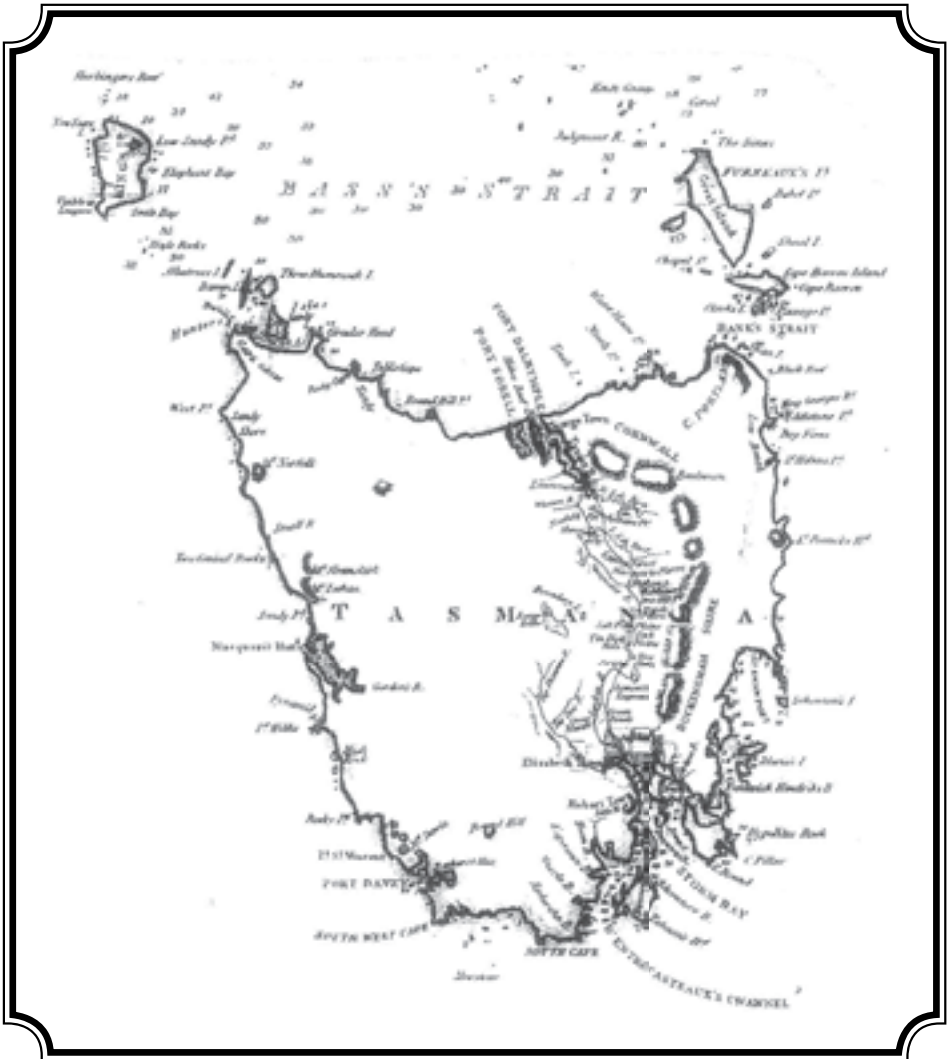


Tasmanian Historical Research Association

(Incorporated)

PAPERS AND PROCEEDINGS



TASMANIAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION INC.

COMMITTEE

President: Alison Alexander
Vice President: Ian Terry
Hon. Secretary: Andrew McKinlay
Hon. Treasurer: Ross Kelly
Hon. Editor: Heather Felton
Members: Michael Roe, Margaret Glover,
Dianne Snowden, Stefan Petrow, Caroline Homer

Annual Subscription

Individual: \$35 Household: \$40 Student: \$30
Life Members: \$30 for Papers and Proceedings

These prices include 10 per cent GST.

Overseas: Asia–Pacific: \$40 Rest of world: \$50

Address all communications to:
PO Box 441
Sandy Bay, Tasmania 7006

THRA Website – www.thra.tascom.net

The Association meets at 8.00 pm on the second Tuesday of each month, from February to December (inclusive), in the Royal Society Room, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

The Annual General Meeting is held in February.

