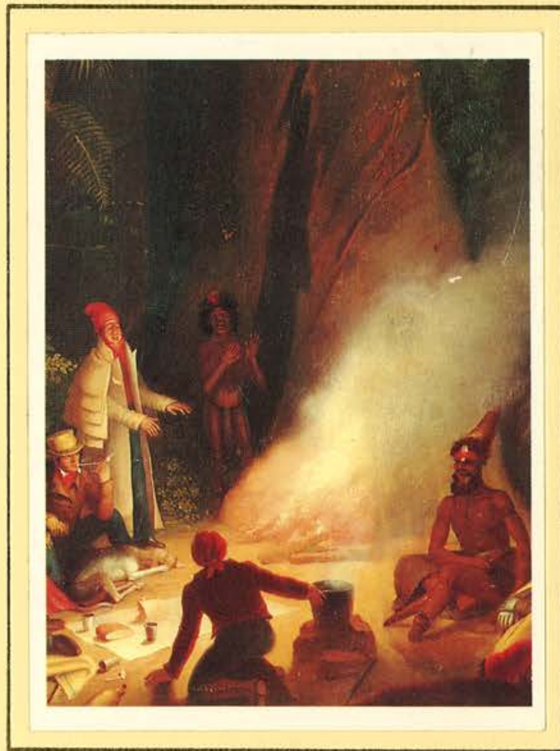
AUSTRALIANS



1838

A colonial surveyor, identity unknown, symbol of British power in Australia in 1838. White men and women aimed to control the land by dividing it up among themselves. The imperial government in London supplied the surveyors and other officials who made the dream of dominion into fact. Undated watercolour by B. Clayton.

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AUSTRALIANS

1838

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AUSTRALIANS: A HISTORICAL LIBRARY
AUSTRALIANS 1838

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COVER ILLUSTRATION

Detail from Augustus Earle, Bivouac of travellers in Australia in a cabbage-tree forest, daybreak, *oil, c1838.*
The full painting is reproduced on page 15.
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Foreword

THIS BOOK and its ten companions have been ten years in the making. They have been created to mark the bicentenary of European settlement in this country, and they are the outcome of collaboration on a scale never before attempted in the writing of Australian history. Hundreds of people in and beyond universities have joined together to re-create the experience of people living in Australia since 1788 and to place that experience in the wider context of a human occupation that began tens of thousands of years ago.

The editors and contributors have worked in a variety of modes: from slicing into the past at fifty-year intervals (*Australians 1838, 1888* and *1938*) to laying out, in terse chronology, events as they happened year by year (*Events and places*), and from portraying processes and movements on maps of the country (*A historical atlas*) to briefing readers for explorations of their own (*A guide to sources*). The authors represent diverse approaches, in terms both of occupation—historian, economist, archaeologist, geographer, librarian, journalist—and of outlook. We have sought the best person for each part of the job, and not altered or muffled anybody's voice. We have also tried to make the work of scholars readily accessible to general readers.

In this aspiration we have been strengthened by a close working relationship with the publishers. From early days the project has benefited from continuous consultation with representatives of Fairfax, Syme & Weldon about its form and presentation. Their confidence in our enterprise has heartened us throughout the long journey.

Together, we and they present *Australians: a historical library* to the people of Australia as an offering for 1988 and beyond.

OLIVER MACDONAGH

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Civilising the wilderness. The artist, John Glover had arrived in Hobart on 1 April 1831, bringing with him English shrubs and song-birds, as well as an English conception of landscape. A view of the artist's house and garden, Mill's Plains, Van Diemen's Land. *Oil on canvas, 1835.*
ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

PREFACE

WHEN AUSTRALIANS commemorate the lengthening history of British settlement on this continent, they are adding to a tradition established by new societies and regimes. The French in 1889 proclaimed that their republican history was a century deep. Americans in 1876 celebrated the enduring success of what their founding fathers had begun by revolution in 1776, and late in the nineteenth century they coined the word 'bicentennial' to proclaim the even greater age of cities, churches and schools founded before the revolution. 'Sesquicentennial' was invented at the same time to honour American institutions only fifty years younger.

In Australia, New South Wales had patriots keen to designate 1838 as a year of jubilee. Half a century later, the idea of a centennial festivity was initiated in Sydney and taken up with more or less enthusiasm by people in other colonies who were unsure whether they wanted their shorter histories to be connected with that of the old penal colony. 'Sesquicentennial' became a word for Australians to get their mouths around in 1938, when organisers of the 150th anniversary commemoration did their best to engage citizens of other states in festivities centred on New South Wales. Readers of *Australians 1838*, *Australians 1888*, and *Australians 1938* will find these jubilee, centennial and sesquicentennial celebrations explored. Their occurrence, indeed, is a reason why we have picked those years as vehicles for one of the approaches employed in these books.

Historians are professionally interested in the passing of time, and in 1977 a few historians in Canberra began to think about 1988 as a year offering a special opportunity to their craft. That year, we guessed, would inspire a larger and more general commemoration than Australians had organised at the end of any previous half-century. The coming occasion was sure to be more *national* than those others, for advances in central government, transport and communication had accelerated the transformation of states that had once been separate colonies into provinces of a single polity, whose people travelled about as never before, talked to each other on STD, watched all over the continent the same prime ministerial news

conference and the same cricket match. Moreover, Australian history itself was gaining a new popularity, as Stuart Macintyre comments at the end of the first chapter in *Australians: a guide to sources*. The names of Manning Clark and Geoffrey Blainey were better known than those of any scholarly historian in earlier times; historical and genealogical societies were burgeoning, and tourists flocked to Ballarat to see goldrush days reconstructed at Sovereign Hill and to Old Sydney Town to see convict floggings re-enacted. Television viewers switched on to Australian costume dramas; and cinema audiences were offered, in 1977 alone, eight feature films based on life in the remote and recent Australian past.

All in all, it appeared likely that public and private enterprise would make 1988 a year for intense consciousness of Australian history. What might historians contribute? Individually, of course, whatever scholarly article or biography or general history an author was moved to attempt. Collectively? The Canberra group, consulting widely, found some antipathy towards the very idea of collaborative enterprise—'history by committee'—and some particular doubts about proposed approaches. But it also found much interest and enthusiasm, and eventually enough support to embark on the project that has become *Australians: a historical library*.

The makers of these books do not see them as official history in any sense. The project has had no money from the Australian Bicentennial Authority. Money for general administration and for research on different volumes has been provided from universities (especially the Australian National University and the University of New South Wales), and from the Australian Research Grants Scheme. General and volume editors have taken on the job as part of their work in universities and colleges of advanced education. With few exceptions, contributors are also unpaid. Royalties will go into a fund to support Australian studies. Some advance royalties, paid years ahead of publication, have been ploughed into research for the books.

That was a source of funds unforeseen when we began. Some potential publishers told us that they would need a subsidy; Fairfax, Syme and Weldon asked for no subsidy, anticipated larger sales than any other publisher we approached, and encouraged us to plan without any inhibitions the size of the books and the quantity and quality of illustrations. The scale on which the publishers have been willing to undertake the project has helped us keep two early resolutions: to write for general readers, addressing them with respect but without assuming prior knowledge and to illustrate the books richly, not for mere decorative effect but to integrate visual material with text.

One half of our enterprise was quickly decided on. Anniversaries, like royal visits, can yield amenities that were needed anyway but required the special occasion to provoke someone into providing them. The celebrations of 1888 endowed Sydney with Centennial Park and the approach of 1988 induced politicians in Canberra to put up a new and permanent Parliament House. Historians had long lamented the absence of a set of reference books that would deliver essential information about Australian history to students, authors and browsers. Our series therefore includes *Australians: a historical atlas*, *Australians: events and places*, *Australians: a historical dictionary*, *Australians: historical statistics* and *Australians: a guide to sources*.

When we wondered about other ways of throwing new light on the past, we considered and set aside a number of approaches. In particular we decided not to add to the shelves one more general narrative history by many hands, which (it seemed to us) would merely elaborate our present understandings of the past without providing any fresh vision. We began to talk about an approach that invited and even required all authors to break new ground. Instead of inviting a

team of contributors to divide up history into chronological sections and have each fill in a stage in his or her own way, we thought of asking groups of writers to work together on a very short period; instead of inviting historians to pass the baton along a familiar track, we proposed a series of survey camps; instead of stringing events on a thread of narrative, we imagined cutting slices.

A book about Australia in a particular year would have at least some qualities in common with Sovereign Hill and Old Sydney Town—exhibitions built to show what our society was like at one moment in its past. Such a book would resemble Elie Halévy's *England in 1815* (1912), or the third chapter of Lord Macaulay's *History of England* (1848), which dealt with the nation in 1685. Both are works in which authors reconstruct a society in a particular year, and contrive perceptions of earlier events by means other than continuous narrative. Adopted by a group of writers, the approach would invite intimate collaboration between scholars with different skills. An economic historian working with a historical geographer, or a historian of medicine exchanging ideas with a social historian, would, we believed, win for readers a richer understanding of the lives Australians were living at a chosen time than any one scholar, working alone, could have achieved.

By writing about one year in people's lives, moreover, historians could avoid creating the most common illusion conveyed by narrative approaches: that history is a stream, carrying people towards a predetermined destination clearly visible to us, if not to them. Slicing through a year, we might hope to see and hear people living as we do, taking some things for granted—the sun rises and sets, the seasons pass, people grow older—but at the same time surrounded by choices and uncertainties. We might recognise people more easily as our own kind if we met them living out the daily, weekly, seasonal, annual and biological rhythms of their lives; and we would certainly understand them more fully by grasping the truth that the future that beckoned or alarmed them was not necessarily *our* past—what actually happened—but rather a hidden destiny, a precarious vision of probabilities, possibilities and uncertainties.

