.
A Lady’s Visit was the first of Ellen Clacy’s nine publications announced over the following eleven years. None of the others purported to be a factual account and none reached quite the same wide market. Lights and Shadows of Australian Life (1854) comprised two volumes of short stories drawn from her home experience as much as from the colonies. They were dedicated to her friend Mrs Wood, who had returned after ‘many years in Australia … in the hope that … the sketches may perchance recal [sic] some pleasing reminiscences of her late colonial home’. It would appear that newspapers were not Clacy’s only source of information about the Australian colonies. A novel Boernice (1858) appeared under the name Ellen Clacy, but seven further novels used the pseudonym ‘Cycla’, an anagram of Clacy. Even more anonymous was the pseudonym ‘A Clergyman’s Daughter’ for her series of religious tracts for children, Wonderful Works, or the Miracles of Christ (1864–1873).

Literary researchers of the Victorian period have identified the author’s maiden name as Sturmer, as did M. Rosalyn Shennan in research undertaken between 1983 and 1986. She was commissioned by a New Zealand woman seeking her family’s history in Victoria, but aware that her Sturmer husband’s forebears had a brief spell in the colony as well. Since the 1980s, greater precision in identification is now possible with the vast increase in digitised genealogical resources. Church registers available to subscribers of Ancestry.com confirm that Ellen Louisa Sturmer was born at Richmond, Surrey, on 15 December 1830 and baptised in the parish church there on 12 January 1831. She was the second child of Frederick Sturmer ‘Esquire’ and his wife Mary, née Norris, the ‘Esquire’ being a recognition that Frederick was still a deacon, a few months short of his full ordination as an Anglican priest.

Ellen’s voyage to Melbourne with her eldest brother, Frederick, (sometimes Frederic) on a ship that left England at the end of April 1852, and identified by Shennan as the Ayrshire, is confirmed by details from other digitised material. The bald record from The Times of 27 April 1852 reads: ‘Gravesend, April 26th SAILED Ayrshire for Port Phillip’, lending weight to Clacy’s account of embarking from quarters at the ‘Old Falcon’. The Old Falcon Hotel, East Street, Gravesend, depicted in a nineteenth century oil painting in the current Borough of Gravesham collection, was regularly used by embarking passengers. Notice of the ship’s arrival in Melbourne on 24 August appears in the following day’s Argus: ‘Ayrshire, barque, 550 tons, David Dewar, dep. April 29th’, with ‘Mr & Mrs Sturmer’
Among sixteen named second cabin passengers. However, the manifest list of 91 passengers on the *Ayrshire*, held in the Public Record Office of Victoria, has no Sturmers, but *Skinner*, Ellen Louisa, 21, and Frederic, 23, with no marital state indicated.\(^6\)

This is just one of several discrepancies between the passenger manifest and the *Argus* report that named only those in cabin or second cabin class. Four or five surnames are differently written, while the *Argus* lists the two Pettavels as ‘Misses’ when one was a male. The origin of the paper’s information, whether oral or written, is unclear, but since the lodged manifest is in unwontedly clean condition, it may be a copy of a damaged original, although whether the copying was done before or after landing is impossible to detect. The passengers are listed alphabetically, except the last 18, who appear to have joined the ship at the last possible opportunity, when it was off Portsmouth or Plymouth. Most of the 18 were first class passengers like the large Purvis family with a Miss Fowler/Annie Forster perhaps in their party as well. The rest, like the Sturmers, had embarked at Gravesend. Among the late embarkees not in first class was merchant John Dewar, 26, possibly a relative of the captain, who may have been given the task of copying and completing the manifest. Clacy records seeing Stark Point ‘the last speck of England’ disappear on Friday 30 April, which fits with the *Ayrshire*’s departure date given in the *Argus* as 29 April, indicating its last Channel stop, rather than 26 April when it left its Thames mooring. The likely location of Stark Point is a long tableland on the Isle of Portland at the entrance to the English Channel near Weymouth, where beacons have warned mariners of danger for centuries.

During the four-month voyage, Clacy says that her brother came to an agreement with four shipmates to travel to the diggings together. She introduces them by their given names only, but all can be identified both from the manifest and in the *Argus* list of second cabin passengers. Shennan’s list of names is given in endnote 7 of Theobald’s article. While the actuality of the Clacy visit is undeniable, problems arise in identifying the departure of the author on what she called her ‘wedding trip’. This is where her fudging of dates and fudging of events do occur. Clacy says their ship sailed on 15 November 1852, which almost fits with the departure of the ‘armed frigate’, *Roxburgh Castle*, on 14 November after a fortnight’s delay. However, no female of Ellen’s age, married or otherwise, appears in its manifest. Faced with mass desertion of crews, and with newcomers and old residents alike ‘rushing’ after every new gold find, ships’ captains
had to constantly tout for passengers and any kind of freight in order to make the return voyage an economic proposition. Sailing dates kept being pushed out as well. Captain Dewar of the *Ayrshire* was one of several who advertised that they would buy gold outright or guarantee its secure shipment to a nominated receiver, thereby garnering a fee. The *Ayrshire* did not sail from Port Phillip till December, its destination listed as Guam.

The Sturmer party seems to have sought out Captain Dewar on their return to Melbourne from the Bendigo diggings, perhaps as a source of good information about ships likely to sail soonest. Clacy gives their arrival date from the interior as Monday 25 October, and among subsequent events, describes a trip down the Bay followed by a dinner on board hosted by the ‘gallant … captain of the vessel in which we arrived’. It was a large and happy party. However, a more reliable guide to the date of return might begin with the receipt issued on 8 October by the Escort office at Bendigo Creek for their ‘precious packet’, the rich haul the party had discovered at Eagle Hawk Gully six days earlier. Time stretching and itinerary tumbling, intermingled with long stories, begin to intensify from this point.

Scenes at Fryer’s Creek and Forest Creek, a detour on their way back to Melbourne, are dated by Clacy from 16 October, but the near lynching she describes happened on Thursday 7, according to Daniel Bunce’s account that was written the following day. Different wording of the two accounts does not meet the plagiarism charge claimed by Theobald, although plagiarism may properly apply to other comparative selections cited. There is a real possibility that Clacy did witness the incident on 7 October. The terrible slow drowning of one of three brothers in a collapsing mud hole at Fryer’s Creek that she describes has no corresponding newspaper account, although the *Argus* correspondent at Mount Alexander did report five fatalities and a serious injury from accidents at or near Moonlight Flat over two days, Monday and Tuesday 12 and 13 October. By then, Clacy’s party was likely to have been well away from the goldfields. As Theobald notes, they were plainly not in the Mount Alexander district when diggers, alarmed about lawlessness, met in mid-October to form the Gold Diggers Mutual Protection Society.

Their journey from Forest Creek (near present-day Chewton) to Melbourne was reported over a protracted seven days, including a Sabbath rest day at Deep Creek near Bulla. This is twice as long as the journey up country, another indication of authorial time stretching. On reaching town, they collected mail at the Post Office, marvelled at all the window
displays offering to buy gold—‘milliners, baby-linen warehouses, &c included’—and finally pulled up at ‘the “Duke of York Hotel” where we dined’. The hotel was at the quieter end of town on the corner of Collins and Stephen (now Exhibition) streets and provided their ‘most comfortable’ interim lodgings.

Clacy’s most likely departure from Melbourne was on the Chowringee, originally advertised to sail on 15 October, but finally departing on the 23rd with George T. Brown as captain. Points for this identification are advertisements that the ship was to sail direct to London, taking only gold and passengers. It fits with Clacy’s ship ‘C’, described as an East Indiaman, that is, a trading ship built for the Honourable East India Company during its centuries-long administration of India. Chowringee is a district of the former city of Calcutta. The route of the Chowringee around Cape Horn, rather than via Cape Town and the Cape of Good Hope, together
with the ship’s arrival date, also fits the Clacy account. She says that they disembarked at Deal on the Kentish coast on Sunday 27 February 1853, after the ‘wind turned right against us’. Damage from the severe gales which swept across England on Saturday 26 February was widely reported. Grave fears were held for ships caught in the busy English Channel, not least the 

Chowringee and the Roxburgh Castle returning from Australia with ‘rich’ cargoes of gold, followed by relief when it was learned that they had ridden out the storm off Deal, the well-sheltered harbour that was a main station for British Marine regiments. The 

Chowringee eventually reached its Thames mooring on Tuesday 2 March.

Finding the manifest for the 

Chowringee in the Public Record Office of Victoria (PROV) proved a minor challenge. Nothing came up in the online index, although a newspaper search via Trove gave plenty of information about the ship, its arrival, and its months in harbour and eventual departure. A scroll through PROV microfilms of outward ships with the October date finally revealed the manifest. Online indexers had apparently entered the ship’s name with a space between 

Chow and ringee. No ages are given for the 41 passengers listed on the manifest, of whom twelve were females. Five of these women accompanied husbands (or possibly fathers), the others being three Misses Simson, two Misses Harper, Mrs Gilbert and Mrs Harlington. Of these, Mrs Harlington, ‘lady’, is spaced in the listing after those who would appear to be cabin passengers and before the remainder. The surname Harlington is quite unusual. Did Ellen adopt it from the district of Hayes and Harlington (now the outer London suburb of Hayes) where the middle years of her childhood were spent?

Her account of a precocious young boy on the return passage was possibly the third Miss Simson, mistaken for a girl by the ship’s clerk, since young children were dressed similarly up to the age of five or so, when boys were put into breeches, distinguishing their maleness.

The main point against the ship’s identification is its October sailing date, rather than November, but fudging of dates is explicable by Ellen’s advanced premarital pregnancy. English census returns from 1861 to 1901 list a daughter, Ellen, in the London household of Ellen Clacy. The daughter was born in 1853, her birthplace variously given as ‘South Atlantic’ or ‘North Atlantic’ or ‘at sea’ or even ‘St Helena’. The last from the 1901 census suggests that Ellen junior supplied that census information, as she did for her mother’s death about six months later. Ellen Louisa Clacy died on 11 November 1901 at the Primrose Hill house she had owned
for about twelve years\textsuperscript{17}, having been confined to bed with senility and sensory loss for some time. Her occupation was given as ‘widow of Charles Berry Clacy, mining engineer’.\textsuperscript{18} The identity of Charles Clacy, if not his reality, has been conjectural throughout the modern historical debate. While the circumstances of his association with Ellen Louisa Sturmer remain somewhat obscure, they were legally married. On 5 June 1854, bachelor Charles Clacy, aged 34, merchant’s clerk, and son of John Clacy, solicitor’s clerk, married spinster Ellen Louisa Sturmer, aged 24, daughter of Frederick Sturmer, clerk in holy orders, at Bermondsey Register Office.\textsuperscript{19} Bermondsey is south of the Thames, leagues away in social terms from the Regent’s Park district favoured by Ellen after her return from Australia. She and Charles were at the same Bermondsey address when they married, fulfilling the residency requirement, usually a month, before marriage in a particular district or parish. The clandestine civil marriage was about eight months after publication of \textit{A Lady’s Visit} and about eighteen months after the birth of their daughter.

Authorial identification on her first two books indicates Ellen’s confidence that she and Charles were in a committed relationship established before the child’s conception, which was probably about the time the Sturmer siblings sailed in the \textit{Ayrshire}. Charles’s absences during the relationship require some explanation, however tentative, and with due regard to the privacy of descendants. A fond mother’s storytelling could have turned the merchant’s clerk of 1854 into a mining engineer, but elements of truth may be detected in both descriptions. Merchant’s clerk fits with a Charles Clacy who was clerk to an Adelaide merchant Captain Hall between about 1844 and 1849.\textsuperscript{20} That in turn fits with Ellen Clacy’s chapter on South Australia and its Echunga diggings in \textit{A Lady’s Visit}, a section that sits a little oddly with modern readers. The marriage certificate occupation of ‘merchant’s clerk’ might also describe an assistant to a ship master such as Dewar of the \textit{Ayrshire}, Brown of the \textit{Chowringee} or another vessel entirely. Being away on voyages would explain the delayed marriage and his absence from the Clacy household at any census. In 1861, Ellen described herself as married, but as widowed thereafter. Significance may also lie in her use of the pseudonym Cycla from 1860. However, examination of death indexes for the 1860s, and the purchase of some certificates, has almost certainly ruled out Charles’s death in England during that decade.

A possible candidate for the ‘mining engineer’ is the Charles Clacy who enrolled to vote in Victoria’s first ‘manhood suffrage’ election of 1856 as
holder of a miner’s licence at the Blackwood diggings. But extending that link to the Charles Clacy who died in 1882 as licensee of a South Melbourne hotel becomes problematic. The wife of the licensee had no information on his birthplace or parents to include on his death certificate, although more about these can be found through the Victorian birth registrations of two of their six children. However, further pursuit of those lines may constitute an unwarranted trespass into the lives of descendants, without adding substantial information about the Victorian experience of the author of *A Lady’s Visit*.