The Association has published indexes to its first 50 volumes.

Index to the Papers and Proceedings:

Volumes 1–30, 1951–1983

Volumes 31–40, 1984–1993

Volumes 41–50, 1994–2003

The indexes are available from the Association.
Price \$25.00 per index or \$65.00 for all indexes, post free.

The *Papers and Proceedings* are indexed in the Australian Public Affairs Information Service, which is readily available in large public libraries.

Contributors' opinions are not necessarily those of the Association.

Publication is assisted by the Minister for the Arts through Arts Tasmania.

Cover illustration: detail from the map in Godwin's
Emigrants' Guide to Van Diemen's Land ... (1823)

TASMANIAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION ANNUAL REPORT 2007

The Tasmanian Historical Research Association had a successful year in 2007. Our numbers have been well maintained, with 369 individual members and 70 institutional members, a total of 439. This is much the same as membership has been for decades. As usual, the Association hosted eleven lectures held in the Royal Society Room of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. These lectures were on a variety of topics, as follows:

13 February	Alison Alexander:	Reality and reputation: convicts and Tasmania in the nineteenth century
13 March	John Unicomb:	A Tasmanian life
10 April	Tony Harrison:	Climbing to the top – TT Flynn in Tasmania
8 May	Eldershaw Lecture John McPhee:	Joseph Lycett, convict artist
12 June	Geoff Lennox:	François Fouché and his ‘Aura of Legend’
10 July	Margaret Woodward:	Shifting views of nature represented through the design of tourism ephemera
14 August	Heather Felton:	When Aliens came to Butlers Gorge: governments, unions and the Hydro-Electric Commission, 1940 to 1945
11 September	Ann Cripps:	Nurserymen and gardeners: an important part of Tasmanian history
9 October	Graeme Broxam:	Pride of the port – the watermen of Hobart
13 November	Andrew McKinlay:	The Orphan Schools before New Town
11 December	Michael Roe:	Michael Sharland

The Eldershaw Lecture was held in the Town Hall and was well patronised. Attendance at the monthly meetings averaged 50, drawn not only by the advertised lecture but by Michael Roe’s inimitable reading of the minutes, including a résumé of the previous lecture, sometimes praised as being as good as the lecture itself.

In 2007 the Association published three issues of Papers and Proceedings instead of the usual four. There had been discussion about the option of three issues in 2006. The resignation of long-term editors was a major break, and the new editor, Heather Felton, took over in February, assisted by Sally Rackham. As Heather works full-time she felt she could produce only three issues. These were well received by members. Each was accompanied by an informative newsletter produced by Robyn Eastley, and then Stefan Petrow.

The Association hosted three excursions during 2007. In the March weekend members visited Queenstown. Places on the itinerary included the Lake Margaret Power

Station with Travis Tiddy, the ghost town of Pillinger, the Mt Lyell Company headquarters with a talk by Heather Gaunt on Robert Sticht, and Raymond Arnold's studio – a varied and fascinating visit. Dinner in the Empire Hotel, with the after-dinner talk by Lou Rae, was a change from our usual venues which tend to be more staid. The Association also held two one-day excursions. In July the Senior Curator of Art at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Craig Judd, took us behind the scenes at the Museum, showing us many of its artistic treasures that are not usually displayed. In October we saw over the historic mansion and garden of Summerhome in Moonah, originally the home of wealthy merchant Henry Hopkins, and we also enjoyed a lavish traditional afternoon tea.

The Association voted unanimously to present life membership to Beth McLeod, a member since 1972, a committee member for many years, and for ten years from 1977 to 2007 the Association's treasurer, membership officer, database officer, and organiser of many other activities, always efficiently and enthusiastically. Since Beth left the committee, three people are needed to fill the enormous gap she left.

The Coal River Valley Historical Society hosted the ninth biennial Tasmanian historical societies' conference, on the theme, 'Defending the Colony: the Military in Tasmania 1803 to the Present'. This was an excellent conference, well organised and very well attended. A number of THRA members gave talks on the day.