The slice approach could help us to recover the richness of everyday life. James Joyce, inspired to write fiction about what some people in Dublin were doing and thinking and feeling on one day in 1904, had made the discovery, his biographer Richard Ellmann suggests, 'that the ordinary is the extraordinary'. Great novelists make worlds of their own, but the historian can also seek the extraordinary in the ordinary. Indeed, that is one way of describing the kind of history newly attempted in the age of democracy, whose subject is not just public and powerful heroes and villains, but the myriad men and women who are their constituents, victims, contemporaries from womb to grave. The writers of *Australians 1838*, *Australians 1888* and *Australians 1938* have searched hard for sources giving access to the private, the domestic, the workaday, the realms of family and community, the lives of ordinary men, women and children. This is not, as G. M. Trevelyan said of his pioneering social history of England, history with the politics left out; politics is in, but placed in its social, economic and cultural contexts.

While charting the rhythms of existence, we have not ignored change and conflict. In 1838 an unprecedented overland movement of people and animals was under way across southeastern Australia. One consequence of that movement was intensified hostility between white settlers and Aborigines, and the killing of Aborigines by pastoral workers at Myall Creek is a central event in *Australians 1838*. In *Australians 1888* colonists celebrate a century of British settlement and politicians try their hardest to exclude the Chinese. *Australians 1938* records both the mild improvement in material conditions experienced by most people since the depression years, and the strike at Port Kembla about the export of pig iron to Japan.

The years 1838, 1888 and 1938 attracted us not only because they were times of commemoration, but also because they do not have historians' labels attached to them, as, say, does 1851 (gold), or 1914 (war) or 1929 (depression). Exploring years not already identified with familiar themes would serve well, we thought, our purpose of discovering things not yet in the history books about what life was like for earlier generations of Australians.

These are also years that are almost one person's lifetime apart. The slice approach does not ignore everything that happened in the intervening half-centuries. Like Australians today, the people of our chosen years were, in important ways, what their past made them, for every moment in time is at once the culmination of past events and the beginning of the future, and every generation is shaped by its own past—and by *its own* vision of the future. Slicing does not obliterate the long view backwards or forwards: instead, it tries to capture visions of the past and future as they seemed to earlier generations.

One book, we resolved, should examine the longest period of all in Australian history, the epoch in which Australia was occupied solely by Aboriginal people. The richest evidence about this ancient Aboriginal heritage often dates from initial contact with Europeans. For the people of the Sydney region, that took place in 1788; elsewhere, the experience of 1788 was re-enacted in various ways as European settlement spread. Where possible, archaeological, linguistic and other techniques of prehistory have been used in *Australians to 1788* to explore changes and continuities in Aboriginal society over thousands of years; nevertheless, the idea of '1788' as the point of contact rather than as a specific calendar year gives this first book something in common with the slice volumes. And if the concern to reconstruct Aboriginal society and culture at the coming of the European intruders involves a kind of slicing, the final chapter of *Australians to 1788* adopts the approach quite specifically. By exploring the first year of British settlement it enables the first four volumes of *Australians* to present a series of slices at half-century intervals. A twenty-year-old convict who knew the Sydney described in that chapter might, in old age, have known also the world of *Australians 1838*, just as a young woman immigrant of 1838 might, after fifty years in the colonies, have witnessed the centennial celebrations of 1888, or Aborigines alive in 1888 have watched their people incorporated into the sesquicentennial pageantry of 1938. Our slice years are thus linked by the living memories of several generations of Australians.

We decided to devote the fifth book—the last volume before the reference works—to the whole period from 1939, so that in the bicentennial year Australians old and new could read about the society they inhabited. In the pages of *Australians: a historical library*, as in all the other ways in which Australians will mark the significance of 1988, a future generation of historians may perhaps find evidence about the contemporary society. But as we write, that slice still lies in our future.

ALAN D. GILBERT

K. S. INGLIS

INTRODUCTION

THE STORY of this book goes back to 1977, when three of us—Jim Cameron, Marian Aveling and Alan Atkinson—began to try out ideas over dinner in a Chinese restaurant in Perth. We were interested in the proposal for a multi-volume history of Australia which had recently come from the Australian National University, and especially in what this might mean for historical research on the colonies in the early nineteenth century. Central to the proposal was the idea of 'slicing', or treating in detail single years spaced at fifty-year intervals. In due course Marian Aveling and Alan Atkinson volunteered to look after the planning of the volume dealing with Australia in 1838, fifty years after the first European settlement. We thought that the best way to involve other historians in the project would be to publish a journal or bulletin from time to time, canvassing ideas and information about the period. We both lived in Perth, and because we were so far away from the centre of things we called our journal the *Push from the bush*. The first number appeared in May 1978. Other working parties, when they emerged for the different volumes, followed our example. The *Push* appeared roughly twice a year, fulfilling its original purpose until 1984, when it became independent of the project. It was the first in Australia to call itself a journal of *social* history.

In his *Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms*, G. A. Wilkes defines a push as 'A crowd; a band of larrikins; an intellectual and cultural clique'. We in the 1838 enterprise aimed to be something between a crowd and a clique without being precisely a band of larrikins. In February 1980 we had our first conference, in Melbourne: we had already begun to come in from the bush. By this time we had gathered a good number of interested supporters, and the conference added to them. A working party of five was appointed to plan further action. These five drew up some detailed proposals and made a written survey of all known supporters in order to settle crucial points: what kind of evidence we should concentrate on; how we should incorporate Aboriginal experiences; how best to cover all the widely scattered points of white settlement in 1838; how many contributors the book should have, and how their offerings should be drawn together to make the book a unified piece of work.

In February 1981 we had another conference, this time in Canberra. We now decided on four guidelines. First, we aimed to base our presentation of the period on the close reading of specific documents. Broad research we took for granted, but it was to be the skeleton of the book, hidden beneath the surface of narrative and logic. Secondly, we wanted to present the minds of people living in Australia in 1838 as far as possible from inside, by recounting the language and behaviour of day-to-day situations. Thirdly, we aimed mainly at 'history from below, at a critical stance towards the social values of the past, at going *beyond* the records of the elite so as to recreate the minds of the inarticulate and powerless'. Finally, we looked forward to saying something about colonial society as a whole. By this we implied, not an account of every detail of life in 1838, but rather a selection which would make our book a single, integrated statement.

This conference also decided on eighteen people who were to be contributors to the book. These, minus a small number who dropped out and with others who have been added since, are listed elsewhere. Two editors were appointed, Aveling and Atkinson, and they were to exercise all the control necessary to ensure that the book had the character its makers had agreed to give it.

One point was not resolved at this conference. From the beginning we had been concerned about the place of Aborigines and race relations in the book. This was the last opportunity for useful public discussion. The main question was whether Aborigines should be described in all the variety of circumstances which existed for them in 1838, or whether we should limit ourselves to those in direct contact with the invaders. No decision was reached, but the contributors later agreed on the second alternative. This was not entirely satisfactory, but we were persuaded by the fact that *Australians to 1788* would deal with Aborigines before contact—although in 1838 the European invasion had implications far beyond the line of immediate contact—and by the impossibility of describing Aborigines beyond the frontier with the personal familiarity which we gained elsewhere.

Then we entered the most challenging part of the project. In Australia no history book had been written in quite this way before, with many experts agreeing to merge their skills—and often their dearly held beliefs—to a single piece of writing. The two editors were obliged to embrace and build on a range of insights, and at the same time to guard against undue idiosyncracies of style, logic and interpretation. The chapter divisions were now worked out and responsibilities allocated in detail. Some contributors wrote a good deal; others gave more in the way of suggestions and research time. Early drafts were distributed widely, later ones within the groups looking after particular chapters and sections. Group criticism, and in the last resort the editors themselves, pushed our ideas towards consistency.

The 'push' thus became something like a Greek republic, very much aware—perhaps too much so—of the danger of invasion and corruption from outside. In this final period, the contributors met three times, the last occasion being February 1983. Our links with the management of the entire project became more vital. The assistant general editor, Stephen Foster, who was already a substantial contributor, began to play an increasingly important and creative role. In the end he was responsible for bringing this, our version of Australia in 1838, into the world.

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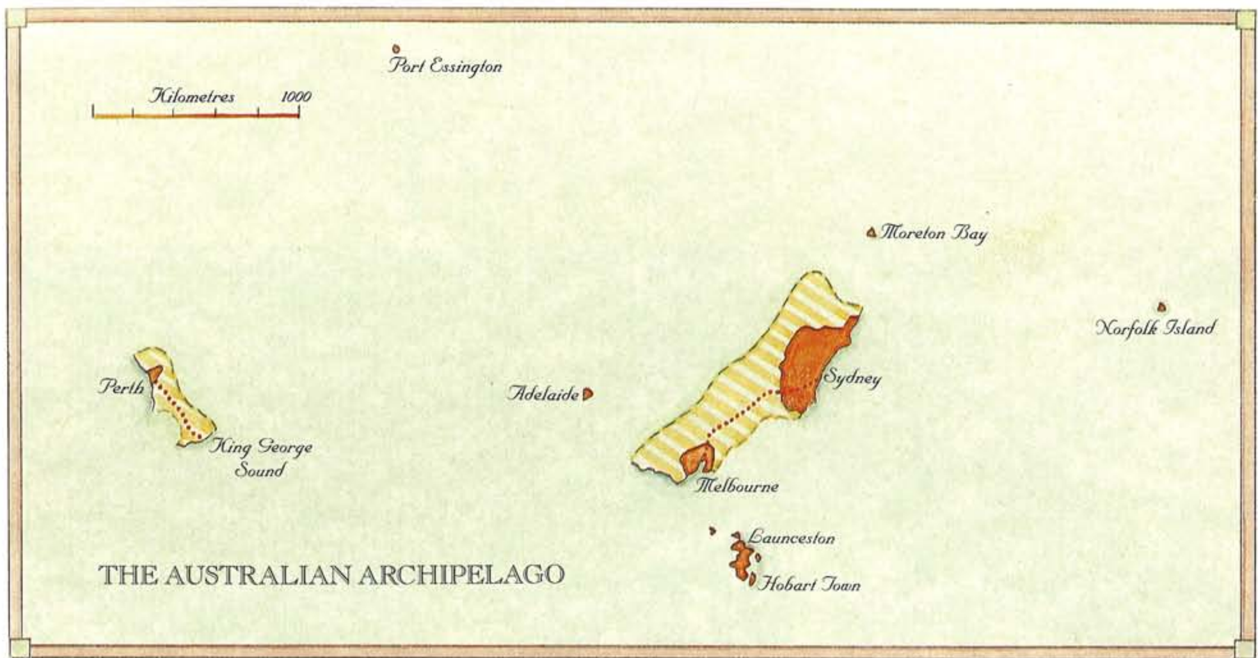
MARIAN AVELING