This raises a general question for researchers as to how much personal details of the lives of historical figures should be included if there is only minor relevance to the topic under examination. Where extensive investigation of personal details and networks is necessary, professional ethics would require some form of prior contact with descendants, especially where they may be unaware of material now available in the public domain. On another level, researchers should also be cautious about assuming that the surviving ‘official’ or public record is entire or wholly accurate. A convincing case cannot be made through the absence of evidence, or by reliance on indexes and transcripts without examining the documents from which these have been extracted. Where original documents cannot be obtained, indexes and transcripts should be used with due regard to possible misreadings and omissions.

Knowing that Ellen was pregnant at the time of her visit surely increases the reader’s admiration for her stamina and vitality. The support of her brother through the whole affair can be seen as another measure of her engaging talent. Small deceits and unacknowledged borrowings notwithstanding, Mrs Charles Clacy’s ‘most pithy and entertaining’ work can be read as a valid eyewitness account, not of two years, but of just two months in Victoria’s history during the turbulent year of 1852.

**NOTES**


4  M. Rosalyn Shennan’s correspondence concerning her research on eight people was deposited with the State Library of Victoria, Manuscript collection. It concluded after Ngaire von Sturmer’s death in 1986, Accession no. MS12242, MS BOX 2799/6. Frederic Sturmer went to New Zealand about 1855, as did another of his brothers. Shennan’s unpublished article, accessed by Theobald, arose from this research.


6  Public Record Office of Victoria (PROV), VPRS 7666.


8  *Argus*, 16 October 1852, Bunce despatch dated 8 October.

9  *Argus*, ‘From our own correspondent’, 14 and 20 October 1852, p. 4.

10  Thompson, pp. 98–110.

11  Identified through *Argus* advertisements, e.g. 28 October 1852, p. 5.

12  It should be noted that several issues of the *Argus* around 23 October are missing from the digitised collection, so no departing passengers list is available. The ship *Three Bells*, Captain, Archibald Campbell, left for London on the same day as the *Chowringee*, but it called at South African ports and none of its female cabin passengers fits the Ellen profile in age. See PROV, VPRS 3506.

13  *A Lady’s Visit*, p. 142.


15  PROV, VPRS 3506.

16  Her father leased Hayes manor while he was curate there, supplementing his income by taking in young gentlemen to prepare them for university or the minor professions.

17  Baptism register, St Mary Magdalene, Richmond, Surrey; London Electoral Registers 1890–1902, available through Ancestry.com. Widowed female property owners were qualified to vote decades before full suffrage was achieved in 1918.

18  Death Certificate no. 432 for Ellen Louisa Clacy, Regent’s Park Registration District, December quarter 1901, purchased 14 November 2012.

19  Marriage Certificate no. 150 for Charles Clacy and Ellen Louisa Sturmer, Bermondsey, Surrey Registration District, June quarter 1854, purchased 17 October 2012.
20 *Southern Australian* (Adelaide), 21 November 1843; 26 & 30 April 1844; *South Australian*, 1 June 1849.

21 British Library 19th century newspaper collection, quote from the *Literary Gazette* used in *Morning Post* advertisements beginning April 1854, Gale Document no. R3210039310.
George Isaac Porter: Across Two Worlds

Anne Marsden and Marcus Langdon

The Melbourne Mechanics’ Institution, forerunner of the Melbourne Athenaeum Library marks its 175th anniversary as one of Melbourne’s enduring cultural elements in 2014. The life of one of the Institution’s founders, George Isaac Porter, reflects the spirit of entrepreneurship abounding in Melbourne before the gold rush.

Porter’s Early Years

Porter, born in 1800 in Surrey, England, joined the British East India Company army and was posted to India in 1817 as a gunner. He was just nineteen when he wed Esther Little Bryden, aged about sixteen, in Calcutta (Kolkata). Four daughters and three sons were born between 1820 and 1831, all surviving to adulthood, except their firstborn daughter, who died aged six.

Shortly after Porter’s marriage, botanist Nathaniel Wallich, superintendent of the Calcutta Botanic Gardens, recruited Porter as an overseer who would also teach and train young apprentice gardeners, and Porter was released from his army duties.

In 1822, Porter accompanied Wallich to Penang (Malaysia), where they established a small botanic garden, and Porter was appointed superintendent. Porter named his eldest son George Wallich, suggesting a close personal relationship with Dr Wallich. Specimens collected in Penang by Porter were sent by Wallich to various herbariums, including Kew Gardens, and Wallich named two plant species after Porter.

On the strength of Porter’s experience teaching apprentices, he was appointed the Penang Free School schoolmaster, to which the position of
parish clerk at St George’s Church was attached. Porter resigned his role as headmaster in 1826, but remained parish clerk when he began his mercantile career under the firm Revely & Co. In early 1827, the partnership with Revely was amicably dissolved and Porter, then twenty-seven, continued on his own.4

Much of his business was as an agent and auctioneer, dealing primarily with goods being imported on visiting East India Company ships and with the sale of local houses, land and miscellaneous goods.

Venturing South: Sydney and the Port Phillip District

In early 1834, having made his fortune, Porter decided to chance his arm in Australia, but not before returning briefly to England. Changed trading conditions may well have prompted Porter to move to Australia, as, by 1813, the East India Company had lost its trade monopoly in India, and, following abolition of its China-trade monopoly twenty years later, existed only as a government agency. By the 1830s, the economy was in recession. George and Esther might have considered that their children’s future prospects would be brighter in New South Wales (NSW). It is also possible that periodic recurrences of a fever suffered by Porter in 1822 were malarial, and Sydney’s cooler climate may have been thought to be beneficial.5

In England, Porter took the opportunity to purchase merchandise for setting up business in Australia, knowing that the population growth there had led to an increased demand for goods. The Penang newspapers often carried articles on Australia, generally copied from British or Indian newspapers.

Porter was thirty-five when, with his wife and six children, he arrived in Sydney on 31 August 1835 aboard the Alexander, bringing with him a large quantity of merchandise which he used to establish himself as a merchant in Castlereagh Street.6 Branching out, Porter’s company purchased the barque Regia in 1837,7 for a coasting trip to Port Phillip, Kangaroo Island, King George’s Sound, and the Swan River. In the same year, Porter purchased the brig Alice and despatched her to Mauritius. The vessel returned from that voyage in December 1838 ‘laden with wine’.8

Porter would have known of the rapid development of the Port Phillip District. Penang had been settled by the East India Company in 1786, just two years before Australia and nearly fifty years before Melbourne. Both Penang and Melbourne were run along British lines and Porter no doubt
saw the opportunity from this perspective. Accompanied by his family and five servants, Porter arrived in Melbourne on 29 September 1839, travelling on the maiden voyage of the brig *Jewess*.9

Two days later, Charles Joseph La Trobe arrived to assume his new role as Superintendent of Port Phillip, and Porter was one of 236 settlers to sign a welcome address.10

Porter invested in the Port Phillip District prior to his arrival in Melbourne when, in response to growing demand, the government was forced to open up land in Heidelberg to the north of Melbourne. Porter purchased Portions 4 (830 acres costing £616) and 7 (780 acres at £1,521), which he named Claremont and Cleveland respectively. Property values rose rapidly and most of the Heidelberg Portions were subdivided and sold. Of the original purchasers, only Porter retained ownership, apparently intending to develop his agricultural interests and build a house. A
conservation study commissioned by the Heidelberg City Council in 1985 shows that, from 1838 to the early twentieth century, the family had continuous ownership of Portions 4 and 7.\textsuperscript{11}

\begin{center}
\textbf{George Porter’s Portions 4 and 7 of Heidelberg Crown Grants.}
(Courtesy of D.S. Garden, Heidelberg: the land and its people, 1838-1900, Melbourne University Press, 1972, opp. p. 6.)
\end{center}

Michael Cannon and Ian Macfarlane, in \textit{Historical Records of Victoria}, show that Porter made further extensive purchases in the Port Phillip District (some prior to leaving Sydney) of land in the centre of Melbourne,
and in Geelong, a fast-developing town in the District. From February 1839, Porter purchased ten prime lots in Melbourne Town, adding two lots the following year. They were in an area bounded by Russell, Lonsdale, Spring and Flinders Streets and the cost exceeded £1,500.\(^\text{12}\)

Initially, the family was living in Lonsdale Street, probably in rented premises, while Porter was actively involved in building activities on his Melbourne properties, including Cleveland House in Flinders Street to house his large family.

Donald Garden, in *Heidelberg: the land and its people, 1838–1900*, comments that Porter showed a marked propensity for the name ‘Cleveland’ and gave it to at least three of his properties: Cleveland Estate in Heidelberg; Cleveland House, his residence in Flinders Street, (later part of the Herald & Weekly Times site); and Cleveland Terrace (currently the site of Her Majesty’s Theatre), on the corner of Exhibition and Little Bourke Streets.\(^\text{13}\)

In *The Chronicles Of Early Melbourne 1835–1852*, written in the 1880s, Edmund Finn, reflected: ‘Old Melbourne could boast of (so-called) “Terraces” … The first erected in Stephen Street [now Exhibition Street] commenced at the corner of Little Bourke Street, and known as “Cleveland Terrace”, but was afterwards known as “Porter’s Cottages”, after their owner Mr George Porter. If the memoirs of “Porter’s Cottages” could be written, many a quaint and thrilling tale of Melbourne life would they unfold.’\(^\text{14}\)

Porter probably took out mortgages during the depression of the early 1840s to build the various houses in town. On 17 January 1840, Porter mortgaged Portion 7, the mortgage being re-paid in November 1843.\(^\text{15}\) He mortgaged his lots in Flinders Lane (2, 3 and 4, Cleveland House), Lot 10 (Cleveland Terrace), and Portion 4 (Claremont) in Heidelberg to the Australian Trust Company against a loan of £2,500 on 10 April 1843.\(^\text{16}\) This mortgage was paid out by George’s widow in 1849, six months after his death.

Even in these difficult times, Porter continued to develop his Heidelberg property, concentrating on Portion 7 which had frontages on the Plenty and Yarra Rivers. In January 1841, he claimed to have spent over £2,000 on improvements.\(^\text{17}\) An 1841 NSW Census of Porter’s Heidelberg property lists nine persons, six of whom were ‘Free’—a substantial workforce a mere sixteen months after his arrival in Melbourne.\(^\text{18}\) It is possible that, with his botanical knowledge, he may have been involved in an early
agricultural society initiated by Heidelberg landowners, who imported a variety of animals and crops.

But not all went smoothly for Porter on his Heidelberg estate. In 1840, the Melbourne Survey Office surveyed a line for a local section of road resulting in Porter’s Portion 7 being left without reasonable access. The original Survey Office map shows the new line of the road through Warringal (Heidelberg) to the parish of Nillumbik.\(^{19}\)

In January 1841, Porter wrote to Superintendent La Trobe to complain about the inconvenience, but eventually withdrew his complaint as he believed that lengthy correspondence with Sydney would cause further delay.\(^{20}\) The new road opened by May 1841 was not satisfactory and a Road Trust was elected on 20 October 1841, the first example of local government in the Port Phillip District.\(^{21}\) George Porter, Thomas Wills and William Verner were elected trustees, and Porter served until 1845.

Meanwhile, Porter’s agricultural know-how—and the rich river-flat soils of Heidelberg—were paying dividends and, in March 1842, the Port Phillip Gazette reported that Porter’s potatoes were of high quality and praised his agricultural practices.\(^{22}\)

By the middle of 1842, moves were under way to hold Municipal Council elections in Melbourne, which resulted in Council assuming control of the markets. Political posturing began in earnest and Porter and others ran afoul of John Pascoe Fawkner, a fellow market commissioner, who, in his *Patriot* newspaper, implied that Porter had fraudulently evaded the payment of market dues by employing the market inspector to sell his potatoes.\(^{23}\) A meeting of the Market Commissioners was hurriedly called, Fawkner’s allegations were refuted, and he was expelled from the organisation by the other commissioners. An editorial in the *Port Phillip Gazette* in June 1842 commented: ‘It was necessary … to relieve Mr Commissioner Porter of the false and scandalous charges of which the Patriot had been made the vehicle.’\(^{24}\)

Porter owned stalls in Bourke Street’s Eastern Bazaar, later utilising one of them to sell produce from his Heidelberg farm, and, in February 1843, he advertised four dwelling houses for rental in Cleveland Terrace at the corner of Stephen (now Exhibition) and Little Collins Streets, and two shops in the Bazaar. Alongside this was another advertisement offering sections of Portions 4 and 7 in Heidelberg for lease. As some of these holdings were mortgaged to a neighbour, this may have been on a fairly informal basis, enabling Porter to lease out sections.\(^{25}\)
Porter’s Community Involvement

Porter’s involvement with the emerging society shows that his commercial success appeared not to override his sense of responsibility to the various communities he encountered—charity, church and educational. In November 1839, less than two months after settling in Melbourne, Porter was elected as one of the eight founding vice-presidents of the Melbourne Mechanics’ Institution. This suggests that he had familiarised himself with the social scene and had cultivated influential contacts. The establishment of a mechanics’ institution at such an early stage in Melbourne’s development was the result of an initiative of the master builders who had called a meeting to discuss the need to support workers in times of stress and to improve their skills and hence expand the labour pool. Men of influence, such as Porter, would have supported these objectives, not without self-interest, as skilled labour was in short supply.