The committee functioned well during the year and newcomers grappled successfully with their tasks – Andrew McKinlay (secretary), Ross Kelly (treasurer), Heather Felton (editor), Margaret Glover (publications) and Robyn Eastley (newsletter editor until her resignation). The Association would like to thank Robyn, and also Margaret Kent and Ian Morrison who are not standing for re-election, for their contribution.

As well as being vice-president, membership officer and website officer, Ian Terry represented the Association on the Federation of Australian Historical Societies, and on our behalf attended the Federation's annual meeting.

In conclusion I would like to thank all those who have assisted the Association during the year. A voluntary association like THRA depends on many members for assistance in all sorts of ways, and this is much appreciated.

Alison Alexander, President

AUDITOR'S REPORT TO MEMBERS OF TASMANIAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (INC.)

SCOPE

I have audited the financial statements of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association (Inc.) for the year ended 31 December 2007.

The Association's Committee is responsible for the preparation and presentation of the financial statements and information contained therein. I have performed an audit on these financial statements in order to express an opinion on them to members of the Association.

The audit has been planned and performed to provide a reasonable level of assurance as to whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement.

My procedures included examination of evidence supporting the amounts and other disclosures in the financial statements and the evaluation of accounting policies and significant accounting estimates. These procedures have been undertaken to form an opinion whether, in all material respects, the financial statements are presented fairly in accordance with Australian Accounting Concepts and Standards and statutory requirements so as to present a view of the Association which is consistent with my understanding of its operations.

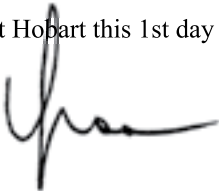
The audit opinion expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.

AUDIT OPINION

In my opinion, the accompanying accounts are properly drawn up:

- (1) so as to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Association as at 31 December 2007 and the results of the Association for the year ended on that date, and
- (2) in accordance with Statements of Accounting Concepts.

Dated at Hobart this 1st day of February 2008.



Malcolm Groom FCA
Auditor

**TASMANIAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE
YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2007**

INCOME (Note 1)	2007 \$	2006 \$
Members' subscriptions	12,275	12,350
Arts Tasmania grant	1,500	1,500
Interest received - general funds	5,586	3,014
Interest received - Eldershaw fund	795	712
Excursions & conferences	1,600	3,901
Donations	10	1,057
Publication sales (Note 2)	2,388	6,121
TOTAL INCOME	<u>24,154</u>	<u>28,655</u>
 EXPENDITURE		
Papers and Proceedings (Note 3)	8,149	12,670
Newsletter	222	157
Excursions and conferences	1,625	3,573
MD McRae Prize	100	100
Insurance	539	539
Room hire	800	800
Audit fee	450	450
Administration	837	1,220
Eldershaw Lecture expenses	750	60
Publications		
<i>Index No.3</i>	-	9,602
<i>Railways, Mines, Pubs and People</i>	-	3,234
Postage on publication sales	173	377
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>13,645</u>	<u>32,782</u>
OPERATING SURPLUS	10,509	(4,126)
 Non-operating income		
Armstrong bequest	143	36,418
NET SURPLUS	<u>10,652</u>	<u>32,292</u>

**TASMANIAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES
AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2007**

	2007	2006
	\$	\$
CURRENT ASSETS		
MyState Credit Union	3,396	4,335
Tasmanian Perpetual Trustees - Reserve Fund	93,949	88,805
Tasmanian Perpetual Trustees - Eldershaw Memorial Fund	13,101	13,117
Interest accrued	1,477	1,004
GST refund receivable	190	-
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>112,113</u>	<u>107,260</u>
Less: CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Subscriptions in Advance	795	595
Sundry creditors	480	7,058
GST payable	-	16
TOTAL LIABILITIES	<u>1,275</u>	<u>7,669</u>
NET MEMBERS' EQUITY	110,838	99,591
ACCUMULATED FUNDS		
Balance at 1 January 2007	99,591	67,299
Net Surplus for the year	10,652	32,292
Adjustment for understatement of 2006 surplus (Note 3)	(6,409)	595
Balance at 31 December 2007	110,838	99,591

Notes to and forming part of the Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2007

Note 1: All items of income and expenditure are recorded excluding any applicable Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Note 2: A stock of publications is held, the value of which does not appear in the balance sheet. This is consistent with past practice which recognises such value as and when the publications are sold.