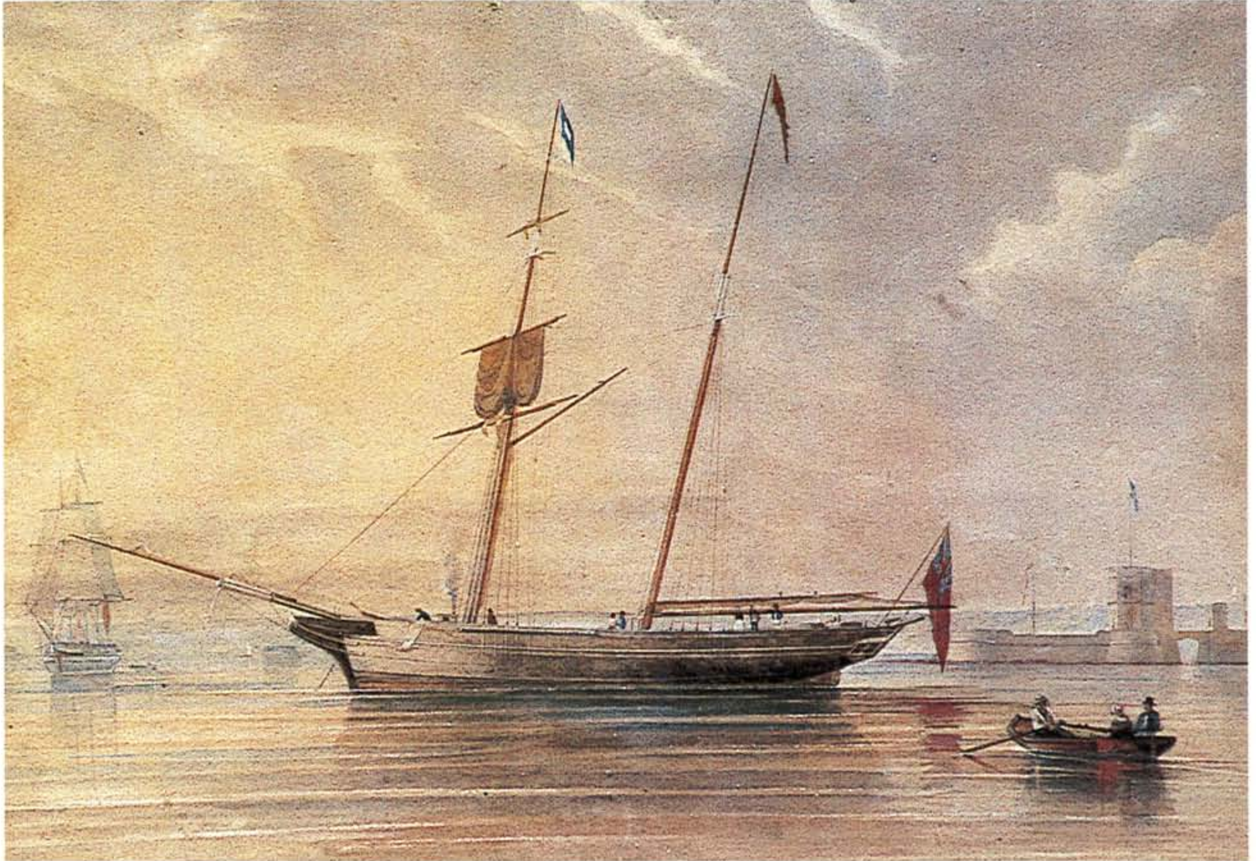
It was the idea of Charles Sturt, one of those English gentlemen who liked to test their courage in remote regions of scrubland or water, that 'Australia might formerly have been an archipelago of islands'. As a man of science, Sturt appreciated the geological dimensions of the image. As an explorer he might also have interpreted the archipelago as we shall in this book – to describe the realities of British settlement in the late 1830s.

A map of the British presence shows a chain of 'islands' strung along the eastern rim of the continent, especially in the southeast, incorporating much of Tasmania – or as it was then called, Van Diemen's Land – and extending along the south coast to Portland and Adelaide. In the far west a cluster of pin-points centred on the river valleys of the Swan and Avon. Along the margins of settlement, sometimes clear-cut and sometimes vague and shifting, ran the edges of the sea or the sea-green bushes. Having crossed the frequently hostile territory of Aboriginal land, Sturt knew more acutely than most the difficulties of passage between the scattered 'islands'.

He also knew better than most how rapidly the 'islands' were growing: as if dots of sand were proving to be the backbone of some New World monster. The most spectacular happening of 1838 – recognised by many at the time – was the movement into the interior of hundreds of thousands of sheep and cattle, expanding the overlanders' tracks into highways, treading down the verges of creeks and rivers, and over-running the Aborigines' carefully husbanded grasslands. It is hardly surprising that the squatters, their men and livestock, were challenged by the Aborigines. This was an invasion by force of arms, resisted with bloodshed but met also by curiosity and by a desire, on the part of some Aborigines, to incorporate the newcomers into their own society.

On the white side of the boundaries another invasion was in progress – an invasion of minds. Aborigines who were already displaced, convict men and women, pauper immigrants from Ireland and Great Britain, children in town and country – all these were to be remade, if possible, into a useful workforce and a moral population. This was an invasion by means of churches and missions, by schools, by law courts and the penal system, by the importation of respectable families, and by the encouragement of marriage. It was a peaceful invasion, except for the turmoil created in the lives of the powerless, and except for the occasional crisis of resistance, caused by apathy, a love of old habits, or a spirit of independence.

White Australians in 1838 took for granted many forms of despotism which are under challenge today – the rule of European over Aborigine, of master over man, of man over woman. As their society grew and changed, their relationships were also changing, with subtle shifts of power, some gains by the oppressed, and some losses. These we explore, within the framework of a double invasion, one which marched forward from the edges of our archipelago, and one which was carried on wherever white men and women were required to make plans for the future.



The Marian Watson *sailed regularly between Hobart Town and Sydney. It arrived in Sydney Cove on 1 January 1838. Oil by Frederick Garling.*
MARY JILL CONNELL, INVERELL

CHAPTER 1

PAST AND PRESENT

NEW YEAR'S DAY 1838 shone over Sydney, a mild and blue-skied Monday. Morning found the two-masted schooner *Marian Watson* making its way up the coast, sighting to the leeward the Five Islands and some threads of breakfast-time smoke over Wollongong and, as day progressed, the open mouth of Botany Bay. At length the schooner entered the Heads—sunset on the faces in its bows—passed the old lightship *Rose* drifting and dancing by the Sow and Pigs, and was carried by cool night breezes to rest at Sydney Cove.

For the crew of the *Marian Watson* this marvellous coastline, scattered with islands and lined with dim blue trees, was simply a workplace. They passed this way, up and back, every two months at least, taking passengers and cargo between Hobart Town and Sydney, the two chief towns of Australia. For the master of the *Marian Watson*, Benjamin Shaw, about 45 years old and a native of the Isle of Man, this was to be his last trip, as he had a new appointment from the government. He was no longer commander of a schooner but an assistant harbourmaster of the port of Sydney: no longer a sailor, coming and going with the winds, but someone paid to know about the movements of other men.

In this book we ask the reader to sit down, as if beside this fairly ancient mariner, and to watch the pattern of life within the four colonies of Australia in 1838: the coming and going by land and waterways, seas and oceans. A colonial newspaper had as its motto two lines from the poet William Cowper:

> What is it but a map of busy life,
> its fluctuations, and its vast concerns?

The same could be said of this book.

Not everyone in the colonies began the year in such a pleasant fashion as the travellers on the *Marian Watson*. For some this New Year's Day was only one more day in a lifetime of hardship. While Benjamin Shaw, his crew and passengers were coming to the end of their journey, John Grapes was just beginning his—though he had the same destination. On New Year's Day Grapes stood before the police

Blue Mountains pass. *Along this road John Grapes was conducted by Corporal Seymour, on his way from Blackheath to the courthouse at Hartley. The massive engineering works incorporated in this road made for more efficient communication and better control over the lives of people like Grapes. Pencil drawing by Abraham Lincolne from his* Australian Sketches, 1838–44.
MITCHELL LIBRARY

magistrate at Hartley, one of the main towns in the western part of New South Wales and 140 kilometres from Sydney. He was charged with being 'illegally at large'. Under the law of both convict colonies—New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land—anyone might be apprehended anywhere and at any time, and asked to prove that he or she was not an escaped convict. Grapes had been taken at Blackheath, in the Blue Mountains, by Corporal Seymour of the mounted police. He had admitted to the corporal that he had once been a convict, but insisted that he was now free. Grapes explained that he had once had a piece of paper proving his freedom, but had lost it. He had been working for General Stewart at Mount Pleasant, a sheep station near Bathurst, but had lately run away, the only course open to men or women who wanted to part company with employers before the period of their contract was up. The corporal had therefore found Grapes alone, with no-one to vouch for him. He had turned out from Grapes's jacket pocket 'some bread and beef and two pieces of lead, one large the other small'. Grapes's explanation for the pieces of lead was that, 'he ... required them to write with'.