In August 1840, Porter was involved in a proposal for a Port Phillip College, possibly prompted by his earlier experience as schoolmaster in Penang. At a meeting held on 12 August 1840, he was appointed to a provisional committee ‘to retain office until £2000 had been raised’. But the Catholic Church saw the initiative as ‘the first step towards the establishment of a Church of England ascendancy’. Finn commented that ‘the Collegiate prospectus fluttered for a season before the public eye, and the proprietary vanished’.

Finn lists both G. Porter (father), and J.A. Porter and G.W. Porter (his sons, who would have been in late adolescence) in attendance at a levee in honour of Governor Gipps in October 1841. One hundred and fifty gentlemen, the social elite of Melbourne Town, were presented to the Governor.

A little over a year after this gathering, many of these men would have attended the opening of the grand new Mechanics’ Institution building in Collins Street, on the site now occupied by its successor, the Melbourne Athenaeum, adjacent to Melbourne’s Town Hall. This supplied a conveniently located venue for gentlemen to mingle, make valuable contacts, and scan newspapers from ‘home’. It also offered the only venue for large gatherings in Melbourne, even housing the first Town Council until the Town Hall was built, and it was Melbourne’s only substantial library, pending the opening in 1856 of the first stage of Melbourne’s free public library, forerunner of the State Library of Victoria.
Porter maintained his interest in botanic gardens. The *Patriot* declared in March 1842: ‘Our readers, more especially the ladies, will be glad to learn that His Excellency Sir George Gipps has given directions that the formation of a Botanic Garden, at Melbourne, shall be immediately proceeded with, and that fifteen acres at Batman’s Hill be set apart for that purpose. Messrs Porter, Simpson, and a number of gentlemen to be named are to form a committee for the purpose of superintending the progress of the work on which the unemployed emigrants are to be engaged.’ It is likely that George Porter was the Porter thus named in view of his previous experience overseeing botanical gardens.

There was an urgent need to establish a hospital in Melbourne and, at a meeting of subscribers to a proposed Melbourne hospital in April 1842, Porter was one of twenty-five committee members appointed for a period of nine months to oversee progress. A staunch and influential Anglican, Porter was involved in the establishment of two major churches in Melbourne: St James, then on the corner of William and Little Collins Streets, but dismantled and moved to King Street in 1913, and St Peter’s in Gisborne Street, still on its original site at the north-east edge of today’s Victorian State Parliament gardens. He was elected to the early committee of St James, the foundation stone of which was laid by Superintendent La Trobe on 9 November 1839. In 1840, Porter was elected to the building committee of St James. The population growth in Melbourne meant that soon another church was needed and Porter was one of a list of thirty subscribers of £5 each when fundraising for St Peter’s began in May 1841. He was one of sixteen of the main proponents calling for a meeting to elect trustees, ‘the sum of £300 having been subscribed’. The application was submitted to the Government in Sydney, but, with some funds short, a decision on St Peter’s was deferred until the roof of St James was completed.

A meeting was held in November 1843 to revive the project and Porter was elected as one of twelve to form a committee to raise further funds. The tough economic conditions of the early 1840s meant that it was not until the end of 1845 that a total of £500 was raised from the public. Bishop Broughton then donated £500 from Sydney funds and the Government added a further £1,000. The application was resubmitted, a site granted, and the foundation stone was laid by La Trobe on 18 June 1846. The first part of St Peter’s was completed only a few months before George Porter died at the age of forty-eight on 7 July 1848.
funeral service was held on 11 July at St James Cathedral, and his burial service conducted by Rev. A.C. Thomson. He was first buried in the Old Melbourne Cemetery, but, in 1883, when the site was required for the Victoria Market, his remains were moved to Boroondara Cemetery in Kew, Victoria.
George and Esther’s Legacy

Porter and his contemporaries typified the gentlemen and master builders who were responsible for the establishment of many of Melbourne’s institutions. Fuelled by their energy and enthusiasm to take advantage of the commercial, agricultural, and cultural opportunities, they played a major role in Port Phillip’s move towards separation from New South Wales as the new Colony of Victoria.

As with so many women of the era who worked behind the scenes to support their menfolk and families, little is known of Esther Porter. Her life was one of constant childbearing from the age of seventeen, as she and her young husband gained increasing wealth and status. She was resilient, outliving George and four of her seven offspring.

Unlike many contemporaries whose fortunes failed in the young settlement, Porter’s legacy endured, his accumulated wealth providing a springboard for his children and their descendants. George Porter also proved his social worth, playing an active and productive role in the growing settlement—a true Port Phillip pioneer.

But we should not forget the roles he played during the formative years of George Town, Penang. In a settlement where Europeans were a very small minority, he held positions of importance and influence while still in his twenties and early thirties. The business skills he honed there in the difficult and competitive world of mercantile trade set him, his family, and subsequent generations on a course of prosperity in Australia. George Porter left a legacy which stretched across two worlds.

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A more detailed, fully referenced account of George Porter’s life by the authors is held at the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and at the Melbourne Athenaeum Archives.

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BATMAN’S ROUTE REVISITED:
HIS EXACT STEPS TO A NEW TREATY SITE

John Daniels

IN 1835, JOHN BATMAN set sail for Port Phillip from Van Diemen’s Land with the intention of claiming rights to pasture land for himself and his business associates. Past scholars have offered varied interpretations of where Batman and his party actually walked around Melbourne, and, therefore, where the famous treaty with the Indigenous people was signed—which is the purpose of this article. (Commentary on the meaning of the treaty will not be offered, it having been well covered by others.) The Merri Creek in Northcote was unquestioned as the treaty location after Bonwick chronicled Batman’s exploits in 1863, until J.A. Blackburn Jnr controversially suggested the Plenty River at Eltham in 1885. He was followed by Sutherland (1888), who suggested the Darebin Creek near Epping. J.S. Duncan attempted to settle the matter at the time of Victoria’s 150th birthday commemorations in 1986, proposing Edgars Creek in Thomastown. A.H. Campbell countered (1987) with Darebin Creek near Norris Bank in Bundoora. Most recently, Merv Lia (2008) proposed Merri Creek at Coburg Lake. Duncan and Campbell, contemporaries and members of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, provided quite detailed, but different, accounts of most of Batman’s journey. The following is a new interpretation that aims to plot as accurately as possible the exact route, and suggests a previously unconsidered location on the Merri Creek as the treaty site. In arguing this case, the interpretations of Duncan and Campbell will be reviewed and other documents examined (including settler reminiscences, maps, expert opinion and studies from a number of disciplines). Primary documents referred to throughout are Batman’s
The diary begins on 10 May 1835, when Batman boarded the *Rebecca* at Launceston. He arrived in Port Phillip on 29 May, anchoring off Indented Head. Having spent a number of days in the Geelong area, examining the land and unsuccessfully trying to make contact with the Indigenous owners with whom a deal could be transacted, Batman and his party headed for the northern part of the bay.

**Tuesday 2 June**

We made the river about 3pm ... endeavoured to get up the river but found the water not more than one fathom. The *Rebecca* laid anchor somewhere between Gellibrand Point and the river mouth, unable to find a deep enough access. Historian Alexander Sutherland was very specific in saying that ‘she lay off the foot of what is now Ferguson Street’ (Melway 56 D8).
I went on shore this evening, and found the land good, covered with kangaroo grass, and thinly timbered with she-oak …

Having inspected the lie of the land, Batman started out by boat the next morning to find a channel, whilst a party proceeded on foot.

**Wednesday 3 June**

After getting everything ready this morning, left the vessel about 9 o’clock. I went up the river about five miles, sounding as we went, and found from seven to nine feet of water in the channel. I landed and joined the party. They had walked about seven miles over a grassy country, thinly wooded with she-oak and scarce another tree.

It is probable that the land party walked on high ground, in from the shore, roughly following the present Douglas Parade from Williamstown to Stony Creek where the map indicates that Batman’s land journey began. It makes sense that the boat rowed out of the mainstream current and into the Stony Creek inlet for Batman to disembark, and where the creek would have been crossed by the land party. There were two prominent wetlands very close to the river on the east before Stony Creek, so Batman would have been unimpressed with the very low, swampy eastern side.³

Stony Creek is only about three miles (five kilometres) from Williamstown. So, straight away, Batman’s estimation of distance must be questioned. If Batman had travelled five miles, he would have passed the junction of the Maribyrnong and Yarra rivers, which, as we shall see, he does not appear to have noticed. (The Yarra originally joined the Maribyrnong opposite Lyons Street.) (Melway 42 E7.)

In trying to determine travel distances, clothing and equipment need to be considered. As it was winter, they probably wore moleskin trousers, boots, serge shirts and over-shirts, top coats or pea jackets, and a broad belt holding accoutrements such as a pistol and a tomahawk. These would be warm and heavy. Apart from provisions and camping equipment, they carried the gifts: ‘Twenty pair of Blankets, Thirty Tomahawks, One Hundred Knives, Fifty pair of Scissors, Thirty Looking Glasses, Two Hundred Handkerchiefs, One Hundred Pounds of flour’. A conservative estimate of the total weight of these gifts is one hundred and seventy kilograms. Robson, first mate of the *Rebecca*, described the party as ‘armed to the teeth and loaded with as much as they could carry’ and ‘Batman, who carried his swag the same as the rest’. Shared between the eleven men (four white men and seven Aborigines), it equates to over fifteen kilograms.
per person. Added to their equipment and food, this was a large load for eleven men to carry.4

In 3 June’s diary entry, there is no mention of seeing the river branch to the right. Why was Batman unaware of, or did not comment on, the Yarra? On Monday 1 June, whilst in the Geelong area, he states his intention to ‘proceed tomorrow up through the country for several days and meet the vessel at the river or head of the bay’. He clearly knows where he is going and that there is a river at the top of the bay, but it appears to be one river only. On Tuesday: ‘I prepared to go with the vessel to the river … We made the river about 3pm … Near the heads of the river … We endeavoured to go up the river … I have hopes we shall find a good channel up for some distance … I shall tomorrow take my departure up the river.’ On his return on June 7: ‘to our great surprise when we got through the scrub, we found ourselves on a much larger river than the one we went up.’ This is remarkable, if, as Harcourt states: ‘Both Flinders and Grimes made detailed maps … collated and published as a single map in 1814. It was this map which Batman had during his 1835 expedition.’ Rusden reported that William Robertson, a close associate of Batman, stated: ‘Of course we had Flinders’ chart; that is the chart we went by.’ Duncan suggested that Batman’s ‘copy of the chart did not include the information gained by Grimes’. Regardless, it must have been Batman’s intention to head northward toward Hume and Hovell’s irresistible Iramoo.5

The Stony Creek inlet was quite wide right up to where Stephen Street would cross, if it were continuous (Melway 42 B11). So, having met Batman and crossed here, the party would quickly rise to the higher ground and head northward. Since the land to the west of, and around, the junction of the rivers was low and swampy, the closest they would come to it would be five hundred metres. If they did not see the Yarra from the Yarraville Gardens area (Melway 42 C8), facing it directly upstream as it headed south-south-west, a distance of about one kilometre, then perhaps it was not visible through the thick tea-tree surrounding it. Frances Perry, in 1848, said: ‘the river is about the width of the Cam at Cambridge behind the colleges—the banks, the whole way up to Melbourne, are perfectly flat, and covered thickly with tea-tree scrub’. W. Lloyd Williams explained:

Neither Batman’s party nor Fawkner’s men found the Yarra at the first try, but went off up the Maribyrnong. This was most likely because the lower Yarra, though quite deep, was heavily lined with tea-tree scrub and was full of snags and half-sunken trees. It did not look very important.6
Batman’s diary continues:

A few miles further I came to the banks of the river, which appeared deeper than where I had landed from the boat. On both sides the land open and covered with excellent kangaroo grass.

They met the river again at Footscray Park, where the terrain is certainly open and fairly flat on both sides.

In passing up the banks, passed over several rich flats, about a mile wide, and two or three long, not a tree, and covered with kangaroo grass above my knees ... It does not appear to be ever overflowed.

Rich flats abound, on both sides of the river, all the way up to the Department of Defence site, north of Cordite Avenue (Melway 27 J7). It sounds like they kept fairly close to the river, but high enough to see in the distance, and with enough twists to make it seem that a lot of ground was covered.

I followed up this river in all about twenty-six miles and found that on both sides, as far as the eye can see, open plains, with a few she-oak trees ... We did not fall in with any fresh water the whole of this day, and just at sunset, when about to stop for the night on the banks of the river, I saw a damp place.