Details of publication sales:	2007	2006
	\$	\$
<i>Papers and Proceedings</i>	119	857
<i>Indexes to Papers and Proceedings</i>	537	1280
<i>"Railways, Mines, Pubs and People"</i>	1,260	905
<i>Varieties of Vice Regal Life by Sir William and Lady Denison...</i>	65	417
<i>Letters of an Irish Patriot William Paul Dowling in Tasmania</i>	25	2,173
<i>Whitehead Letters</i>	311	105
<i>Other</i>	71	384
<i>Total</i>	2,388	6,121

Note 3: Costs for Papers and Proceedings for 2006 included refundable GST of \$595 causing the 2006 surplus to be understated by that amount. An adjustment of this amount is made to the accumulated surplus.

TASMANIAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION INC.

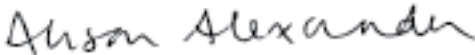
STATEMENT BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

In the opinion of the Committee, the accompanying financial statements:

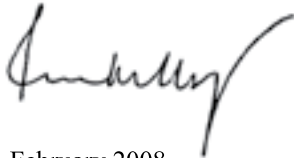
- (1) fairly present the financial position of the Association at 31 December 2007 and of the results for the year ended on that date, and
- (2) have been prepared in accordance with the applicable accounting standards.

This statement has been made in accordance with a resolution of the Committee and is signed for and on behalf of the Committee by:

President: Signed by Dr Alison Alexander



Treasurer: Signed by Ross M Kelly



Date: 1 February 2008

TASMANIANA LIBRARY, STATE LIBRARY OF TASMANIA NEW ACQUISITIONS

This is a select list of books on history, biography and genealogy which have been added to the Tasmaniana Library in 2007. They are mostly new publications; the Tasmaniana Library often acquires older works which relate to Tasmania and which it does not already hold. Some publications received in early 2007 might have been omitted from the list. Notification of omissions, using the contact details below, will be received gratefully. The list has been kept as brief as possible; normally only author, title and the Tasmaniana Library's reference number are given.

If you would like further information about any of the books, please contact the Tasmaniana Library at 91 Murray Street, Hobart 7000, or by telephone on (03) 6233 7474, by fax on (03) 6231 0927, and by email < Heritage.Collections@education.tas.gov.au >. Further information is also available on TALIS, the State Library's on-line information system. TALIS is available in city and branch libraries throughout Tasmania and through the World Wide Web; its URL is < <http://catalogue.statelibrary.tas.gov.au/> >.

Please note that, while all of these books are available for reference in the Tasmaniana Library, **they are not available for loan**. Reference and/or lending copies of some of them may be available at city and branch libraries.

Aboriginal Reference Group, *Deep time: continuing Tasmanian Aboriginal culture*. (TLMAPF 994.0049915 DEE)

Aitchison, Ray, *New Norfolk Licensed Anglers' Association 1927–2007*. (TLQ 799.1755 NEW)

Aitken, Leanne, *Our schools & pioneer families: a history of Stowport, Natone, Camena & Upper Natone*. (TLQ 371.099463 OUR)

Aitken, Richard, 'Mary Hudspeth's garden books' in *Australian garden history*, vol. 10, no. 5, March/April 1999. (TLPQ 635.09946 AUS)

Ajani, Judith, *The forest wars*. (TL 333.750994 AJA)

Alexander, Alison (ed.), *The companion to Tasmanian history*. [CD-ROM edition] (TLCDROMS 994.6 COM)

Alexander, Alison, *Mary Ogilvy: the evolution of a grand lady: the Mary Ogilvy Homes Society, 1946–2006*. (TLQ 362.610994661 ALE)

Alexander, Alison, *University leaders*. [Biographies of the University of Tasmania's Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors] (TLP 378.946 ALE)

Ames, RS, *The badges and uniforms of police in Tasmania*. (TLQ 363.209946 AME)

Anderson, Helen, *Briggs family history report*. (TLR 929.2 BRI)