The word of a man like John Grapes was worth next to nothing, so the police magistrate ordered that he be taken to the capital 'to be identified and dealt with'. Thus he too became part of the immense traffic moving towards Sydney, a town that was not only the busiest port on the continent, but also the heart of a great penal administration. In Sydney John Grapes would find some respectable men, seated at their desks near Sydney Cove, who could tell him all about himself.

We ask the reader to sit down not only with Benjamin Shaw but also beside these respectable men, with their weighty registers and other records spread out in front of them. Beyond the barricade of ink and paper, beyond the mesh of writing—in both form and function like modern barbed wire—we see the faces of countless men and women like John Grapes, and children as well, who are to be 'identified and dealt with'. Whether we, at a distance of 150 years, can understand more than these respectable men, remains to be seen.

— Blue Mountain Pass —

The opposite sketch was taken in 1838 when on a journey from Sydney to the "River Lachlan", and shews the description of roads over a great part of this high range of Mountains — The spot drawn is just past "Black Heath" on the Bathurst road, and is about 75 miles from Sydney — it is termed "Mount Victoria", and from the distant cliff, named "Pulpit Hill", an extensive view of the "Vale of Clwyd" lying to the South may be obtained — This road was made principally by convicts —

We return to the *Marian Watson*. The vessel was 150 tonnes, a brigantine, with a crew of ten. Built at Anglesey in old Wales three years earlier, the *Marian Watson* had spent most of its life in this southwest corner of the Pacific. It took about a week to sail between Hobart Town and Sydney, though good winds might cut the time to five days. On this New Year's run it carried in its hold a typical freight of sundries. There were 32 bundles of kangaroo skins for Francis Mitchell, whose home and warehouse were within a few metres of the Queen's Wharf, where the ship lay at anchor. Kangaroo skins from Van Diemen's Land were Sydney's chief source of soft shoe leather. There were also twelve cases of bottled fruit and 55 kegs of paint for Montefiores, Breillat and Co, of Macquarie Place, a branch of a large firm with headquarters in London and an office in Hobart Town. Montefiores' main business was to send fine wool from the two colonies to England. Seven kegs of locally made tobacco, returning unsold from Hobart Town, were addressed to J. Simmons: probably James Simmons, an ex-convict merchant and one of Sydney's leading Jews. His headquarters were at the Jerusalem Warehouse, near the post office in George Street.

The *Marian Watson* belonged to Daniel Egan of Lower George Street. He had bought the ship seven months earlier for £1860. Egan was a near neighbour of Mitchell but, unlike Mitchell and most of Sydney's merchants he had been born in Australia, the son of convicts. Egan was now about 33 years old, two-thirds the age of the settlement at Sydney, which rejoiced this month in its half-century. He had spent his working life on the harbour: where Captain Arthur Phillip and his people had entered fifty years before, amazed, the first white men and women to see its myriad inlets. For Egan it was home, and he knew better than most how to take a fortune from it. Sydney Cove and the adjacent Darling Harbour were now the heart of his trading business and the centre of his world. For Egan and his generation, many of them the children of the early convicts, and for their offspring, England was far beyond the horizon: a partly imaginary island, a place of curious contradictions where their parents and grandparents had been children, and men and women who were now wealthy and venerable had been common thieves.

A sense of history. The brass tablet was attached in 1822 to honour James Cook and Joseph Banks. It is at Cape Solander, Botany Bay, where Cook was supposed to have cast anchor in April 1770. Hand-coloured lithograph by G.E. Madeley after a sketch by John Lhotsky, 1839.
W.L. CROWTHER LIBRARY, STATE LIBRARY OF TASMANIA

Egan owned several sea-going vessels and managed all their movements from his house near Sydney Cove. The barque *Francis Freeling*, a whaler at anchor in the harbour, had just returned from the vicinity of Encounter Bay in South Australia. The brig *Bee*, also at anchor, had been lately bought by Egan for £920. It was being refitted for trading to Van Diemen's Land and the new settlement at Adelaide. Earlier this summer he had lost another whaler, the *Lynx*, broken to pieces on a sandbank in New Zealand. Insurance money had allowed its speedy replacement with the brig *Hind*, which set off for the same region at Christmas time. No lives were lost in the wreck of the *Lynx*, but still it seems curious that Egan had himself gone to New Zealand with his new ship, 'for the benefit of his health'. He was therefore not at home on this New Year's night to meet his best possession, the *Marian Watson*, though perhaps his wife, native born like himself, heard from her bed the anchor's noisy descent into home waters.

A sense of history. This column, also at Botany Bay, honours the French navigator, La Pérouse, who called there in 1788. It was erected in 1820. Lithograph after a sketch by Robert Russell, 1836.
MITCHELL LIBRARY

Later in the year Daniel Egan had the chance of taking part in an experimental venture further afield: a voyage to Timor to buy ponies for the colony. From this he drew back, though the venture turned out to be very successful. Timor was an island beyond the vision of men like Egan. The native-born Australians found it hard to fix their minds on such remote places. It was usually others—rich free immigrant families, English firms such as Montefiores, and merchants and army officers with a knowledge of the Indies—who tied the colonies to a world beyond their own and the New Zealand seas.

The four colonies of what we now call Australia encompassed the entire continental mainland and Van Diemen's Land. In New South Wales, the oldest, British inhabitants were scattered in varying density from Moreton Bay, north of

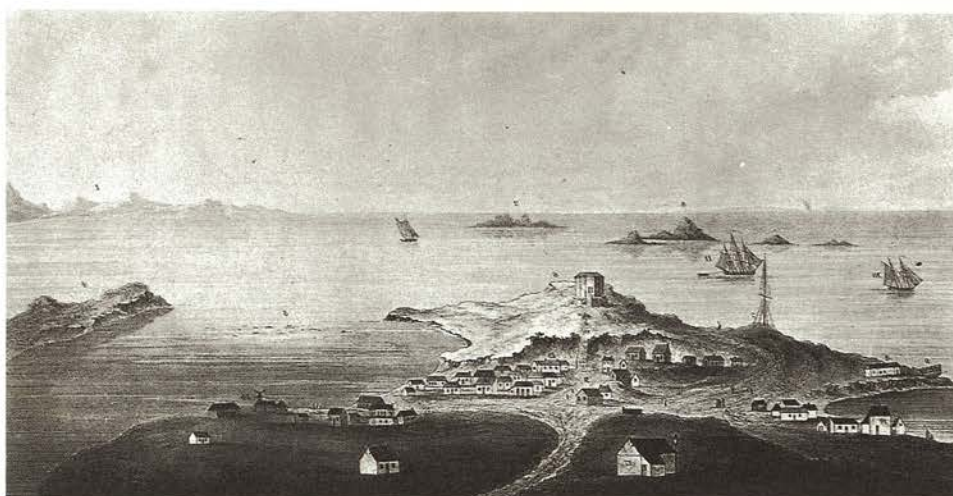
Port Essington. In 1824 and 1827 British settlements had been formed on Melville Island and Raffles Bay on the north coast of the continent. In 1829 both were abandoned. In 1838, apprehensive of French intentions for the area, the Colonial Office ordered a new settlement. Sir J.J. Gordon Bremer arrived at Port Essington in November, with a detachment of the Royal Marines under the command of Captain John McArthur, who painted this scene. Watercolour.
NATIONAL LIBRARY

Sydney, to Portland, in the newly settled Port Phillip district, and inland to the frontier beyond Bathurst. There was an outpost at the Bay of Islands in New Zealand—technically outside the territory of New South Wales—with a government agent and a small white population. From November there was, too, a little settlement at Port Essington on the remote north coast. On the island colony of Van Diemen's Land, known to local patriots as Tasmania, the settlers lived mainly at Hobart Town, at Launceston—the northern port—and in a rich belt of country in between. In South Australia, a colony since 1836, Kangaroo Island and Adelaide were almost the only places showing substantial signs of British invasion.

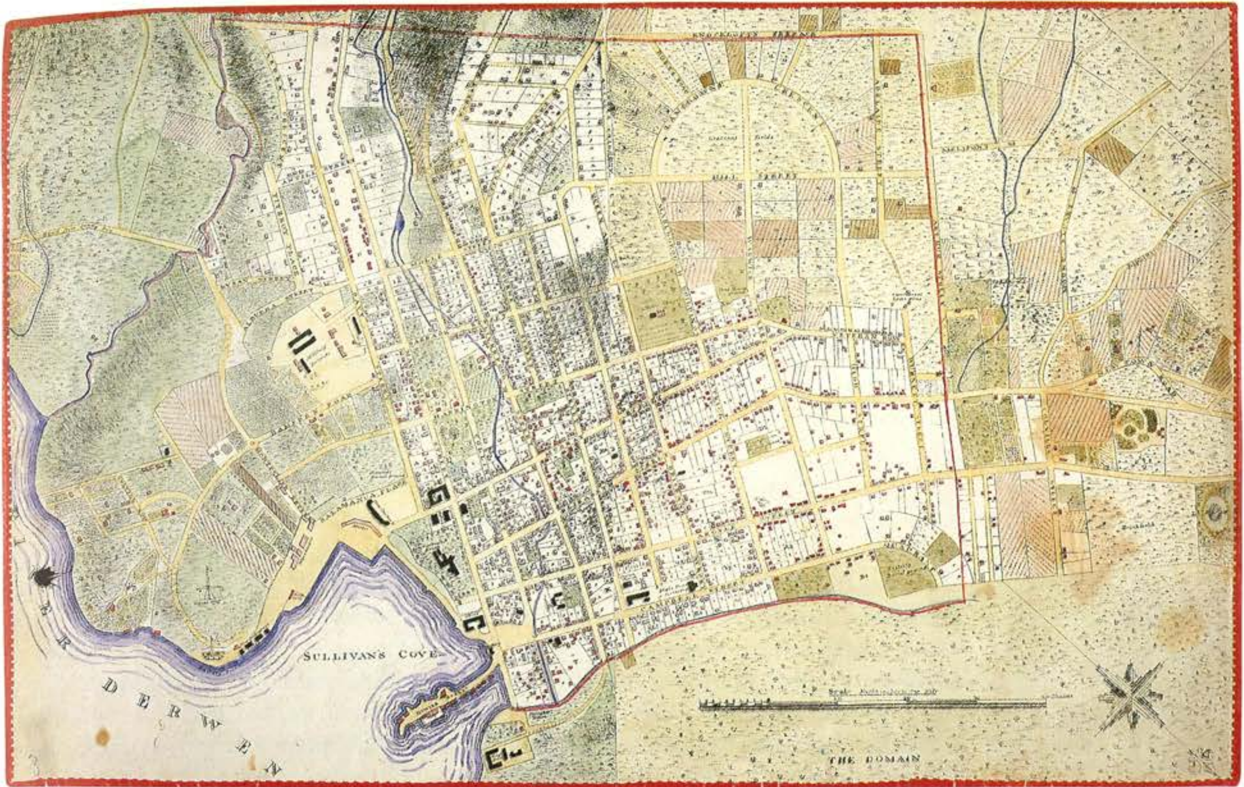
The affairs of Daniel Egan rarely went beyond New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land and South Australia. Taking Sydney as the centre, the white communities within these colonies, except the tiny bases at Port Essington, Norfolk Island and New Zealand, were within a radius of 1200 kilometres. This normally meant anything up to three weeks' travelling, the time to Adelaide being lengthened by the difficult passage of Bass Strait.