Twenty-six miles is an unrealistic estimate since the river’s water was tidal and saline up to the rocky crossing (named Solomon’s, Clancy’s or Canning Street Ford) described by Flemming in 1803, about thirteen miles (or twenty-one kilometres) from Williamstown.\textsuperscript{7}

I ordered one of the men (Gumm) to make a hole with a stick which he did about two feet deep, and in less than one hour we had a plentiful supply of good soft water; and by ten o’clock this evening the hole was running over the top, the water beautiful and clear.

Duncan states that this place, named Gumm’s Well by Batman, was at Medway Golf Course (Melway 27 F9). For such a hole to be overflowing with fresh water, there would have to be pressure from water running downhill. Whilst Medway is a plausible spot, there is another possibility—on the Defence site, north of Cordite Avenue. Opposite the Afton Street Reserve, about fifty metres upstream from the remnant buttress to an old bridge, is a bluestone drain that was once a small watercourse (Melway 27 K6). Joseph Raleigh built his home near here in about 1850, indicating that there was a supply of fresh water.\textsuperscript{8}
The river varies from 100 yards to 60 yards up it, and at this place it is not more than 40 yards. I think it will get smaller as we go up. I have named this place Gumm’s Well.

At both Medway and the Defence site, the width of the river is about forty yards (or thirty-six metres). But, from the eastern perimeter of the golf course, the river suddenly almost halves in width. If Batman camped at Medway, one would have thought that he would have seen and known, not just thought, that ‘it will get smaller’.  

Thursday 4 June

After following the river for four or five miles, I went off to get a view of Mounts Collicott, Cottrell and Connolly ...

The Canning Street ford is only about two kilometres upstream of Medway and five kilometres upstream of the Defence site (Melway 27 B8). If Batman camped at Medway, he would no doubt have seen the ford in his ‘four or five miles’ (and it could well have been worth a comment). It is more likely that the party followed the river from the Defence site and left it before reaching, or seeing, the ford. Whilst this five kilometres is only about half Batman’s estimated mileage, most of his estimates are up to double the real distance.

Three emus started across a beautiful, or rather high plain. I followed the dogs for a mile or more, and saw them run for two or three miles further. When on these plains, and where I now stand ... I think I can safely swear that I can see every way over plains twenty miles distance ...

The party headed in a north-westerly arc across Sunshine North, St Albans and Kealba.

Still continuing on the plain for about eight miles, when we made the river again, which, I am happy to say, contained excellent water.

Given that the obvious loop on the Wedge map is Horseshoe Bend in Keilor (Melway 15 A9), it must be where they returned to the river. Therefore, ‘eight miles’ must also be a large overestimate—more probably a five-mile (or eight-kilometre) circuit.

We all had a hearty drink, and crossed over the river on some of the richest ground I ever saw in my life. Marshmallows with leaves as broad as cabbage leaves and as high as my head. We then crossed the river again at a native ford ...
McIntyre’s or Delahey’s Ford was at the end of Stenson Road (Melway 14 J10), although whether it was crossable in Batman’s time is unknown. However, it is quite a distance (one and a half kilometres) before Horseshoe Bend and does not fit Batman’s description of the land. A more likely crossing is just north of the junction with Taylors Creek. It is now a concreted, permanent ford (Melway 14 H8). Ray Dodd, whose family were very early landowners in Keilor, remembers that the river was not crossable in winter below Taylors Creek. To the north, on the eastern side, was rich black soil devoted to market gardens. Taylors Creek meanders in a deep, narrow, alluvial valley. Ancient Aboriginal skeletal remains were found south-west of the confluence in 1965 in a pit from which garden soil was extracted for sale. The soil was three metres deep, conducive to supporting the vegetation he describes.\(^\text{10}\)

The diary is quite confusing at this point and neither Duncan nor Campbell made an attempt to explain the river crossings of this day. If they crossed from west to east and back again (at the ford), they would be facing a very steep, high bank. Considering the rich terrain and what follows, it is more plausible that the second crossing was from west to east. Therefore, it makes sense that they crossed Taylors Creek first, amongst the tall vegetation, proceeding upstream about sixty metres to the ‘native ford’.

We must remember that Batman may not necessarily have recorded the events of his travels accurately or completely, writing in a notebook at the end of a day’s (or half a day’s) hard slog. It would be difficult to recall exact events and sequences over unfamiliar territory.

We went up a small rise of excellent soil, with grass above my knees. The only small rise is on the eastern side, where Brimbank Park (and Dodd’s Homestead) is. The western side has steep banks all the way to the Keilor Road bridge.

We then kept up the river for a few miles and stopped for the night, in a corner alongside the river. I gave it the name of Gumm’s Corner. The distance from the ‘native ford’ to Gumms Corner (Melway 14 K8) is about three and a half kilometres, once again ‘a few miles’ being a typical overestimation. It certainly fits the description of a ‘corner’, with the river taking a very sharp, almost right-angled bend.

Batman’s route as marked on the map, at this point in particular, is an inaccurate simplification that adds no evidence to the location of the
crossings, or the distance to Gumms Corner. However, the ‘Gumm’s Corner’ label on the map does indicate the site as being in the sharp bend.\footnote{11}

After I got a little tea and something to eat I, with 4 of my natives, took a circuit of about 13 miles up the river, which was running in a north direction. I found the whole of the land very good with excellent warm hills and valleys with grass 3 feet high ... Walked about 30 miles today.

When Batman mentions tea, it is safe to assume that he means afternoon tea. It is very doubtful that he would have undertaken a night walk. The eastern side of the river to the north is steep, with a fairly flat plain interrupted by the upper reaches of Steele Creek (one to one and a half kilometres away). About three kilometres upstream of Gumms Corner are the gullies of Arundel Creek, which starts near the Melbourne Airport Communications Tower. The area certainly fits the description of ‘warm hills and valleys’ (Melway 4 H10).

**Friday 5 June**

Left the river this morning for W-N-W direction. The river took a north one. I intend to cross some large plains and get into tiers on the other side.

This suggests an immediate river crossing from Gumms Corner and the river can actually be crossed about fifty metres north of the Corner bend, not far from the bridge where there is no steep embankment. This area was the chosen crossing place from the first European settlement, and it is likely that Batman’s party took a similar route to the original (and present) road on high ground away from the river flats, with the Keilor Plains stretching out ahead.

Crossed the plains which were very extensive on all sides as far as I could see ... Crossed three streams of fresh water and both sides of each of the banks were steep but covered with grass to the edge of the water. In some parts of the creeks the water did not run but large and deep ponds remained in the bed. The three creeks I crossed I am inclined to think is the same, running in different directions, and empties itself into the river.

The description of the creeks fits with that of the meanders of Jacksons Creek. Three crossings of the creek indicate a course towards Redstone Hill, Batman’s Mt Iramoo (Melway 382 K12). In the direction they walked, Mt Macedon is almost directly in line behind Redstone Hill, which sits in front of other peaks in the Sunbury district. These are likely to be the ‘tiers’ that Batman mentioned earlier, and towards which he headed.
So far, the timber is the only thing I now see that is deficient. We passed a small forest about two miles in length of she-oak ...

This fits with Isaac Batey’s account of the area: ‘On Glencoe, the Messrs Page’s station, the she-oaks started from Allison’s late brick factory, and ran down into the Misses Dickens’ Coldhigham Lodge estate in a forest sufficiently dense for the writer to get lost in when he was a boy.’ Allison’s factory was situated north of Watson’s Road (Melway 352 F1); Dickens’ property was at Melway 176 D7. George Duncan, current owner of Glencoe, has noted old tree stumps on his property. The party would have actually passed through this forest before making their third Jacksons Creek crossing.\(^\text{12}\)

Ascended the top of a beautiful hill, bare of timber at the top, with a few she-oak on the sides. We have here, from where I am sitting, a view all round. I think I may say 40 miles or more each way of beautiful Plains of the best description of grass—from east to west I think there is more than 80 miles certain—and from this to the river or bay is 50 miles all plains and 30 miles due north all plains—with here and there a few gentle rising hills and valleys of the best description ...

Batey, long-time resident of Redstone Hill, recalled: ‘The western slope of Red Stone Hill ... was thickly clothed with she-oaks’. They reached Redstone Hill at about noon, a distance of about seventeen kilometres from Gumms Corner, having travelled at a rate of about four kilometres per hour. This sounds very feasible for the party and roughly equates to Batman’s previous travel estimates. Whilst Duncan agreed that Redstone Hill is Batman’s Mt Iramoo, Campbell believed it to be Mt Kororoit (Melway 332 J12).\(^\text{13}\)

Campbell’s first suggested interpretation was the following: ‘A journey in accordance with the map west from Horseshoe Bend crosses Taylors Creek and Kororoit Creek, and by turning north it again crosses Kororoit Creek’. For this to occur, Batman’s party would have headed west for thirteen kilometres beyond Taylors Creek, crossed Kororoit Creek, and made a sharp turn north toward Mt Kororoit, re-crossing Kororoit Creek. In doing so, it would be obvious that the last two crossings were of the same stream and that Taylors Creek was not connected at all.\(^\text{14}\)

Campbell’s second theory was that ‘By deviating slightly he could have crossed Taylors Creek three times’. It must be questioned why Batman would want to cross Taylors Creek three times and why, considering that it is a fairly straight waterway, he would not have realised that it was the
one stream. Campbell himself stated that ‘the third crossing being … where the banks of the watercourse are not steep’.

Campbell dismissed Jacksons Creek, because its ‘banks are not merely steep but are precipitous in places with exposed rock or rubble without the grass specified by Batman—nor is flow absent in places … and Jacksons Creek is likely to have been flowing in June 1835’. However, he does recognise that it ‘is true there are large pools separated by rock-bars’. Batey wrote in 1907:

that Jacksons Creek, from 1846 to 1852, ceased to run every year from end of December or early in January until the autumn rains about April, but one season it remained a chain of waterholes until August. Since 1852 the cessation of flow has been very rare, though a few years back it stopped running for a few weeks.

Clearly, flow certainly has been absent at times.

‘Another problem’, according to Campbell, ‘is that Redstone Hill is not on an extensive plain as described for Mt Iramoo … Duncan believes that Batman could have loosely described the terrain as a plain but this is not a foregone conclusion’. Neither scholar actually visited Redstone Hill to witness the commanding view all around. The hills toward Sunbury seem smaller and do not interfere, the valley of Jacksons Creek likewise. Batman makes a similar grand, general statement on 2 June whilst heading towards Gumm’s Well—he found ‘on both sides, as far as the eye can see, open plains’. He doesn’t bother to mention the river, nor the ‘she-oak hills’ to the east (as mentioned on the map). The land to the east (Ascot Vale, Moonee Ponds, Essendon) is quite hilly.

Both Duncan and Campbell use the route taken by Gellibrand (in early February of 1836) to support their respective claims to Redstone Hill and Mt Kororoit. Like Batman, Gellibrand left a diary and a map, both open to interpretation. So, as it stands, any reference to Gellibrand’s trip is unhelpful until his course is clarified.

A major consideration in determining whether it was Redstone Hill or Mt Kororoit is distance. The travel rate from Gumms Corner to Mt Kororoit via Kororoit Creek would have been 5.6 kilometres per hour; via Taylors Creek, 4.7; and that across Jacksons Creek, 3.6. The latter best fits in with the party’s overall travel rates.

We have just seen the smoke of the natives in an easterly direction, and going to take that course.
This was Batman’s first sighting of smoke. The specific purpose of this midday smoke is, of course, unknown. Was it some form of communication about the intruders? Was it about a meeting? Was it to attract the party? Was it simply for cooking or warmth? Whatever the case, it could be assumed that the Aborigines were aware of the party, especially given Batman’s previous encounter (inland from Corio Bay on 31 May).  

We kept in the direction for the smoke about 16 miles over fine plains and crossed a fresh water creek—just at a junction of another running from N-N-E. We then crossed plains again and came into a small forest about 2 miles through some gum and box, that would either do for splitting or sawing, with she-oak ... We then came upon beautiful open plains with a few wattle and oak, gentle rising hills of very rich black soil with grass up to our middle and as thick as it could stand … We came on to a small valley and to our joy found a tea tree scrub at the upper end of a small creek running s-East—here we found good water at sunset and remained for the night.

Does Batman really mean they travelled ‘sixteen miles’ (or twenty-six kilometres) before crossing a creek? Or, does he mean it was ‘sixteen miles’ overall? The former would be highly improbable. The issue of interpretation or the correct recording of events arises again. One could assume that a similar rate of travel as in the morning (about sixteen kilometres) would be a good pace.