Anderson, James, *Frances L Stubs Award, recipients and their achievements*. [Invermay Primary School] (TLQ 372.9946 INV)

Andrews, Kamlesh, et al, *Overlooking Hobart: celebrating 50 years at Mount Stuart Primary School 1957–2007*. (TLQ 371.00994661 OVE)

Angell, Barbara, *Voyage to Port Phillip, 1803*. (TLP 994.5 ANG)

Anglo-Indian, An, *A visit to Tasmania by an Anglo-Indian 1875*. (TLPQ 919.46 ANG)

Angus, Max, *Max Angus: the Gaslighter murals*. (TLP 708.9946 ANG)

- Apex Clubs of Northern Tasmania, *St Paul's Church: erected 1861 – demolished 1975*. (TLP 283.94611 SAI)
- Arge, Jogvan, *Jorundur: hundadagakongur i islandi, hndadagamenn i foroyum*. [Jorgen Jorgenson in Tasmania] (TL 920 JOR)
- Arnold, John and John Hay, (eds), *The bibliography of Australian literature: K–O to 2000*. (TLR 820.9016A BIB)
- Australian garden history*, vol. 11, no. 2, September/October 1999. ['Colonial gardens: focus on Tasmania' issue] (TLPQ 635.09946 AUS)
- Australian National Maritime Museum, *Dutch connections: 400 years of Australian-Dutch maritime links 1606–2006*. (TL 387.509492 DUT)
- Bacon, CA, *Report 1989/32. A brief history of the Jane River Goldfield*. (TLPQ 622.3422099465 BAC)
- Bacon, CA, *Report 1992/20. Notes on the history of mining and exploration at Adamsfield*. (TLQ 662.34099465 BAC)
- Bacon, CA, *Report 1992/31. Notes on previous mining and exploration activities in the Interview River area (Revision 1)*. (TLPQ 553.28099463 BAC)
- Bacon, CA, *Unpublished report 1986/61. A summary of the oil shale resources of Tasmania*. (TLPQ 553.283 BAC)
- Bailey, Mick, *Blood, sweat and cheers: the official history of the University of Tasmania Football Club 1936–2006*. (TLQ 796.336 BLO)
- Bain, Tom, *Sydney to Hobart: the 1995 golden commemorative Sydney to Hobart yacht race*. (TLPQ 797.14 BAI)
- Barrett, Peter, *The immigrant bees 1788 to 1898, vol. II: an update on the introduction of European honeybees into Australia and New Zealand*. (TL 638.10994 BAR)
- Barrett, Peter, *The immigrant bees 1788 to 1898, vol. III: a third insight on the introduction of European honeybees into Australia and New Zealand*. (TL 638.10994 BAR)
- Beale, Bob, *If trees could speak: stories of Australia's greatest trees*. (TLQ 582.160994 BEA)
- Bennett, Michael, *Quaker life in Tasmania: the first hundred years*. (TL 289.609946 BEN)
- Bennison, Peter, *Parliament of Tasmania: a brief historical overview of the sesquicentenary of bicameral Parliament and responsible government, 2 December 2006*. (TLP 328.946 BEN)
- Beslu, Christian, *Naufage à Okaro: la fabuleuse et tragique épopée de la corvette Alcène dans l'Océan Pacifique 1848–1851*. [Account of a voyage which included a visit to Hobart in 1851] (TL 910.8 BES)
- Binks, CJ, *Hills of the west wind: reflections on the Tasmanian landscape*. (TL 994.6 BIN)
- Bissett, Muriel and Betty Bissett, *The Weekly Courier: vol. I: July 1901–1903: index to photographs, birth, death and marriage notices and personal items of interest to family historians*. (TLQ 929.3 WEE)
- Blenkhorn, John, *Blenkhorn's Run*. [Blenkhorn family of Railton] (TLQ 929.2 BLE)
- Boden, Donald C, *The other side of the hill: a biography of David William Simpson Scholes, OAM, DFC*. (TLQ 799.1092 SCH)
- Bolt, Frank, *The founding of Hobart in 1803–1804*. (TLQ 994.661 BOL)