Along the far edge of the continent the settlements of Western Australia had different horizons. By 1838, nine years after the first tree had been felled at Perth, the settlers' travelling habits were still very restricted, by sea at least. Inland they were a scattered people, their tiny farming communities stretching from Toodyay, with only twelve inhabitants, south to the Vasse and Augusta, and to Albany on King George Sound. The main coastal settlements, Perth, Fremantle and Albany, though small enough—even Perth had a British population of only 691—accounted for nearly two-thirds of the people. Water transport between these last named towns constituted most of the traffic in the colony and voyages along the coast gave the settlers their main seaward horizons. The government schooner *Champion* was the most useful vessel on these waters. Inland the main line of communication was also by water: the ferry-way by the Swan River between Fremantle, Perth and Guildford.

No merchants traded beyond the colony. Two whaling firms, both formed in 1837, operated from Fremantle, but their vessels were bay-whalers only and never went far from the coast. Fremantle and Albany watched the coming and going of ships from the world beyond, but these visitors were not very frequent. Albany, with 172 inhabitants, had its own history, beginning three years before Perth's, and its own magnificent harbour, from which it looked to southern seas. King George Sound was a stopping place for vessels from the outside world on their way to the



Fremantle. The gaol on Arthur's Head dominates. On the right is the mouth of the Swan River and, on the horizon, Rottnest Island. Aquatint after Wallace Bickley, View of Fremantle, Western Australia (from the Canning Road), *1832.*
ART GALLERY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



eastern colonies, and it was also within relatively easy reach of traders working from the east. Daniel Egan had considered sending his new vessel, the *Bee*, to both King George Sound and the settlements at Swan River, but he decided in the end that Adelaide was far enough.

There was no native-born merchant like Daniel Egan among the settlers of Western Australia. Not even Van Diemen's Land, though settled by the British since 1803—about a year before Egan's birth—could boast a generation of native born quite like that of New South Wales. The white population of Van Diemen's Land was now over forty thousand—nearly half the population of the mother colony and to all appearances growing more quickly. But this growth had been very recent, especially in the number of women, which, of course, largely determined the number of children born. For a long time few female convicts had been sent to Van Diemen's Land, and not until 1823 did the number of female colonists reach that of New South Wales twenty years earlier. By then, New South Wales had a flourishing economy: many convict and ex-convict men had been able to marry and prosper, and some were growing rich. One, Samuel Terry, died in

Hobart Town from the Derwent estuary. Most of the town is hidden. Sullivan's Cove and the main wharves are to the right. St David's Church is in the centre. Hand-coloured lithograph by George Philip Reinagle.
NATIONAL LIBRARY

Top.
Hobart Town, mapped by the surveyor-general George Frankland, c1836. Hand-coloured lithograph, 1839.
ALLPORT LIBRARY AND MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, STATE LIBRARY OF TASMANIA

1838 reputedly worth half a million pounds. He was linked by business and kinship with many wealthy Sydney families, whose menfolk walked behind his coffin.

Thus in New South Wales, when the jubilee year began, we find an ex-convict and native-born community more substantial than in Van Diemen's Land. The adult natives alone in New South Wales made up roughly a fifth of the free adult population (taking fifteen years old as adult, which is right for the time), compared with less than 5 per cent in the younger colony. Among this latter tiny group there was certainly a national feeling. 'In no bosom', an immigrant observer wrote, 'does the love of country burn more intensely than in that of the native-born Tasmanian'. But the great mass of those born in Van Diemen's Land were too young even for such simple idealism. In Western Australia all the native born were little children, and in South Australia they were babes in arms.

William Charles Wentworth, author of A statistical, historical, and political description of the colony of New South Wales, and its dependent settlements in Van Diemen's Land: with a particular enumeration of the advantages which these colonies offer for emigration, and their superiority in many respects over those possessed by the United States of America, *London 1819. Lithograph attributed to J. Allen, c1820s.*
MITCHELL LIBRARY

The native born of New South Wales combined a peculiar sense of history with their own distinctive sense of geography. The great figure in their national past was Governor Lachlan Macquarie (1810–21), celebrated in William Charles Wentworth's widely-read account of the colony, first published in 1819. Wentworth himself was the son of a convict woman and was born, apparently, in 1790 aboard a convict transport in local waters. He had been educated to the law in England, but had returned to the colony in 1824. He was a skilled politician and a powerful public speaker. Especially in Sydney, he had helped to merge the ethos of a partly criminal, ex-convict society with the fresh and spontaneous patriotism of the young native born. Wentworth's language was that of a Whig reformer, and he was obsessed with tyranny and the cost and corruption of government. His great panacea was a local parliament, on the model of those that had long existed in the older parts of the empire.

The patriots' national day was 26 January, the day in 1788 on which Phillip had landed at Sydney Cove. The anniversary had been first celebrated by Phillip himself, in 1791, and had become more recently a day of popular rejoicing. Since 1828 there had been boat races on the harbour in honour of Anniversary Day, from Sydney Cove to the Sow and Pigs and back. It was also a day of church services and public dinners, and the principal person at such dinners was normally liberty's darling, Wentworth, who gloried in the company of his fellow patriots, ex-convict and native-born. However, in 1837 a number of the leading native-born, calling themselves 'United Australians', had organised their own dinner, to which only native-born men were invited. (Women rarely went to public dinners.) This dinner, although well attended, was not a complete success, because there was some disagreement about making it so select. The organisers, who included Daniel Egan, had been anxious to free their generation from the taint of convictism and disorder, but some among the 160 guests were just as keen not to be linked with exclusivism and oligarchy. Wentworth himself had refused to come, but a few young men at the dinner drank his health.

In 1838 efforts to organise a similar gathering in honour of the jubilee were unsuccessful. However, there was plenty of general celebration: a regatta, a salute of fifty guns at noon and fireworks at night. Those native-born men and women who preferred the company of their own kind hired the new steamer *Australia* and spent the day on the harbour dancing. Daniel Egan, as we know, was also

water-borne, somewhere in the Tasman Sea. For him the shoals of New Zealand might well have seemed less hazardous than the native-born politics of Sydney.

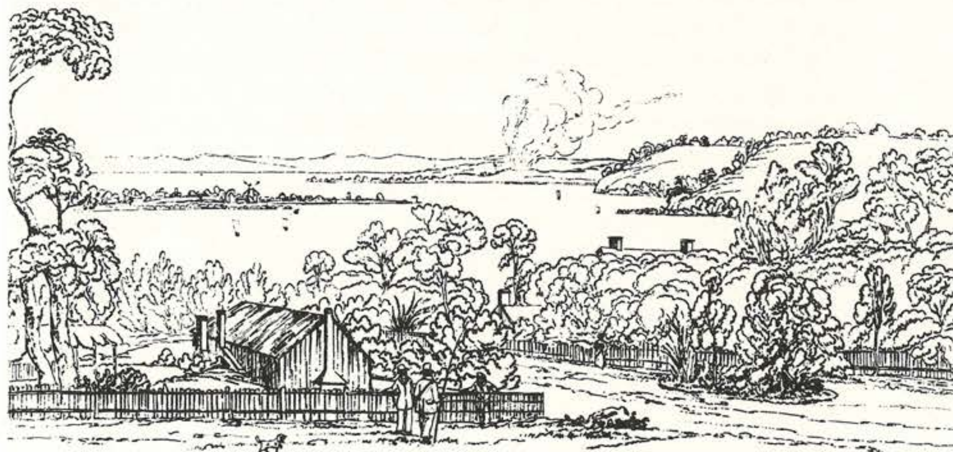
Van Diemen's Land had no day like Anniversary Day. In 1838 this was remedied by the institution of Regatta Day, on 2 December, anniversary of the day in 1642 when Abel Tasman had anchored off the island. The steady growth of the island's white population since about 1823 had been partly a result of more and more convicts being sent there, following the recommendations of John Thomas Bigge, who conducted an official inquiry into the colonies in 1819–21. Under the governorship of Colonel George Arthur (1824–36) a larger administration had been fashioned to control what was in effect a vast open-air penitentiary. The present governor, Sir John Franklin, and Jane, Lady Franklin, were more inclined to see the island as a centre of British culture, the main work of civilisation being entrusted to a polished elite. However, they found their elite mainly among the higher officials, whose status and salaries depended on the convict system.