That first creek junction was of Emu Creek and Maribyrnong River (also called Deep Creek in this vicinity). (Melway 177 A1). Open plains extended from there to about present-day Oaklands Road (Melway 177 J2). The plains merged into ‘forest’ that extended from Woodlands northward—a geologically distinct granitic pocket. There is remnant gum, box and she-oak in varying degrees of thickness. The ‘rich black soil’ begins east of this, before Mickleham Road. Their camping spot was probably in the area of the present Greenvale Reservoir where streams, converging from north-east and north-west, met in a distinct valley (Melway 179 C8). The Yuroke Creek, ‘a small creek running s-East’, is fed by a spring, just south of Aitken College. Tea-trees are still found here. This is about fifteen to sixteen kilometres from Redstone Hill, consistent with Batman’s previous incorrect estimates of distance, and consistent with a realistic rate of travel for the day considering the tall, thick grass they contended with.

Whilst Duncan agrees with the above interpretation of this day’s travel, Campbell claims the party travelled from Mt Kororoit to the junction of Deep and Jacksons Creeks (Melway 4 B4), across the southern part of
Tullamarine Airport, continuing to Moonee Ponds Creek at Westmeadows where it flows south-east (Melway 6 A7). First, it is questionable whether Deep Creek at this point could be described as a freshwater ‘creek’, not a river, in winter time. Second, to reach the junction, they would have encountered Jacksons Creek, followed it for about two kilometres, and made a sharp turn northward for about one kilometre. There would be no reason for this detour from their eastward goal. Third, to imply that Deep Creek runs from the north-north-east at this point is quite wrong. It runs into the junction from a meander to the west, this being the last of a series of meanders. Overall, it runs from the north.

Next, on this route across Tullamarine, there is nothing to account for the forest described by Batman. The area is considered plains grassland on volcanic soil. Campbell then makes an extraordinary claim that the Moonee Ponds Creek ‘is likely to have been less defined than in Batman’s day so that Batman gained the impression that he was at the “upper end” of a stream’. Campbell openly admits to ‘uncertainty concerning an open forest and the doubt about the “upper end” of Moonee Ponds Creek’.

Saturday 6 June

We travelled over as good a country as I have yet met with and if possible richer land, thinly timbered the grass was mostly 3 and 4 feet high and as thick as it could lay on the ground the land quite black, we walked about 8 miles when we fell in with the tracks of the natives, and shortly after came up with a family, one chief, his wife & 3 children ...

This Aborigine, we now know, was named Morandulk, Mooney Mooney, or Old Murry, headman of the Balluk-Willam group who occupied the most easterly and southerly part of Woiwurrung land on the western side of the Dandenongs.

He then went on with us and crossed a fresh water creek. The land on each side excellent. This would have to be the Merri Creek and in keeping with Batman’s overestimated travel distances, it is more like eight kilometres, not miles, from the camping spot.

He took us on, saying he would take us to his tribe and mentioned the names of chiefs. It is at this point that the map is very misleading. Whereas previous scholars have taken the eastward line of the map to be true and interpreted ‘took
us on’ to mean in an easterly direction, Morandulk could well have taken
the party south-easterly, roughly following the direction of the Merri, but
not within view of it.

It seems that Morandulk was aware of the meeting of the headmen. The
direction Morandulk was initially heading is speculative. He could
have been heading northward, following the creek, away from the treaty
site, and then reversed course for Batman. Maybe he was sent to intercept
the party. Alternatively, he could have been heading south to attend the
meeting, not knowing its exact location. Whatever the case, he was not a
signatory to the treaty.

We walked about 8 miles, when to our great surprise we heard several voices
calling after us. On looking back we saw 8 men all armed with spears, etc.
When we stopped they threw aside their weapons and came very friendly
up to us.

It is important to note here that they travelled about the same distance
south-south-easterly as they had travelled eastward to the Merri from the
previous campsite.

[They took us with them about a mile back where we found huts, women
and children ...]

The map line eastwards indicates Batman crossed a stream (the Merri
Creek) and then another (not mentioned in the diary). To the east of the
Merri is Edgars Creek, which runs roughly parallel. Edgars was originally
named Blind Creek, meaning that it was seasonal and rather insignificant,
which could explain why the diary did not mention it.²³

After they had crossed Edgars Creek, the Aborigines caught up with
them and took them back to the larger Merri. If Morandulk was heading
south when intercepted by Batman, he would not have known exactly
where the headmen were camped. If he was heading north (having left
them), not taking Batman’s group directly to the headmen could well have
been attributable to Aboriginal etiquette. Hallam, in her examination of
Aboriginal greeting rituals, noted that ‘keeping a correct distance’ was
important.²⁴

I found eight chiefs amongst them ... alongside of a beautiful stream of water
... Each of the principal chiefs has two wives and several children each. In
all the tribe consists of 45 men, women & children.
Batman’s treaty deed identifies eight Aboriginal headmen. Five of these are recorded in Diane Barwick’s studies. All five were members of the same large Woiwurrung group, but came from disparate territories.\textsuperscript{25}

There are many recorded signs of Aboriginal occupation along the Merri Creek. Aborigines could have camped almost anywhere as long as basic needs were met: shelter (both building materials and a terrain that provided protection from the wind), food, water and, in this case, space for forty-five people.\textsuperscript{26}

An examination of the Merri Creek’s course will show a particular spot (Melway 18 A4 & 5) that bears an uncanny similarity to the drawing on the map, where Edgars Creek runs parallel, where the creek could be crossed in winter, where there is good shelter from westerly winds, and which is large enough to accommodate eight families. Also, it accords with Batman’s estimated travel distance. Unfortunately, we will never know what Batman considered ‘a beautiful stream of water’, but here there is a sweeping bend with a gentle rise on the eastern bank and a natural stone crossing at the southern end. The western bank is steep and rocky, providing good shelter from westerly prevailing winds. It is now choked with weeds and the flow regime and water quality is dramatically different, but this spot is less altered than much of Merri Creek. The creek line has not been realigned; the original soil has not been filled over; and some remnant native grassland remains on the slopes of the east bank.\textsuperscript{27}

At this point, the relationship between the map and the deed needs examination.

The map was no doubt based on the diary, but had to reflect the text of the treaty document since it was to be submitted to Governor Arthur. The deed describes the land being traded as ‘about 7 miles from the mouth of the river, Forty miles North East, and from thence West Forty miles across Iramoo Downs or Plains’. From Mt Iramoo (Redstone Hill), Batman stated in the diary that he travelled thirty-one miles eastwards, yet he claims forty. From Redstone Hill to the Plenty River, way beyond the Merri and the Darebin creeks, is a mere seventeen miles. From the Yarra northeast to that seventeen-mile point on the Plenty is a mere thirteen miles (yet Batman again claims forty on the deed). The deed’s claims are thus far in excess of Batman’s diary distances and extraordinary when compared to actual distance covered. Just as the deed’s description of the land is a contrived simplification, so is the map, in that it reflects the land claimed on the deed, ignoring Batman’s exact route.
The map was drawn by Wedge, in Van Diemen’s Land. Apart from the diary, one must assume that it was based on Batman’s memory alone, being so out of scale and simplified. The line of his walk is simplified, even contrived (especially from Mt Iramoo onward), because it served as a marker of territory to be claimed. Batman’s landmarks are sound—the shape of the Maribyrnong up to Keilor, Horseshoe Bend, the curling meanders of Jacksons Creek, Redstone Hill and its proximity to the junction of Emu.
and Deep Creeks, and the treaty site area. The latter depicts the shape of the Merri from what Batman saw of it. It is very out of scale and proportion, and is askew in direction, but it fits with what follows in the diary.

As stated earlier, previous scholars have Batman following the map line eastwards from the Merri, except for the proponents of the Merri-at-Northcote as the treaty site. The latter (such as Bonwick, Rusden and Harcourt) have not attempted to explain how Batman arrived so far south down the Merri. From the campsite at Westmeadows, Campbell says the party journeyed on to, and over, the Darebin Creek at Norris Bank (Melway 182 G12). He stated that Batman ‘describes crossing two creeks and negotiating a treaty with the Aborigines on the banks of the second creek’. This is a clear misreading of the diary. As we have just read, he ‘crossed a fresh water creek’ and was taken ‘about a mile back’ to be ‘alongside of a beautiful stream of water’, clearly indicating the crossing of only one creek. Campbell’s theory involves crossing the Merri, Edgars (which he also noted as ‘often dry and may have carried little water at the time’) and Darebin. Duncan maintains that the treaty site is on the eastern bank of Edgars Creek.  

**Sunday 7 June**

Detained this morning some time drawing up triplicates of the deeds ... and delivering over to them more property on the banks of the river, which I have named Batman’s Creek ... about 10am I took my departure ... I crossed Batman’s Creek and walked through a thinly timbered forest of box, gum, she-oak & wattle but thickly covered with excellent grass.

In 1850, when J.P. Fawkner purchased Section 2 of Will Will Rook parish (present-day Hadfield), he named it Box Forest. Fawkner Cemetery is to its east, Boundary Road to the south and Box Forest Road to the north. James Watson, an early landowner, gained employment by cutting and carting wood from Box Forest to the Saltwater River (now the Maribyrnong River). There are remnant box trees in the cemetery.  

Most of the land was as rich as I ever saw in my life; grass 3 and 4 feet high, and many places where a fire had been, thistles 5 feet high—impossible for grass to stand thicker on the ground.

This land is largely basalt sheet flow, typical of much of the area traversed and viewed by Batman—highly fertile, but shallow and prone to waterlogging in winter; expanding and cracking in dry weather. Trees struggle to maintain a foothold. Hoddle’s 1837 map shows a number of deliberately
marked patches of ‘plain’ between the Merri and Moonee Ponds Creeks. One assumes that these were totally treeless areas that had been ‘fired’ by the Aborigines, and were noted by Batman.\(^{30}\)

We walked over this Land about 12 miles down my Side Line, in a South West direction, when we came to another creek of good water, in a most beautiful valley—which I named Lucy’s Creek, and Maria’s Valley—extending several miles and as fine land, and altogether a most enchanting spot.

This would be the Moonee Ponds Creek and valley. Naming the two suggests that the valley Batman saw was a distinct and impressive feature in itself, which it is. Batman could not help but be impressed by the wide valley on his approach from the high ground—somewhere in the vicinity of Bell Street (Melway 17 A11). He was impressed enough to later run his sheep and establish a hut in the valley near Evans Street, Essendon. His ‘Side Line’ refers to the fact that he had just transacted the purchase of the land to the west.\(^{31}\)

Duncan’s theory would involve crossing Edgars (which he did not see as dry and inconspicuous), Merri and Moonee Ponds creeks. That’s one creek too many. Discounting Edgars Creek, Campbell’s theory involves crossing Darebin, Merri and Moonee Ponds creeks. That’s also one creek too many.

After leaving this we crossed some plains of good land and then came into a forest thinly timbered with gum, wattle, she-oak; the land, for the first time was rather sandy with a little gravel, but the grass about 10 inches high ...

Geological mapping indicates that the most likely crossing was between Pascoe Vale and Strathmore railway stations where a patch of basalt (conducive to the ‘plains of good land’) interrupts the Brighton sands group, which is predominant between the Moonee Ponds Creek and Maribyrnong River. This allowed for more vigorous tree growth as can be seen in the remnant red gum grassy woodland of Napier Park, Strathmore (Melway 16 H12). It is likely that the party would have proceeded over the high point of Essendon (Windy Hill) and followed the highest route, roughly along the railway to Moonee Ponds, down toward Union Road and, as Duncan described, ‘the western end of Flemington Racecourse where Fisher Parade runs down to its bridge’ (Melway 28 E12). Governor Bourke, referring to the early track to Solomon’s Ford, noted that ‘the first four miles leads through a very pretty country having the appearance of an English park’.\(^{32}\)

[W]e then made the river I had gone up a few days before ...

The course from here has been well accepted: they followed a natural
levee beside ‘a large marsh’ (Flemington Racecourse), south toward the original course of the Yarra, seeing to the distant left ‘a large lagoon’ (West Melbourne swamp), ‘through a tea tree scrub very high and thick’, and to their ‘great surprise’ they confronted the Yarra. Duncan rightly pointed out how the map had been manipulated to fit the deed by having the south-east line meet the Yarra where the city is now.33

It was now near sunset ... so, after some time, I made up my mind that two of the Sydney natives should ... go to the vessel ... which they did, and were back again with the boat in three hours ... my travelling I hope (on foot) will cease for some time …

Batman’s travel estimate of ‘about 12 miles down my Side Line’ to Moonee Ponds Creek is concerning, because the distance from the suggested treaty site area is only about six kilometres. His total for the day would be about sixteen kilometres. However, one has to keep in mind his late departure time and his stated weariness after four days. Quite probably Batman meant ‘about 12 miles’ for the day’s journey, just as he meant ‘about 16 miles’ from Redstone Hill on 5 June. Given that it would have been very late at night when the party reached the Rebecca, it is likely that Batman made his diary entry the next day and a mistake would be easy to make.

Monday 8 June

[W]e tried but could not get out of the river. The boat went up the large river ... about six miles found all good water and very deep.