- Boutchard, Marjorie (Sister), *A celebration of faith and commitment: Star of the Sea, Church of Mary (East Coast)*. (TLP 282.9467 CEL)
- Breen, Shayne, *Aboriginal connections with Launceston places*. (TLQ 994.6110049915 BRE)
- Brewer, Warren B, *Never say die: the North Hobart Football Club, a history*. (TLQ 796.336 NEV)
- Bridge, LJ, *Boats, nets, pots & hooks: untold tales of fish and fishermen of south-eastern Tasmania*. (TLQ 639.54099467 BRI)
- Brown, James Temple, *The whale fishery and its appliances*. [Great International Fisheries Exhibition, London, 1883] (CRO 639.28 BRO)
- Bullers, Rick, *Convict probation and the evolution of jetties in Tasmania*. (TLPQ 627.2409946 BUL)
- Cannell, Josephine, *To the beckoning shores: urged on by the love of Christ*. [Sisters of Charity in Australia] (TL 271.91094 CAN)
- Carolan, Jane, *No run-of-the-mill: a biography of Henry Beaufort Somerset*. (TLQ 338.092 SOM)
- Carte, Bruce S, *William Carte, Superintendent of the Port Arthur penal settlement 1833–1848: his life, lineage and progeny*. (TLQ 365.92 CAR)
- Castles, Alex C, *Lawless harvests, or God save the judges: Van Diemen's Land 1803–55, a legal history*. (TLQ 994.603 CAS)
- Childs, Terry, *A who's who of the Classical and Commercial School (Mr Hawkes' Academy), Franklin Village, 1842–1866*. (TLPQ 994.602 WHO)
- Clements, Graham, *Vision in sound: 25 years of RPH Print Radio Tasmania*. (TLP 791.446994661 VIS)
- Cleveland, Gary, *A vision for design: thirty years of transforming perceptions and practice in Tasmania*. (TL 745.409946 CLE)
- Cleveland, Gary, *James Dodson*. (TLQ 748.20282 DOD)
- Clifford, H Trevor, *Alfred Blannin and the matriarchs*. [Blannin family] (TLQ 929.2 BLA)
- Clode, Danielle, *Voyages to the South Seas: in search of Terres Australes*. (TL 919.4042 CLO)
- Coleman, Judith, *Eighteenth century to the millennium: Donaldson, Kinnaird, McKay: a family history in Australia*. (TLQ 929.2 COL)
- Coleman, Peter, *The heart of James McAuley: life and work of the Australian poet*. (TL 820.A MCA)
- Coleman, William, *Giblin's platoon: the trials and triumph of the economist in Australian public life*. (TL 330.994 COL)
- Collection: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery*. (TLQ 708.9946 COL)
- Collins, David (edited with an introduction and notes by John Currey), *A voyage to New South Wales with Governor Phillip 1787–1788*. (TL 994.402 COL)
- Commissioner for Children Tasmania, *Who is listening to the children now? The Commissioner for Children's response to recommendations 8 and 9 of the Tasmanian Ombudsman's report: 'Listen to the children, review of claims of abuse from adults in state care as children, October 2006.'* (TLQ 362.7609946)
- Corney, Graeme and Mike Grant, *Van Diemen's Land Company Store, Wharf Road, Stanley: conservation plan, 1995*. (TLPQ 725.350994638 COR)