At the beginning of 1838 the Franklins were already maturing plans for a complete reform of the island's educational system, aiming to establish a network of elementary schools for the poor and a good college for the sons of gentlemen. They had also lately inaugurated the Natural History Society of Van Diemen's Land, to encourage higher learning and interest in the island's natural resources. Lady Franklin, especially, hoped to create among the people a better sense of their national past and future. She and Sir John were responsible for building this year a monument to the founding governor, David Collins. But more important in her scheme of things was Abel Tasman's discovery of the island. This event was beyond living memory, and Tasman was Dutch. But it could be seen as a national event happily free of convict associations, and she and Sir John encouraged, for this reason, wider use of the name 'Tasmania'. They soon renamed their Natural History Society the 'Tasmanian Society'. Regatta Day, as we see in chapter 6, was to be a national day, to mark both Tasman's achievement and the people's common hopes. As it happened Regatta Day was immediately popular, for the same reason that Anniversary Day, with *its* regatta, was popular in Sydney. It prompted some inhabitants to contemplate higher things, their national past and future. For most it was fun.

Compared with the convict colonies, the history of Western Australia was short and simple. In 1838 the editor of the *Perth Gazette* congratulated his readers on the ninth anniversary of settlement—'The steady progress of our Colony may be hailed as an earnest of its permanent and successful establishment'—but at times progress had been almost imperceptible. This did not prevent the people from celebrating as usual the first day of June—anniversary of the colony's foundation in 1829—with horseraces and a regatta on Perth Water, a subscription ball for ladies and gentlemen and—a new event—a tradesmen's ball. There were also amusements got up 'for the delight and gratification of the lower classes'—even lower, that is, than tradesmen. These included wrestling and other sports, and spear throwing by the Perth Aborigines. 'The natives', wrote the editor of the *Perth Gazette*,

> exhibited their want of precision in aiming at a loaf stuck on a spear. After throwing for some time, a spear was taken from one of their hands by a boy named Carey Stokes, and at the first throw the loaf was knocked down.

Contempt for the Aborigines mingled in the editor's mind with pride in the skill of Carey Stokes, eighteen years old and a tradesman's son. The celebration affirmed a solidarity of feeling among settlers of all ranks, and concealed the many divisions in local society.



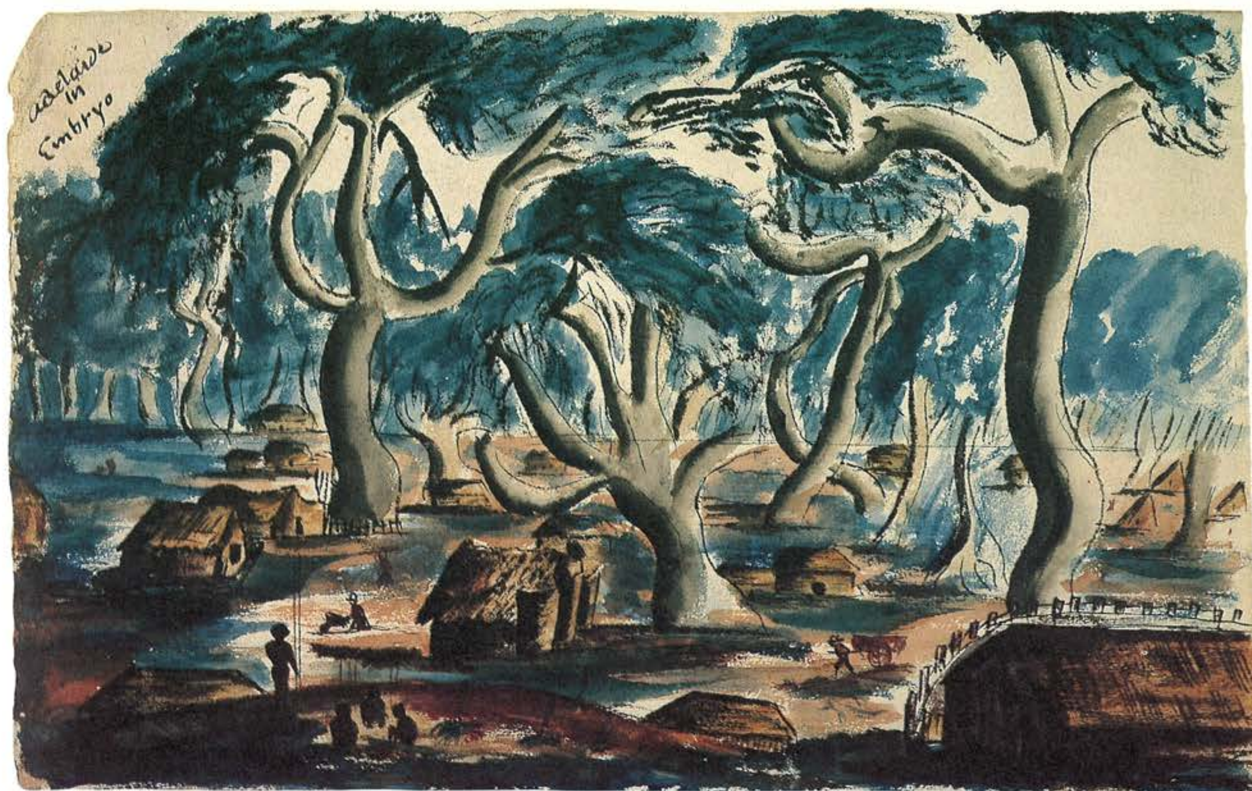
The Swan River, from the main street of Perth. Lithograph by J. Henshall after Charles Wittenoom, 1839.
ART GALLERY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The South Australians had better reason for self-congratulation, having achieved much more than the Western Australians in a fraction of the time. But they did not have the same sense of unity. Most of the inhabitants were fresh from the boat and had no idea of sharing a common history. The officials who might have encouraged such a feeling, as officials did in Van Diemen's Land, were split into two angry factions, one supporting the governor and the other the resident commissioner, who was responsible for immigration and land sales. The very first national celebration had been held on 28 December 1837, the first anniversary of settlement, when some leading officials and other gentlemen, apparently all friends of the governor, met at the courthouse and gave themselves a dinner, 'four courses and dessert . . . served up by Mr Lee of the Southern Cross Hotel'. Their opponents attempted to answer in kind with a dinner at the Adelaide Tavern on 27 March 1838, to mark the first anniversary of land sales in the town, but this had to be cancelled. When the second anniversary of settlement came around, at Christmas time 1838, the duties of governor and resident commissioner had been combined in one man, Colonel George Gawler. This union of interests might have been expected to yield a single joyful celebration. But there now seemed to be no need to dine together, to show where one stood. The second anniversary passed unnoticed, even among the officials.

Invitation to William Macarthur, of Camden Park, to the St Patrick's Day ball, Sydney. It should read Monday the 19th, but the ball in fact took place on Friday the 16th.
MITCHELL LIBRARY

Another day of popular importance for the colonies was St Patrick's Day, 17 March. Perhaps it was the most significant of all. It was certainly a matter of more heartfelt celebration than either of the other two national saints' days, in April—St George of England—and November—St Andrew of Scotland. These two saw mainly a clinking of glasses and some hearty speeches and pleasant conversation among the rich, who cherished sweet recollections of home. For English and Scots the Queen's birthday, in May, was a more popular day of rejoicing. St Patrick's Day, on the other hand, was a day for the Irish, who were largely outnumbered among the rich. On this day the Irish remembered, if they liked, their religion and their poor and persecuted country—or at least they remembered some sympathetic publican, and did their best to remember their way home afterwards.

On his anniversary in 1838 the Irish in Hobart Town welcomed 'their darling St Patrick . . . with drums, fifes, and other marks of Hibernian hilarity'. This was on Saturday night, and the hilarity continued through Sunday, so that the watch-house was packed with the drunk and disorderly by Monday morning. In Sydney the

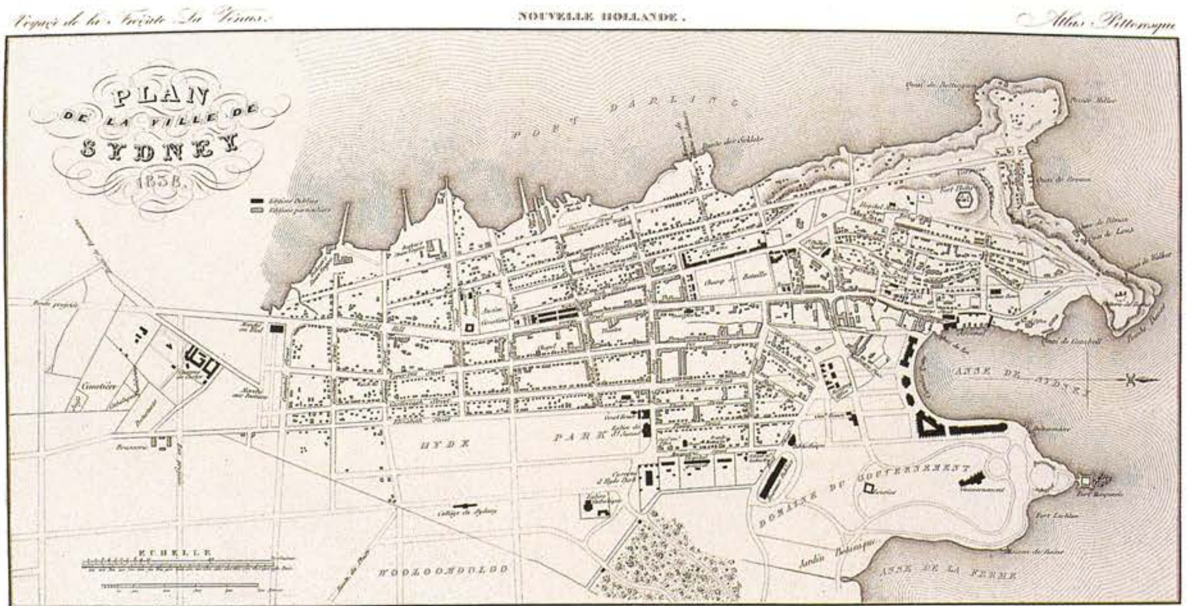


Adelaide in embryo. *The artist sees a puny and flimsy settlement, vastly overshadowed by menacing wilderness and observed closely by Aborigines. For very different perceptions see the illustrations on pp 13 and 129. Watercolour attributed to W.H. Longway, 1838.*
ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY, WELLINGTON

Irish poor were more restrained and better disciplined. However, Patrick Maguire was locked up on Saturday, and fined twenty shillings as the ringleader of a mob who had thrown brickbats at the mounted police 'for the honor of St Patrick'. An Irish governor, Sir Richard Bourke (1831–37), had made the day in Sydney more respectable than in Hobart Town, and the only organised festivity was seemly and magnificent. In 1838 there was another regatta on the harbour, and a ball at the new Royal Victoria Theatre, 'one of the most splendid festivals that has yet taken place in the Colony' according to the *Sydney Herald*. It was the first occasion of this kind at which the new governor, Sir George Gipps, appeared with his lady.