Captain Harwood must have moved the Rebecca from Williamstown into the river and windy conditions prevented their departure. Meantime, a party took the boat up the Yarra—and found ‘a place for a village’. It sounds like this was the first venture up to the site of Melbourne, although some scholars, such as Harcourt, claim otherwise and question whether Batman was on board. Batman finishes with another exaggeration of distance, this time by boat. From the river mouth to William Street would have been only six kilometres.34

Aftermath

Batman returned to Launceston on 11 June and the movement of settlers and stock was soon underway. Batman died within four years, leaving a diary and a map that are open to interpretation. By the time anyone wanted to know the exact location of landmarks, no one was able to provide a definitive answer. The precise steps of the fateful walk and the site of the signing
of the only formal act of Aboriginal land dispossession in Australia will remain a mystery. However, after tracing over the landscape and examining the primary documents and all other relevant sources, I have argued that a grassy clearing on the eastern bank of Merri Creek at the rear of where Lakeside High School used to be is the treaty site.

NOTES


2 A. Sutherland, ‘Early Williamstown’, Williamstown Chronicle, 27 November 1897, p. 3.

3 SLV, Contour Plan Melbourne & Suburbs, G. Black, 1885; SLV, Hobson Bay and River Yarra Leading to Melbourne, surveyed by H.L. Cox, 1863.

4 The quantity of gifts is detailed in the Melbourne deed. The party of eleven consisted of Batman, Alexander Thomson, William Todd, James Gumm and seven Sydney Aborigines whom Batman had taken to Van Diemen’s Land. As told to Rev. R.K. Ewing, Launceston 27 Sept. 1866 and reported in Hobart Mercury, 27 October 1934; Cornwall Chronicle, 28 June 1862.

5 Rex Harcourt, Southern Invasion, Northern Conquest, Melbourne, Golden Point Press, 2001, p.14; ‘Old Colonists’ Association’, Argus, 3 July 1871, p. 7; Batman’s ignorance of the Yarra’s existence places a question mark over the prototype deed (in Mitchell Library and believed to be the original used on the day of the treaty) which describes ‘the branch of the river’. As Duncan states, ‘On that day, Batman did not know that there was a branch of the river’, p. 9; SLV, H. Hume’s Sketch shows the Iramoo plains.

6 A. de Q. Robin (ed.), Australian Sketches: the Journals & Letters of Frances Perry, Melbourne, Queensberry Hill Press, 1983, p. 68; From bank-to-bank the widths of the
Cam River along the College Backs range between 12 m and 25 m; W. Lloyd Williams, *History Trails in Melbourne*, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1957, p. 35.

7 Whilst a ford existed, and still exists, at the end of Canning Street (within the early Braybrook Village Reserve), there was also a crossing about one kilometre upstream, at the end of North Road. These have both been called Solomon’s Ford. The lower crossing has also been called Clancy’s Ford after a local landowner. One must assume that the lower one was the rocky crossing described by J. Flemming. ‘Journal of the Explorations of Charles Grimes’, in J.J. Shillinglaw (ed.), *Historical Records of Port Phillip*, Melbourne, Heinemann, 1972, p. 24.


9 SLV, *Town of Braybrook, Parishes of Cut Paw Paw and Dousta Galla, County of Bourke*, Surveyed by Cape Webster, Contract Surveyor, 1873. This map shows the early widths of the river.

10 Dr Steve Sinclair, Department of Environment and Primary Industry (DEPI), identified the marshmallows as probably Australian hollyhock (*Malva preissiana*) or flood mallow, which grow 1.5–2 m tall in flooded areas near the coast, with leaves 15 cm across; Ray Dodd, descendant of early Keilor landowners, provided details about the river and land use at Horseshoe Bend. The Delahey property (relatives of Dodd) was on the east of the Maribyrnong, while McIntyre’s property was on the west side; J.M. Bowler, ‘Alluvial Terraces in the Maribyrnong Valley near Keilor, Victoria’, *Memoirs of the National Museum of Victoria*, no. 30, 1970.

11 Gumms Corner was added to the Register of Geographic Names, VICNAMES, in 1966. It ‘was sourced from the Vicmap Topographical Map Series at the time.’ Despite this, I have not been able to locate any map at or before this time that features Gumm’s Corner. Also, I have not been able to locate any person who knew of this place before that time. However, I believe this to be the spot where they camped. There have been a number of versions of Wedge’s map. The one referred to here, claimed to be ‘Wedge’s original map’, could not be sourced apart from its appearance in Harcourt, p. 45.


15 Campbell, p. 99.

16 Campbell, p. 101; Isaac Batey, *The Animal-Life of the Sunbury District Sixty Years Ago*, read before the Field Naturalists’ Club of Victoria, 8 July 1907.

17 Campbell, p. 101.

18 Campbell, p. 102.
On Sunday 31 May, the party headed inland from Point Wilson and found only women and children. The next day, they ‘saw the smoke of the natives under Mount Collicott’ in the You Yangs. Perhaps this was communicating news of their presence.

Moloney & Johnston, *City of Hume Heritage Study: Former Bulla District*, 1998, p. 94; Information provided by Troutbeck brothers, life-long residents of Mickleham; Sinclair, DEPI, identified the tea-tree as *Leptospermum lanigerum* (Woolly Tea-tree). This was, and is, common around Melbourne in drainage lines, particularly in wet spots on the basalt plain, but never over large areas near Melbourne. It is a big, scrubby shrub.

BL&A Pty Ltd., *Melbourne Airport: Airport Drive & Steele Creek North Fauna & Flora Assessment*, November 2012; Campbell, p. 105.

Barwick. The Balluk-Willam occupied the most easterly and southern parts of Woiwurrung land.

*Map of Heidelberg District*, Australian Intelligence Corps, SLV, 1913.

Conversation with Prof. Ian Clark, March, 2013; and Sylvia Hallam, ‘A View From The Other Side of the Western Frontier or “I Met a Man Who Wasn’t There”’, *Aboriginal History*, 1983, vol. 7, no. 2.

Barwick has identified the following Aborigines and the tribes they belonged to: Jagajaga (Billibellary) of Wurundjeri-Willam; Jagajaga (Jerrum Jerrum) of Wurundjeri-Willam; Jagajaga (Murrumbean) of Balluk-Willam; Cooloolock of Wurundjeri-Balluk; Bungarie of Marin-Bulluk. The other three (Yan Yan, Moowhip, Mommarmalar) have not been identified.

Terra Culture Heritage Consultants, *Moreland Pre-Contact Aboriginal Heritage Study*, 2010: This document contains an archaeological survey of the Merri Creek Parklands by Hall (1989), which covers about 30 kilometres on both sides of the creek, but Hall noted that owing to varying ground surface visibility, only around 17 per cent of this 30 kilometres was effectively surveyed. Twenty-one stone artefact scatters, 32 isolated stone artefacts and five scarred trees were located along the creek. (Hall, Volume 2 section 6, 1989). Hall also provided maps showing the extent of fill and landscaping along the banks of the Merri Creek. These show that the banks of the creek through the vast majority of its course through the City of Moreland had undergone at least minor works, whereby the original surface of the ground had been destroyed. Extensive areas along the creek within the municipality had also undergone major works or consisted of fill. Johnston and Ellender provided the cultural heritage component prepared for Merri Creek Concept Plan, 1993. At the time of the study in 1993, there were 27 registered Aboriginal archaeological sites on the Merri Creek and only one new Aboriginal archaeological site was discovered during the survey.

Information from Tony Faithfull, IT & Strategic Projects Manager, Merri Creek Management Committee.

Campbell, p. 105–6.


31 Hoddle.

32 Geological formation maps are available on Department of Primary Industry GEOVIC website; Batey states, ‘There were … lots of trees on the open lands from Essendon to Flemington’, ‘The Far-Off Has-Been’, *Sunbury News*, 2 April 1904; Duncan, p. 8; Sir Richard Bourke, *Journal 1837*, 9 March 1837, SLV.

33 Duncan, p. 9.

34 Harcourt, p. 5.

Mimi Colligan’s Circus and Stage documents for the first time the impressive careers of Rose Edouin and G. (George) B.W. Lewis in colonial Australia. It’s hard to believe there hasn’t been a book about them before this, because both performers not only had a significant influence on the development of theatre in Australia’s gold-rush era, but also in India, China, New Zealand and Britain. On the evidence presented in this biography, their names are as important in our theatre’s history as the celebrated George Coppin.

George Lewis was born in London and claimed at fourteen to have walked from London to Liverpool to join a circus. He became an accomplished equestrian, and, at one time, worked with Pablo Fanque’s circus in northern England as ‘Conductor of the Circle’, which involved the choreographing of equestrian processions, tournaments and battles. He arrived in Melbourne in 1853 at the height of the gold rush, his first engagement being as a gymnast in Joseph Rowe’s American Circus, performing with his ‘pupil’, a boy billed as ‘Lilliputian Tom’, performing ‘miraculous feats’.

Rose Edouin, also born in London, grew up performing as a child on the West End stage in Living Marionette productions, a genre of theatre in which children moved their lips and acted like marionettes while the speakers remained hidden behind curtains. In 1855, at the age of eleven, under actor-manager Samuel Phelps’ direction, she played Puck in A Midsummer Night’s Dream at Sadler’s Wells Theatre, London. Other
early appearances included *The Sister of Mercy* at the Garrick Theatre, the pantomime *Holly Tree Inn*, and as the child in the melodrama *Kate Wynsley*; or *A Woman’s Love*, also at the Strand. The Edouin family migrated to Victoria in 1857 when Rose was thirteen.

Lewis and Rose’s lives crossed when the Edouins, on their arrival, were booked to play in ‘vaudevilles’ at Melbourne’s Theatre Royal, where Lewis and his equestrian troupe were appearing. Lewis became an entrepreneur and was the first lessee of Astley’s Amphitheatre, which later became the Princess Theatre, Melbourne, and also the first lessee of the Bourke Street Academy of Music, which was renamed the Bijou Theatre. He also employed J.C. Williamson and Maggie Moore in their early days in the colony.

Lewis was passionate about taking Western drama to Asia, which he did in 1864–5 with a company of players that included Rose Edouin. They played in Hong Kong, Shanghai (where he married Rose, 26 years his junior) and India. They returned to India in 1867, and spent most of the next nine years there. Indeed, Lewis even built Calcutta’s Theatre Royal on Chowringhee Road in 1871.

As an adult, Rose had become an accomplished actress whose roles included Lady Gay Spanker in Dion Boucicault’s *London Assurance*, and Lady Anne in Shakespeare’s *Richard III*. Pantomime, of course, was an annual necessity. When she appeared as Prince Selim in *Harlequin Blue Beard*, the influential critic James Neild was delighted:

> Mrs Lewis sparkles with good nature, and looks the handsomest, jolliest hero of extravaganza you could see. When she sings, her cheery voice reminds you of ever so long ago, when nobody was a more deserved favorite than she in this class of performances; when she dances you think of nothing but sparkling water. And she is full of fun too ...

In between theatrical engagements, Rose taught ballet and drama to private students and gave birth to four children, only one of whom lived to adulthood. Towards the end of her life, she resumed her career on the West End stage, performing in *The Pompadour* and Somerset Maugham’s *Perfect Gentleman*.

Lewis and Rose don’t exactly jump off the pages of *Circus and Stage* as real-life flesh and blood people, but that’s not the fault of Mimi Colligan, who has done a remarkable job in the absence of little or no surviving personal papers. It’s a fascinating story and, for anyone interested in our theatre history, an important volume. Her detailed research of these
theatrical pioneers not only paints a vivid picture of early theatrical life, but also of the difficult and harsh times actors faced pursuing their art.

Why aren’t Lewis and Rose as well-known as George Coppin? Colligan believes it is because they were performers on the ‘lower’ level of popular culture and were not as consistently ‘successful’. By comparison, Coppin was a comedian, entrepreneur, parliamentarian, and very good at marketing himself. *Circus and Stage* is richly illustrated with playbills, drawings and sepia photographs, and the index is extensive.

Peter Pinne


This is a father-and-son biography, two Thrings for the price of one as it were, though, of course, that inevitably makes it a biggish book of over 500 pages. Both father and son were christened ‘Francis’, but both were always known as Frank. The father, who is described in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* as an ‘entrepreneur’, was very much a self-made man, but in that process played fast and loose with his own history, and Fitzpatrick has an enjoyable time setting the record straight. Frank the son and actor had the advantage of a well-to-do upbringing and inherited wealth, but did, very deliberately, set about creating the flamboyant, high camp persona, which saw him become a distinctive and popular presence on the Melbourne theatre and entertainment scene.

Born in 1882, Frank Senior worked as a bootmaker in South Australia in his youth, but was already developing skills as a conjurer and magician. After he married 29-year-old Grace Wight in 1904, the couple somehow found their way to the west coast of Tasmania where he surfaced as ‘The Great Dexter’. However, young Thring seized the opportunity presented by the arrival of ‘moving photography’ to become a projectionist who cobbled together his own programs of short films, often complemented by some live local entertainment.