- Crocker, Dorothy, *Dover Community Church: celebrating 130 years 1877–2007*. (TLPQ 289.9 CRO)
- Dammery, Sally, *She lived in Launceston: Isobel Horner of Waratah House 1868–1955*. (TL 610.73 HOR)
- Dando-Collins, Stephen, *Captain Bligh's other mutiny: the true story of the military coup that turned Australia into a two-year rebel republic*. (TL 994.402 DAN)
- Daniel, Gwyneth, *Nellie Lello: a Tasmanian girlhood and beyond*. (TL 929.2 LEL)
- Daniel, Gwyneth, *Trevor Daniel: doing the right thing*. (TL 920 DAN)
- Darby, Andrew, *Harpoon: into the heart of whaling*. (CRO 338.37295 DAR)
- Davey, John, *Ulverstone Baptist Church: a century remembered*. (TLQ 286.194634 DAV)
- Davies, Helen, *For the record: James Bennell's buildings in early Launceston*. (TLQ 728.0994611 DAV)
- Davis, William E, *Tasmania: a natural history*. (TL 508.946 DAV)
- Decker, Dianne, *Women in Australian parliament and local government: an updated history, 1975–1992*. (TL 328.940922 DEC)
- Delbridge, Noel, *Land of hope and Gladys: my mother's family history in Tasmania and beyond*. [Scott family] (TLQ 929.2 SCO)
- Devonport Regional Gallery, *Onlooking: photographs from the Robinson collection 1927–1948, curated by David Martin. 13 October–12 November 2006*. (TLP 779.994632 ROB)
- Dickens, LP, *50 not out: Clarence District Cricket Club Inc, 1956–2006*. (TLQ 796.358 DIC)
- Dickson, Rod, *The history of the whalers on the south coast of New Holland from 1800–1888*. (CROQ 639.28 DIC)
- Dimmick, Kaye, *John Glover and his books*. [Exhibition catalogue, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery] (TLPQ 759.994 GLO)
- Dixon, Terry, *Colonial character: nineteenth century Australian furniture*. [Exhibition catalogue, Ballarat Fine Art Gallery] (TLPQ 749.2994 DIX)
- Downie, Angus, *'They don't make men like that anymore': Cecil Leventhorpe McVilly – a profile*. (TLPQ 920 MCV)
- Downward, Joan, *The case of Mr Richard Downward, of Pittwater, in Van Diemen's Land*. (TLQ 345.0233 DOW)
- Duncombe, Kathy, *Excursion around North Bruny Island*, 2nd edition. (TLQ 994.651 DUN)
- Duthie, Brian, *One man's dream: a history of the Roland View Estate Trust, Ulverstone, Tasmania*. (TL 362.610994634 DUT)
- Duyker, Edward, *A dictionary of sea quotations*. (TLQ 082 DIC)
- Edgecombe, Jean, *Flinders Island and eastern Bass Strait*, 2nd edition. (TL 919.4691 EDG)
- Edwards, Barbara Malpass, *Australia's most notorious convicts*. (TL 994.02 EDW)
- Edwards, John, *The Ryrle family: Australian pioneers*. (TLQ 929.2 RYR)
- Elliott, David, *Memories of my father*. (TLP 920 ELL)
- Engineering Heritage Tasmania, *Duck Reach Power Scheme 1895–1957: presentation of an historic engineering marker on 7th October 2006. Ceremony report*. (TLQ 620.00994611 DUC)