Other groups of people came together during the year to celebrate their memories and achievements. The lawyers of Adelaide had a dinner to mark the first twelve months of the resident magistrate's court. On New Year's Day some of the new free immigrants of Sydney met at the Pulteney Hotel in Bridge Street, where they had their second annual Emigrants' Ball. They were close enough to Sydney Cove for the music to reach the ears of the travellers on the *Marian Watson* as it drew in at the Queen's Wharf. Also in Sydney, on 18 June, the anniversary of the British victory at Waterloo, 'a few individuals who shared in the glories of that memorable battle dined together at the Cricketer's Arms'. Freemasons throughout the colonies ate and drank especially well on 27 December, the day of their patron saint, St John the Evangelist, remembering traditions which they believed went back to King Solomon.

Taken together these celebrations illuminate the differences in character of the four colonies. The age and complex population of white New South Wales had allowed a rich variety of celebrations to evolve, and to produce a greater bonding between ranks and more fellow feeling than in other colonies. The rich in New South Wales had found more effective ways of conversing with their poor than



Sydney in 1838. This lithograph was probably drawn after a sketch made by one of the crew of the French ship La Vénus, *which called at Sydney in 1838. It was published in Abel du Petit-Thouars'* Voyage autour du monde sur la frégate La Vénus, pendant les années 1836–1839; Atlas pittoresque, *Paris 1841.*
The buildings blocked in are public ones: government offices, hospitals, churches and so on. Some of what appears in the map was only planned in 1838. Thus de Thierry shows the small estuary of the Tank Stream, which runs into Sydney Cove, filled in to make a 'circular quay' with large warehouses along the southern and eastern edges and a new pattern of streets in dotted lines; a new government house (of which the foundations are already laid); and bureaux publics *at the southern end of the domain.*
*Other buildings shown include the military barracks (*caserne*) and parade ground (*champ de bataille*); the Australian Subscription Library (*bibliothèque*); the Treasury (*trésor*); the old cemetery (*ancien cimetière*); and various churches (*églises*) and wharves (*quais*).*
MITCHELL LIBRARY

their counterparts elsewhere. Altogether, conversation on public affairs in New South Wales was more sophisticated. According to a Sydney gentleman fresh from Van Diemen's Land, 'there are more enlarged views and feelings here, people *here* dispute ... on principles, there about *persons*'. While this may have been unduly flattering to the mother colony, it was accurate enough.

The schooner *Marian Watson* contained within its wooden walls a rough microcosm of colonial life, a collection of individuals representing several of the types which made up local populations. Among its passengers were two classes, the poor and relatively uneducated, who travelled together in the steerage part of the vessel, and the wealthy who had cabins of their own—a division made in every passenger ship of the period, and corresponding to the main division of rank in the wider world.

In the steerage of the *Marian Watson* were ten people: two married couples, named Lambell and Lake, a man by himself, and two women, Mrs Saunson and Mrs Welsh, both with children. No doubt some of them were moving from Van Diemen's Land in the hope or expectation of work in New South Wales. Some may have been travelling for family reasons. Mrs Welsh and her child had spent only ten days or so—including Christmas time—at Hobart Town, and they were

now presumably coming home. Such men, women and children belonged to what were called 'the masses'. Their joys, their troubles, their personalities, rarely take any clear and particular form among the written records available to us. Unfortunately, all ten people in the steerage of the *Marian Watson* must be left among the masses, perfectly faceless. Later in this book we have better luck with others of similar rank.

Men and women from among the masses appeared and disappeared like innumerable shadows among the opal-blue bush of the Australian interior. The well-known pioneers came from among the ranks of the educated: Joseph Hawdon, for instance, who, as we see in chapter 2, led the first expedition to take livestock overland from New South Wales to the new settlement at Adelaide. Hawdon left from his cattle station at Western Port near Melbourne on 1 January. He travelled first to his brother's station at Howlong on the Murray, where he mustered about 340 head of cattle and, with a gentleman friend, a cook and tent servant—both on foot—two drivers for the drays, a shepherd for the small flock that supplied them with fresh mutton, and four stockmen, had set off downriver. For about ten days, 'the most serious part of our journey', they were in territory hitherto unknown to white people, or so Hawdon believed. They arrived at Adelaide on 3 April, and the gentlemen of South Australia congratulated Hawdon and his friend with a

View from Mount Lofty Range. *Colour wash by Frances Amelia Skipper, c1838.*
ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

public dinner. They were followed in August by a party led by Captain Charles Sturt, who was similarly feted by men of his rank in the new colony.

But it was the common stockmen, the mailmen, blacksmiths and publicans, who made up and maintained most of the British traffic that was beginning to overlay the equally busy traffic of the Aborigines. Hawdon held the first government contract to carry mail overland to and from Melbourne. Between Melbourne and Howlong he was accompanied by John Conway Bourke, an Irishman of relatively humble birth, whom he employed to do this work for him. In his journal of the expedition Hawdon mentions Bourke several times, but never by name: since he was not a gentleman his identity did not matter. This journey was Bourke's pioneering run, and he travelled the distance fortnightly for the rest of the year.

Opposite page.
A bivouac of travellers in Australia, in a cabbage tree forest, day break. *The scene is probably the Illawarra. The forest dwarfs the travellers; a huge tree towers so high above them as to be lost to our sight. The newcomers have come to terms with the bush: the gentleman in charge and another in the party smoke contentedly. But they have not mastered it. Oil by Augustus Earle, 1838.*
NATIONAL LIBRARY

He exchanged bags at Howlong with the mailman who went between there and Yass, 300 kilometres from Sydney, and from Yass the post went by coach to the capital. On the track from Yass to Melbourne there was only one public house, owned by Edward Green, 34 kilometres from Yass, while Martin Ready, a blacksmith, was to be found on the Murrumbidgee, 30 kilometres further on. There were sheep and cattle stations beyond, such as John Hawdon's at Howlong, but Ready was the last hope for worn horseshoes and broken vehicles.

To the north of Sydney the most remote place providing accommodation and the services of a blacksmith was Saumarez, the sheep station of Captain Sturt's cousin Sophia Dumaresq, high on the New England plateau. Among the employees of the Dumaresq family was John Duval, or Devell, an ex-convict stockman stationed at the northernmost part of the family holdings. Duval was so well regarded as a bushman that owners of stock looking for pasture beyond were strongly advised to consult him before they plunged into the unknown. In this way Duval helped determine the shape of settlement on that stretch of the white frontier.

Concealed even more deeply in the bush were small groups of men and women who made it their business to stay hidden. George Finch, who carried the mail beyond Queanbeyan in southern New South Wales, was robbed in January by four of them, three men and a woman. Beyond Marulan in the same area, Mary Ann Hawthorne lived in a hut already collapsing with decay, apparently supporting herself by running stock on crown pasture and selling spirits, in both cases without the appropriate licence. In South Australia the men known as 'tiersmen'—men of the mountains—numbers of them ex-convicts from New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, lived in the hills above Adelaide. They were not all outlaws. One of them, John Williams, a bullock driver from Sydney, came into town on Christmas Day to be married to a young immigrant girl of good character. Generally, however, they lived beyond the reach of the law and therefore largely beyond the sight of the historian.

Among the cabin passengers on the *Marian Watson* were several whom we can know as individuals. The most important person on board was John Walker, an eminent flour miller and brewer with property throughout Van Diemen's Land. Walker had been born on the Scottish border and was an active layman in the

Entering Sydney Harbour. Such a late afternoon scene met the passengers of the Marian Watson. *Lithograph by Sabatier, published 1841.*
MITCHELL LIBRARY

Presbyterian Church. Presbyterians in Van Diemen's Land were divided, as in Scotland and elsewhere, between those who believed that authority should lie mainly with the congregations, and those who thought it should be in the hands of ministers and a central hierarchy. For many years the Presbyterian congregations of Van Diemen's Land had largely looked after themselves, though linked with the United Associate Synod in Scotland. This was Voluntaryism, and Walker liked it. It was in keeping with the isolated and self-contained community life that had always been typical of Van Diemen's Land, and it gave considerable power to leading laymen like himself. However, ministers had lately arrived in Hobart Town who were members of the mainstream Church of Scotland, and who therefore favoured a more centralised form of church government. Van Diemen's Land was now to be tied more closely to Edinburgh and orthodoxy.

This shift in authority on the island was part of a general tightening of the net of empire in the 1830s. Public opinion and men in authority in Britain were becoming more conscious of Australia. Australians for their part were beginning to sense a new pattern of interference in their affairs. Some liked it. Some did not.

New South Wales had already two distinct Presbyterian groups, a Synod of New South Wales having been formed along vaguely Voluntary lines by the Reverend John Dunmore Lang in opposition to more orthodox ministers. Lang had lately returned to the colony in the *Portland* with a cargo of new ministers from Scotland and Ulster, and these were to be his Synod. The news of their arrival had reached Hobart Town on 15 December 1837. John Walker saw his chance. The *Marian Watson* was at anchor in the Derwent, about to return to Sydney. Walker had booked a passage, intending to see Lang and to secure two or more of his new recruits, and perhaps a couple of teachers, to revive the Voluntary tradition in the southern colony.