In 1911, Frank gained a position at Kreitmayer’s Waxworks in Melbourne where, at a time when waxworks were losing their appeal, he was commissioned to set up a cinema. The same year, Grace gave birth to their only child, Viola, always known as Lola. Plagued by ill health and needing care, Grace returned to her family home in Adelaide and
the marriage effectively came to an end. She died in 1921. Meanwhile, Frank was doing famously at Kreitmayer’s, having won the confidence of the owner Max, and at some time having reached an understanding with his personable daughter Olive, whom he married just a few months after Grace’s death. Having set up Electric Theatres in 1915, Thring had become managing director of Hoyts Pictures and a powerful figure in the Melbourne cinema world by 1926. Marrying Olive was important for his career: as Fitzpatrick notes, Frank ‘had most things he needed in order to achieve his dreams, except for seeding capital. The link with the Kreitmayers fixed all that at a stroke’. Olive, however, colourfully described by Fitzpatrick as ‘a handful’, knew what she was doing. She was 34 at the time of their marriage. In 1926, Olive gave birth to their only child and son (Frank, of course, like his father), who was doted on by both parents.

Frank Thring Senior is chiefly remembered today for his heroic—some would say quixotic—endeavour, at the time of the Great Depression and the advent of the talkies, to create a local filmmaking industry using the new sound technology. Between 1931 and 1934, his Efftee Film Productions (F.T. were his initials) made nine feature films, a few of which enjoyed modest financial success, as well as a number of variety shorts and some historically important documentaries. Thring was an active presence in the studio, often named in film credits as director, and seemed to enjoy it all immensely. But, in 1934, it all began to come unstuck, and Thring’s entrepreneurial instinct seemed to let him down; a growing problem with alcohol didn’t help either. He died in 1935 from oesophagal cancer at the age of 53.

Young Frank was ten when his father died. Olive’s immediate reaction was to treat the boy as, in Fitzpatrick’s words, ‘a surrogate for her dead husband’: he accompanied her to cocktail parties and was the ‘child-host’ at dinner parties in the Thring Toorak home, Rylands. Years later, even as he sought his mother’s financial help for his early theatrical ventures, Frank had not a good word to say about his mother whom he referred to as the ‘Lucretia Borgia of Toorak’; indeed, for many years he hardly spoke to her. Fitzpatrick assumes that there must have been some major betrayal on Olive’s part which he could never forgive, but Frank never made clear what it might have been. It is possible, of course, that he just came to realise how his mother had thoughtlessly exploited him as a child—he had, as Fitzpatrick observes, forfeited his childhood. Frank blamed her for the psychological problems that increasingly troubled him as he grew older.
As an actor, Frank Thring was precocious, at the age of 25 setting up his own Arrow Theatre in Middle Park, which, in the space of a couple of years, staged 22 plays, mostly classics from around the world, with the odd commercial success thrown in, such as the Kaufman and Hart *The Man Who Came to Dinner* (which Thring was to perform with relish several times through his career). With a deep, commanding voice and a large physical frame, he was regularly playing roles much older than himself.

He briefly experienced international success in the famous Peter Brook, Stratford production of *Titus Andronicus* with a cast headed by Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh. While abroad, he also briefly experienced marriage with an old friend Joan Cunliffe. (For someone whose homosexuality was never in doubt, it was, not surprisingly, a disaster, and they parted after a year, but stayed on good terms.) Thring’s performance as Saturninus in *Titus* led on to his flirtation with Hollywood, notably as Pontius Pilate in the colossal *Ben Hur*, presiding over the legendary chariot race, and playing several other toga roles in biblical epics.

But he chose to return to Melbourne where he played in many Union Theatre Repertory productions (later the Melbourne Theatre Company MTC), while at the same time becoming a television identity. While his mannerisms weighed him down—he often seemed to be playing Frank Thring—Fitzpatrick concludes that now and then he could command the heights, as in Orson Welles’ *Moby Dick – Rehearsed*, Brecht’s *Galileo* and Pinter’s *The Homecoming*. As he grew older, he had difficulty retaining lines; the MTC virtually farewelled him in 1981 with the informal entertainment, *Frankly Thring*. His last years saw a tragic decline. An alcoholic like his father, Frank’s life literally shrank when he gave up Rylands for a small house in Fitzroy, where, subject to paranoia, he became a recluse. But Melbourne remembers him: he lives on, thanks to YouTube.

Peter Fitzpatrick’s *Two Frank Thrings* is a fine achievement, deservedly winning the National Biography Award. The narrative is lively and engaging, but the witty asides are not made at the expense of the respect he accords the contrasting lives of father and son. In an ‘Author’s Note’, Fitzpatrick remarks on the lack of diaries and personal letters and, by way of compensating for this absence, signals his use of brief, fictional monologues associated with journeys referred to in the narrative. Interestingly, although these interludes are monologues, they are given in the third person, still maintaining a subtle distance. Clever as these are, I am not sure they are entirely necessary, as Fitzpatrick’s main narrative, making adroit and
insightful use of the sources available, gives us impressive portraits of the two Frank Thrings.

John Rickard


Olwen Ford’s approach to history was influenced by Eileen Power’s seminal book _Medieval People_, first published in 1924, which avoided the conventional ‘great men’ narrative to focus primarily on people ‘unknown to fame’. The lives of these people, while being of inherent local interest, were often emblematic of widespread trends. After years of meticulous research, Olwen Ford produced a panorama of the people of the City of Sunshine and, through the use of interviews and memoirs, interspersed their voices throughout the book. Formerly known as Braybrook Shire, the City of Sunshine took its name and impetus from the famous Sunshine Harvester agricultural machinery company. The city’s industrial fortunes and development of a multicultural identity are themes of national interest.

_Harvester City_ is a comprehensive, scholarly book written with the insight of a dedicated insider. The author has lived in Sunshine for over fifty years and was the director of the Living Museum of the West from its inception in 1984 to 1997. Born in the ethnically diverse country of Guyana, Olwen Ford later lived in Jamaica and England, before migrating to Australia. These experiences enabled her to write with sympathetic understanding of the kaleidoscopic immigrant waves that were the defining feature of post-war Sunshine.


_Harvester City_ enters a domain marked by the watershed Second World War and its long-term repercussions. The harnessing of the Harvester,
ICIANZ and other factories to the war effort and the rapid expansion of the government’s explosives and ordnance factories caused Braybrook Shire to become temporarily known as ‘Australia’s Arsenal’. After the war, the City of Sunshine (proclaimed in 1951) attracted numerous additional industries such as Invicta Mills, Taubmans Paints and engineering works.

Industrial Sunshine’s huge demand for labour coincided with the dislocation of millions of people in post-war Europe and Australia’s resettlement policies. Sunshine became a magnet for immigrants, and Ford analyses the transformation of the region from a monocultural to a multicultural society. In 1947, residents in the Shire of Braybook numbered 15,000; of these nearly 90 per cent were Australian-born and most of the rest had been born in Britain. Over one-third of the 76,427 people in the City of Sunshine in 1971 were European-born. The book is replete with the recollections of Polish, Greek, Ukrainian and Maltese immigrants.

The mushrooming of schools and churches followed the influx of immigrants. Some Sunshine residents, overcome by cultural change, clung to the past, like the school principal who pleaded for a flagpole so he could inculcate the rituals of the British Empire. Others adapted, like the enterprising Marist Father Kevin Glover, who produced a catchy advertisement to attract teaching nuns to a new convent. Father Glover described the situation in a nutshell. He had several hundred parents, mostly refugees, who were prepared to make great sacrifices for the education of their children. The district was materially poor, but culturally rich.

Evocative photos throughout the book capture the prevailing spirit of improvisation. One such photo shows five boys sitting on a makeshift diving board above the Kororoit Creek. Later, the community celebrated construction of a municipal swimming pool and other civic facilities.

*Harvester City* breaks out of the usual lineal straitjacket of local history, which moves from Aboriginal to recent times. The book opens in the shadow of war and closes in the shadow of economic and social decline. The intervening period is one of vibrant and seemingly unstoppable development. Then the unthinkable happens. The Canadian-based global corporation of Massey-Ferguson takes over Harvester in the 1950s and gradually downsizes. Together with many other local industries, Massey-Ferguson eventually closes. The district attracts government grants, but for unenviable reasons: it has become part of the deprived west. In 1994, the municipality of Sunshine itself disappears when it is absorbed into the City of Brimbank and City of Maribyrnong.
Olwen Ford’s writing is clear and disciplined. The division of her book by period, rather than theme, causes some fragmentation, but has the advantage of juxtaposing diverse events in a particular time frame. The Sunshine Historical Society and the Local History Grants Program of the Public Record Office Victoria funded publication of Ford’s book. Another program, companion to the Local History Grants, conferred the recognition it deserved. On 21 October 2013, in the striking surrounds of the Deakin Edge overlooking the Yarra River, Harvester City secured first prize in the History Publication section of the Victorian Community History Awards.

Carole Woods


It would be difficult to think of a less fashionable topic for historical analysis than the old gentlemen’s clubs of Melbourne. Similarly, it would be equally difficult to think of a less fashionable historian than Paul de Serville. Fortunately for those unconcerned with being fashionable, the Athenaeum Club has recognised de Serville’s rare talents and commissioned him to write its history. The author of two treasures of Victorian history, Port Phillip Gentlemen and Pounds and Pedigrees, de Serville has a unique insight into the world of the colonial gentleman for whom the clubs were founded. Whereas many modern historians are guilty of judging the past by the standards of the present, de Serville approaches 19th century Victorian history with the standards of the past—one feels he really belongs in the 18th century, when birth and breeding counted for more than money, before the certainties of the ancient regime were destroyed during the turmoil of the American rebellion and the French Revolution.

The Athenaeum Club was not well served by its earlier historians. This was partly due to the paucity of records of the early years of the club, which led one writer to give up on reality and make up facts to suit his story—the reader was somewhat startled to learn that W.L. Baillieu’s father, a poor boatman from Queenscliff, was apparently a founding member, and Baillieu himself joined when he was ten-years-old. No such problems bedevil the present book. De Serville’s meticulous scholarship and unparalleled knowledge of Melbourne’s polite society of the 19th century have allowed
him to reconstruct the club’s early history as effectively as possible given the paucity of records.

An advantage (for the general reader at least) of the club’s lack of early records is that de Serville’s history is necessarily outward-looking. It is not a history of an institution isolated from society, but solidly placed in its time and its social, political and economic context. The account of the land boom and bust of the late 1880s and early 1890s, for example, is as good a brief account as one could want. The club decided to build a new clubhouse in 1889, just as the boom began to fade, and it opened in September 1891 as land banks and building societies were failing on an almost daily basis. This put the club under extreme pressure as the club’s membership was ‘largely commercial in character’ and virtually every member was adversely affected by the crash. The club’s president, Sir Matthew Davies, was one of the most prominent of the land boomers and he was not alone among the club’s members in being fortunate not to be jailed for some unusual accounting practices during the boom and bust. At least one club member committed suicide when his fortune collapsed.

Class is little talked of in Australia today, and when it is, the analysis is usually superficial and unhelpful. De Serville, by contrast, talks frequently of class, primarily in his frequent emphasis that the membership of the Athenaeum was drawn from the middle classes. He does not define the ‘middle classes’, but it is clearly based on a combination of breeding and wealth. Similarly, the upper class is not defined, but consists of a tiny group around the governor’s court and a handful of colonists who could trace their ancestry to the English aristocracy. There is no suggestion that class relations might be defined in terms of relationship to the means of production. If class was defined by wealth and power, it would be laughable to describe David Syme of The Age or H. V. McKay of Sunshine Harvester fame as ‘middle class’, but wealth and power count for little to de Serville, compared to birth and breeding, which effectively excluded Syme, McKay and most Athenaeum members from the exclusive ranks of the upper classes.

The book is a delight to read, being written with de Serville’s usual exquisite turn of phrase and wry humour. There is never a word out of place. He has corrected the numerous mistakes of the earlier histories of the Athenaeum, while meticulously avoiding new ones—one minor blemish is that former Premier Ted Baillieu is identified as W.L. Baillieu’s great-grandson, rather than his great-nephew.
The history is devoted to reconstructing the first fifty years of the club’s history, concluding with the end of the First World War. This was a vital moment in the club’s history as it changed from its original proprietorship model, where the club was owned by an individual who ran it for profit, to a company structure, with control firmly in the hands of the members. With this model, it has continued to prosper for the better part of a century, in spite of many commentators’ firmly expressed opinions that it and its companion clubs, the Melbourne, Savage, Australian, Alexander and Lyceum, are anachronistic and doomed to disappear. It is rare to suggest that an institutional history might be of interest to people with no connection with the institution, but Paul de Serville’s history of the Athenaeum is a clear exception. The mass of detail of the early members will be an invaluable reference for any student of colonial Victoria, and beyond that, the book is simply a pleasure to read.