With Walker travelled a young Scotswoman whom we know only as Miss Robertson. She was probably one of a family of brothers and sisters settled in Van Diemen's Land. John and William Robertson had a large store in Elizabeth Street, Hobart Town, while James and Daniel operated from Launceston. Daniel Robertson had lately returned from a buying expedition to England, having taken 'a larger Sum than ever was sent before by any house now in the Island'. He had sent back ahead of him a consignment of haberdashery, hosiery, silk fabrics and other textiles which the brothers were now selling. They were rich and active men, and had also taken a leading part in the new pastoral settlement at Port Phillip, across Bass Strait. John and William Robertson had been founding members of the Port Phillip Association, which shipped livestock across the water. William had been to see the new land as early as January 1836, six months after their partner in the association, the pioneer John Batman, set foot there.

John Walker was also interested in Port Phillip, but he was a member of the rival firm in that part of the world, the Clyde Company. In fact there were few men of substance in Van Diemen's Land who had not given thought to investment across Bass Strait. Port Phillip and the nearby coastal settlements around Geelong and Portland were largely colonies of Van Diemen's Land, though formally part of New South Wales. Even the Presbyterians there were now so numerous, after less than three years, that Dr Lang agreed to spare one of his new men to minister there. The Reverend James Forbes was to leave by the *Sarah* early in January.

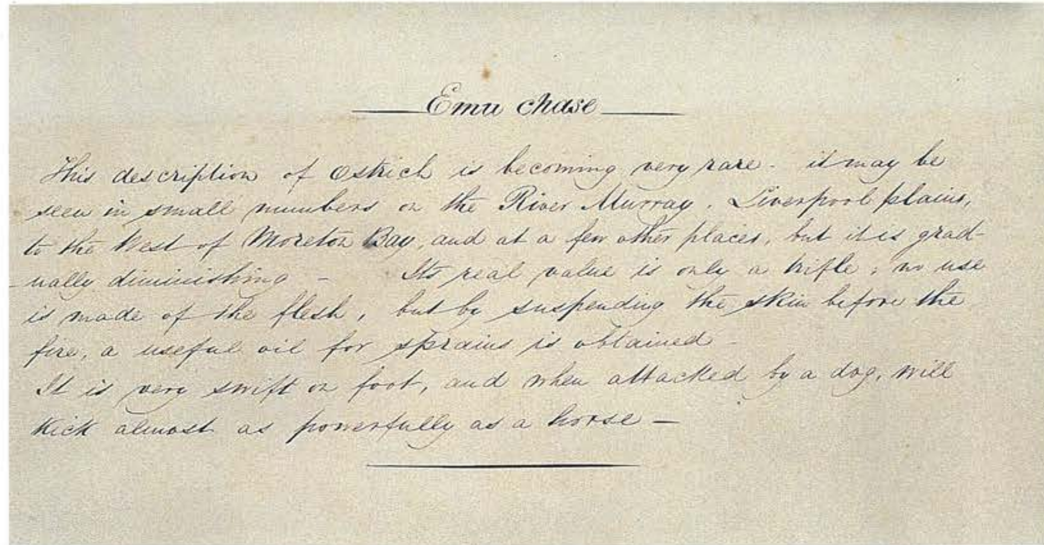
Miss Robertson, like Walker, was paying only a short visit to Sydney. She was bringing from Van Diemen's Land three orphans, Fanny, Eliza and William Jacob, all under fourteen years old. Their father had been a Protestant Irishman and at one time an officer in the Bengal Native Infantry. Like many Indian army officers he had visited the Australian colonies on furlough, and had been taken with the

Melbourne, probably late in 1838. The cottage of the pioneer, John Batman, appears on the extreme left. Elizabeth, Swanston and Russell streets run down the hill to meet the broad expanse of Flinders Street and the edge of the river. Hand-coloured lithograph by an unknown artist.
ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY, WELLINGTON

prospect of making money here. Cashing in his commission, he had lived as a merchant first at Sydney and then at Hobart Town, but had spent his last years as a manufacturer of indigo at Jessore, near Calcutta. On his death in 1836 his widow Ann Jacob had taken her children back to Hobart Town, where she too had died, leaving them in the care of her friends. They were now on their way to England and to their wider family. Miss Robertson had charge of them as far as Sydney, where she was to hand them over to the assistant colonial secretary of New South Wales, Thomas Harington. Harington's father had been a judge at Calcutta, which explains why he was also a family friend.

The care taken with the young Jacobs was in keeping with their rank as the children of a gentleman. For them the British Empire was a network of friendly and powerful connections; Australia and the Indies were not far apart, and the oceans were a network of highways leading, if necessary, directly home. Their position stands in dramatic contrast with that of the children of the poor, who might well be lost forever in this corner of the globe.

This happened to Michael Boyle, one of the faceless masses, even in his own time. He had been parted from his mother in Sydney at the age of two. He had no father and his mother, a poor woman, possibly a fisherman's widow, could not support them both. He was therefore labelled an orphan and sent to the male orphan school near Liverpool, west of Sydney, in July 1835. In 1838—while the Jacob children were on their way home—Judith Boyle came to find her son, but the small boy who was presented to her was so unlike the child she expected that she insisted a mistake had been made. Other inmates were brought forward, but none could be found whom she could recognise as her own. It turned out that Michael had entered the school at the same time as ten other little boys. As no means of identification had been sent with them, the staff could only guess who


Emu chase

This description of ostrich is becoming very rare. it may be seen in small numbers on the River Murray, Liverpool plains, to the West of Moreton Bay, and at a few other places, but it is gradually diminishing. Its real value is only a trifle; no use is made of the flesh, but by suspending the skin before the fire, a useful oil for sprains is obtained.
It is very swift on foot, and when attacked by a dog, will kick almost as powerfully as a horse —

Emu chase, probably at the Illawarra. Pencil sketch with a description by Abraham Lincolne, from his Australian Sketches, 1838–44. *By 1838 the British had been in Australia long enough to notice how their own presence was affecting the future of entire species. In this case the artist exaggerates.*
MITCHELL LIBRARY

they were by asking visiting parents. Michael Boyle's mother had been unable to visit, and he and another boy had been mixed up. When Michael died in 1836 nobody knew that he was the child of Judith Boyle. So when she came to the school in 1838 there was no familiar little boy to meet her.

This could never have happened to one of the rich and educated; to one of those whose rank required that they travel in cabins.

We can recognise one more face among the cabin passengers in the *Marian Watson*. Littleton Powys was English and twenty years old, the only son of the Honourable and Reverend Littleton Powys, a Northamptonshire clergyman. He had spent two years in the Australian colonies, having arrived by the *Cygnet*, the vessel that had brought the governor and first settlers to South Australia. He belonged to an aristocratic family deeply involved in good works, especially Church of England missions, and his father had joined in the project to establish South Australia by giving five guineas to promote religion in the colony. Littleton Powys senior had also arranged to become a landowner in this new and appealing dominion. He had sent his son to look after his interests under the guidance of a coloniser, John Morphett, author of *Reasons for the purchase of land in South Australia, by persons resident in Britain; with a view to the removal of labourers, and the profitable employment of capital.*

Young Littleton Powys had chosen, on his father's behalf, an acre in Grote Street, Adelaide. He was too young to do much else of significance. He had voted with Morphett in a dispute about the siting of the capital, thereby helping to keep it where it was; he had given ten shillings to help build a chapel for the Wesleyan Methodists; and he was among the gentlemen of the colony who paid their formal respects to the governor when the new Queen, Victoria, was proclaimed in Adelaide on 19 October 1837. Soon afterwards he had left South Australia. Though his father had looked forward to owning rural land as well, Powys did not wait for the resident commissioner to throw it open for purchase. Like all his family, he was destined for Cambridge University and the law, and it was time to begin reading for his degree. He had gone first to Van Diemen's Land, where he spent several weeks. From there he had sailed by the *Marian Watson* for Sydney.

The pedigree of Littleton Powys reads like an account of the most powerful traditions of the British establishment. He had not much authority himself, but among the travellers on the *Marian Watson* he represented the mind and memory of the state that had created all the colonies. A remote ancestor, Sir Thomas Littleton, was the author of *Littleton on tenures*, for centuries the best legal text on English landed property, and still a primer for lawyers and landed gentlemen. Sir Thomas Littleton's work was part of the foundation of the British constitution, for it was through the distinctive form of English land tenure that the aristocracy had won permanent control of the state. It was fitting that in the 1680s two other ancestors, Sir Thomas and Sir Littleton Powys, lawyers and brothers, had been prominent in the debates leading to the coup d'etat—called by those who approved of it the Glorious Revolution—which gave the Protestant aristocracy in parliament formal power over the King.

Then in the 1780s and 1790s young Littleton's grandfather had been one of Pitt's most useful allies in the House of Commons: he had played a part in the parliamentary strategy which, among other things, settled a community of convicts and guards in New South Wales in 1788. The family involvement in South Australia represented a new set of preoccupations, including a fashionable desire to spread through the world the precepts of the Church of England. But the Powyses had never ceased to play their part in the creation of rank as the principal vehicle of power in British affairs.

John Walker, Littleton Powys and Miss Robertson became well acquainted during their eight days aboard the *Marian Watson*. Walker failed to secure any Presbyterian ministers from Dr Lang, and he and Miss Robertson returned home together later in the month. A servant woman was found to look after the Jacob children on the next stage of their journey, under the friendly eye of Littleton Powys: they all sailed for England by the *Portland* in March.

Corroboree, South Australia. A confrontation of black and white. Four ladies and gentlemen come to the edge of territory that Aborigines have outlined for themselves by fires, shouts and dancing. One of the ladies is afraid. But the artist has given them nothing to be frightened of: they hold the centre of his picture, and the Aborigines are little more than curiosities. Invasion has already succeeded. Oil by John Michael Skipper, 1840.

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