*Peter Yule*


Biographies bring the whole of the subject into one narrative and in so doing can challenge the common perception of yesterday’s citizens. While a historical figure may be admired from the present for this or that attribute, the recreation of the subject in the round brings into focus less admirable traits that can be difficult to synthesise in a simple assessment of character. As many biographers begin their task with strong feelings toward their subject, the temptation is to deify or vilify. Samuel Furphy’s scholarly, yet readable, biography of Edward Curr has avoided these extremes. His biography sets out to achieve two distinct aims. The first was to track through the facets of Edward Curr’s life in the standard biographical form, and in so doing, challenge some of the common perceptions of this important 19th century figure. The second was to assess Curr’s legacy and, in particular, the use of his publications in the Yorta Yorta native title claim over portions of the Murray River region of northern Victoria and southern New South Wales.

To achieve his first aim, Furphy has written an even-handed assessment of Curr’s life in the classic biographical form. The narrative begins with
his grandfather’s engineering innovations that helped transform the British coal industry; then follows his father’s education, marriage into money and the couple’s emigration to Hobart in 1820, where employees of Curr senior’s company were involved in a massacre of Tasmanian Aborigines. Then onto the subject: the tale tracks through the young Edward Curr’s education in England, before his return to the colonies, where he managed his father’s squatting venture into Port Phillip. He then forged his own runs on the Goulburn and Murray Rivers of Northern Victoria in the 1840s. The young Curr married, then tried his hand in New Zealand, before returning to Queensland, intending to stock his new runs there with cattle from Victoria. His purchase of a station on the Lachlan River in New South Wales brought ruin following a severe drought. Curr became a government employee, inspecting the sheep mobs of Victoria for the dreaded scab that threatened the economy of the colony. Bombastic and determined, Curr brought the scourge under control and earned the admiration of the populace.

In his later years, Curr became involved in the new craze of ethnography and, recognised as knowledgeable in Aboriginal issues, he was granted a place on the Board for the Protection of Aborigines. He became embroiled in the controversy over Coranderrk, the Aboriginal reserve near Healesville. In the 1880s, Curr left a haunting legacy to Victoria. He followed up his few early publications on horse breeding and letters to the editor with his famous memoir, *Recollections of Squatting in Victoria* (1883), and then a four-volume work on Aborigines *The Australian Race* (1886-87), which appeared two years before his death.

At specific moments, Furphy’s biography confronts the legacy left by Curr’s published works, particularly the view that he was sympathetic to the Aboriginal people—his ‘sable friends’—whom he had dispossessed. Curr took his skills in segregating sick and contagious mobs of sheep from healthy populations to the problem of Coranderrk and did all in his power as a member of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines to have the reserve closed and relocated to northern Victoria. As Furphy notes, Curr’s efforts to go against the clear wishes of the Aboriginal people of Coranderrk is a serious challenge to the previous view of his subject as a benign and sympathetic observer of Aboriginal life, an idea that grew largely from his widely read *Recollections*. Furphy also traces the intense debates between Curr and the small company of men in Victoria engaged in ethnographic studies during the 1870s. Claiming authority as the authentic observer whose knowledge was gained prior to widespread colonisation,
Curr was dismissive of the efforts of others, particularly A.W. Howitt and Lorimer Fison.

The book concludes with the most powerful of Furphy’s themes: Curr’s double dispossession of the Yorta Yorta people. The last chapter draws the reader back to the ominous opening to the prologue where Furphy assesses Curr’s complex legacy. Curr first dispossessed the Yorta Yorta people to claim his run in northern Victoria in the 1840s. In a distressing irony that points to the shortcomings of the use of nineteenth century texts as evidence in a court of law, the Yorta Yorta claim of the early 2000s was largely sunk on the written word of Curr: the High Court of Australia rejected the final appeal of the Yorta Yorta people on the basis that they could not prove they had maintained their traditions as described in Recollections of Squatting in Victoria, or The Australian Race.

Furphy’s book has attempted two difficult aims: first to track through the scraps and archives of this man to build an even-handed assessment of his life. The second was the more focused analysis of Curr’s texts, in particular, their ascendancy in the court of law over oral traditions. Biography is difficult at the best of times; Furphy has added an extra layer to this complex task. It is an important book in the history of this state that deserves to be widely read.

Helen Gardner


This book is an intellectually adventurous examination of records of sightings (and the occasional capture) of large introduced cats (of the family felidae) in the Australian environment. It presents with a unique combination of authorship: David Waldron as a professional historian and anthropologist, and Simon Townsend as a significant cryptozoologist, writing their different chapters.

Rather than simply rehearsing the well-known twentieth-century big cat scares—such as the Tantanoola tiger—Waldron has dug deeply into the nineteenth-century records of big cat sightings, as well as 20th century reports and oral history accounts, placing these sightings and reported stock killings in their historical, social and cultural contexts. He considers
the mythology that develops from reported big cat sightings as reflecting prevailing mythologies about the Australian environment (both in terms of the ‘wildness’ of the bush, as well as the problems of establishing and maintaining European agricultural enterprise in a new, and frequently harsh, environment), as well as the development of specific mythologies about the zoological denizens (real or imagined) to be found therein.

Waldron having supplied the detailed record of sightings, both authors, from their different perspectives, examine the possibility that big cat sightings are not sightings of introduced placental carnivores, but the continued existence of recently extinct, or more distantly, but still historically, extinct marsupi-carnivores (such as the Tasmanian tiger, *Thylacinus* and marsupial lion, *Thylacoleo*) or even the possibility of the existence of still scientifically undiscovered, large indigenous marsupials.

Waldron details the unrestricted 19th century import of exotic species into Australia, their advertised sale, and representation in travelling circuses, and travelling menageries displayed at agricultural shows (and the occasional escape of stock therefrom, with the occasional live recapture and killing thereof). These incidents undeniably establish the existence—even for just a short period of time—of big cats roaming the Australian countryside. He also discusses the variety of exotic military mascots, held during both world wars, and their possible release into the Australian environment, given the official demand for their destruction because of the risk of their having imported human or animal diseases.

Townsend, in his turn, takes a reasoned approach to cryptozoological evidence collection, and the likely confounding alternative explanations to records suggesting big cat existence. Refreshingly, he writes without a chip on his shoulder, an unfortunate characteristic of much of the published cryptozoological literature, whose authors feel (not, it must be admitted, without reason at times) that their work is ignored by professional zoologists and relevant public service bureaucrats. Townsend makes a strong argument for the importance of cryptozoology to professional zoological endeavour, on the basis of recent, large new species discoveries, while recognising the limitations of the lay observer (and the existence and actions of deliberate fraudsters). While demanding serious professional zoological acknowledgement of cryptozoology, as part of the necessary openness to evidence of scientific endeavour, he also calls for more serious, professional behaviour in the process of evidence collection by amateur cryptozoologists.
(and offers some suggestions on methodologies to improve their record of accounts and evidence collection).

This book, placing cryptozoological records in their historical and cultural, as well as scientific, constructs, serves as a most desirable model for any presentation and analysis of cryptozoological data, in its demonstration of the importance of professional historical, as well as zoological, investigation of cryptozoological claims.

Robert Paddle
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Weston Bate, OAM, is a poet, historian and broadcaster, who has taught at every level from primary to PhD. After time at Brighton and Melbourne Grammar Schools, he went to Melbourne University (1964–1977) where he became Reader in History and Chairman of Department. He was then Professor of Australian Studies at Deakin University until retirement in 1989. A pilot in the RAAF from 1943 to 1945, he was later an A-Grade amateur footballer and a member of the Melbourne University winning golf team of 1948. He served for two periods as president of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria.

Andrew Burbidge was trained in economics and political science at Melbourne University. He spent much of his working life with the Henderson Poverty Enquiry, Brian Howe (then Minister for Social Security), and the Institute of Family Studies. Since he retired, the Williamstown High School Ex-Students and Staff Association has published several of his short history pieces in its newsletter, The Anchor.

Dr Fred Cahir is a senior lecturer at Federation University Australia. He is Aboriginal Studies Program Coordinator and Australian History Higher Degree by Research Coordinator in the Faculty of Education and Arts. His research interests are colonial Aboriginal history and Indigenous ecological knowledge. His recent book publications include Black Gold: Aboriginal People on the Gold Fields of Victoria 1850–1870 and The Aboriginal Story of Burke and Wills. Through Fred’s research and recording of traditional and contemporary Aboriginal land management practices, he hopes to contribute to a compendium of Indigenous ecological knowledge that can be employed for land management today and in the future.

John Daniels began his interest in local history as Secretary of the Broadmeadows Historical Society in the early 1980s. He produced the manuscript, Indian Hawkers in Victoria, now in the RHSV’s collection. He also wrote Early Schooling in Victoria, 1900–1920. A simple desire to know about the pre-contact suburban
landscape of Melbourne (to know what the land he is living on originally looked like) led to his endeavour to solve the mystery of Batman’s walk and the disputed location of the ‘treaty’ site.

**Helen Gardner** is an historian at Deakin University with expertise on nineteenth century Christian missions and anthropology in Oceania. Her book on Lorimer Fison, A.W. Howitt and the writing of Kamilaori and Kurnai will be published by Palgrave Macmillan in December 2014.

**Marcus Langdon**, a descendant of George Isaac Porter, is an Australian historical researcher and writer, specialising in the early history of Penang under the East India Company 1786–1858. His latest publication is *Penang: the Fourth Presidency of India 1805–1830, vol. 1: Ships, Men and Mansions*.

**Anne Marsden**, a former science teacher and university administrator, held a 2012 Honorary Creative Fellowship at the State Library of Victoria, and is a volunteer at the Melbourne Athenaeum archives, researching the establishment of its forerunner, the Melbourne Mechanics’ Institution.

**Bob Paddle** is a comparative psychologist at Australian Catholic University, Melbourne Campus, and author of *The Last Tasmanian Tiger* (2000).

**Peter Pinne** is a composer, author and theatre historian, and writes for *Stage Whispers* and *On Stage*. He is currently collaborating with Peter Johnston on a book about Australian musicals.

**Susan Priestley**, Fellow and former President of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, is currently absorbed in biographical research under a variety of guises.

**John Rickard** has written widely on Australian cultural history and biography. His most recent book is *An Imperial Affair: Portrait of an Australian Marriage* (2013).

**Richard Turner** is a PhD student in History at La Trobe University. He was awarded a first class Honours pass by La Trobe University in 2012, and received the Peter Cook Prize in Australian History for his Honours thesis. His PhD research project explores the story of Lancashire settlers/migrants in gold rush Victoria.

**Benjamin Wilkie** has recently completed his PhD in Australian history at Monash University. His thesis was entitled *Weaving the Tartan: Culture, Imperialism, and Scottish Identities in Australia, 1788–1938*. He currently teaches history and politics at Deakin University.
Douglas Wilkie is a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne. His thesis is entitled *1849 The Rush That Never Started: Forgotten Origins of the 1851 Gold Discoveries in Victoria*. Recent publications include ‘Madame Callegari in Australia: the Identity of Alexandre Dumas’s Narrator in *Impressions de Voyage: Journal de Madame Giovanni*’, ‘Finding Forrester: The Life and Death of Joseph Forrester, Convict Silversmith’ and ‘Eugenie Caroline Lemaire: Woman of Fashion and Influence; or Con-woman?’

In a reminder of the interconnectedness of history, Alexander Wilkie and Joyce Cosstick, whose wedding photograph features on our cover, are the parents of Douglas and the grandparents of Ben.

Carole Woods, FRHSV, is a councillor and honorary secretary of the RHSV. At present, she is preparing an exhibition for the centenary of the Australian Red Cross Society and completing a biography of Vera Deakin, founder of the Society’s tracing services.

Peter Yule, FRHSV, is a research fellow in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne. His most recent book is *William Lawrence Baillieu: Founder of Australia’s Greatest Business Empire*, and he is currently working on an economic history of Australia in the First World War to be published by Oxford University Press in 2016.
The Royal Historical Society of Victoria is a community organisation comprising people from many fields committed to collecting, researching and sharing an understanding of the history of Victoria.

Founded in 1909, the Society continues the founders’ vision that knowing the individual stories of past inhabitants gives present and future generations links with local place and local community, bolstering a sense of identity and belonging and enriching our cultural heritage.

The RHSV has a large membership base, including individuals, families, libraries, schools and businesses, as well as functioning as the umbrella organisation for over 280 local and specialist historical societies throughout Victoria.

Membership of the RHSV is open. All those with an interest in history are welcome to join.

The Society’s core activities encompass a diversity of activities that bring history to a wide range of people. Working with a large number of volunteers, the RHSV conducts lectures, exhibitions, excursions and workshops for the benefit of members and the general public. We also publish the *Victorian Historical Journal*, a newsletter, *History News*, six times a year, and monographs.

The *Victorian Historical Journal* publishes and reviews scholarly contributions to Australian history, with particular emphasis on the history of Victoria. Reviews are by invitation. Guidelines for contributors can be obtained by contacting the Society’s office below. Books may also be reviewed in *History News*.

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