- Engineering Heritage Tasmania, *Nomination of Duck Reach Power Station as a historic engineering marker, vol. I – Nomination, vol. II – Appendices*. (TLQ 620.00994611 NOM)
- Engineering Heritage Tasmania, *Nomination of Lake Margaret Power Scheme for a historic engineering marker*. (TLQ 620.0099464)
- Engineering Heritage Tasmania, *Nomination of Launceston water supply 1857 as a historic engineering marker*. (TLQ 628.10994611 NOM)
- Eslake, Ruth, *Stanley burial ground*. (TLQ 929.5 ESL)
- Examiner, The, *March of time: celebrating the Examiner newspaper's 165th anniversary*. (TLPE 079.94611 EXA)
- Fawkner, John Pascoe, *Reminiscences of early Hobart Town*. [Copy of the original manuscript, held by the State Library of Victoria] (TL 994.6102 FAW)
- Film Australia, *Lake Pedder: in Tasmania's wilderness, an alpine lake and its spectacular quartz beach are drowned – and the world's first Green party is born*. (TLDVD 333.78216099465 LAK)
- Finch, Ephraim, 'Harrington Street old Jewish Cemetery, Hobart: revisiting our past', in *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, vol. 17, part 3, 2004. (TL 305.89240946 FIN)
- Finlay, HA, *To have but not to hold: a history of attitudes to marriage and divorce in Australia*. (TL 346.940166 FIN)
- Fish, Tem, *Mr Clarence Richard Dew Freeman: the eulogy given by the warden of Oatlands Mr Tem Fish on Nov. 2 1992*. (TLPQ 920 FRE)
- Fitzgerald, John, *Big white lie: Chinese Australians in white Australia*. (TL 325.94 FIT)
- FitzSymonds, E (ed.), *Montagu and Stephen Van Diemen's Land 1836: Algernon Montagu and Alfred Stephen in Supreme Court proceedings against TW Rowlands; with a comment by Robert Lathrop Murray; with Geo. Arthur's despatch*. (TLQ 345.9460256 MON)
- Flanagan, Arch and Martin Flanagan, *The line: a man's experience; a son's quest to understand*. (TL 940.5472593 FLA)
- Flannery, Tim (ed.), *Where is here? 350 years of exploring Australia*. (TL 919.404 WHE)
- Fogagnolo, Jocelyn, *Twin deliveries: Our Lady Patricia, Our Lady Pamela: the story of their conception and delivery*. [International Catamarans Australia] (TLP 623.8234 FOG)
- Fox, Noela M, *An acorn grows among the gums: the Presentation Sisters Tasmania, 1866–2006*. (TL 255.97709946 FOX)
- Friends of the Library, Launceston Inc., *Launceston family album: a selection of stories from the Passport Photographic Album, Tasmanian International Exhibition 1891–1892*. (TLQ 994.611 LAU)
- Fry, Mark and Angela Fry, 'Unusual locomotives of the Tasmanian forests', parts 1 to 5, in *Narrow gauge downunder*, nos 9–13, 2000–2002. (TLPQ 385.54 FRY)
- Fry, Michael, *Ormiston House 1899: stately home of the west coast of Tasmania*. (TLP 728.370994644 FRY)
- Gardam, Julie, *The Snug: a history of the Snug-Electrona-Coningham area*. (TL 994.654 GAR)
- Gibbings, Dennis, *A Seven Mile Beach scrapbook and other stories: 50th anniversary celebrations, November 1995*. [Congregational Youth Fellowship camp] (TLQ 285.894 GIB)

- Goold, John, *The life of William Lachlan Jordan master tailor with a brief history of the Jordan family of Dumbledale, Pembrokeshire, Wales & Launceston and Forth, Tasmania*. (TLQ 929.2 JOR)
- Gordon Fysh Rally Committee, *Gordon Fysh Rally 50th anniversary 1956–2006*. (TLQ 796.73 GOR)
- Grassby, Al and Marji Hill, *Six Australian battlefields: the black resistance to invasion and the white struggle against colonial oppression*. (TL 994 GRA)
- Green, Anne, *The home of sports and manly exercise: places of leisure in Launceston*. (TLQ 790.1099461 GRE)
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THE REMINISCENCES OF CAPTAIN JAMES WILLIAM ROBINSON, 1824–1906

Michael Nash

In March 1904 ‘at the earnest request of my family’ James William Robinson set out to record his reminiscences of his remarkable life on both land and sea. While his career was based around the pelagic whaling industry out of Hobart, he had also been involved in carrying cargoes to Singapore, New Zealand and gold-rush California; undertaken the only Australian sealing voyage to subantarctic Heard Island; collected guano off the Queensland coast and established mines in Victoria and Tasmania. Robinson’s account provides a tremendous level of detail on practical matters that are often overlooked in historical works – such as the mechanics of ‘cutting-in’ a whale; loading livestock; dealing with injuries at sea; and repairing damaged ships. Robinson’s reminiscences demonstrate the versatility required of a master mariner in the nineteenth century, and also show his ability to capitalise on opportunities, as they arose, by changing ships, crews and trades. While he is reticent about his private life, there are also glimpses of his extensive family as his wife and children often accompanied him on his travels. Robinson’s original hand-written manuscript comprises 430 pages of text in two volumes. The account is mainly chronological but includes very few dates. I have been able to confirm the timing of the events that he relates and validate the accuracy of his account, implying that Robinson based his manuscript on the private diaries, journals and ships’ logbooks in his



Captain James William Robinson
(Archives Office of Tasmania)

possession. The original manuscript, along with other relevant documents, was donated to the Royal Australian Historical Society by James Robinson’s descendent, LL Robinson, in 1957, and was subsequently transferred to the collection of the Mitchell Library in Sydney.¹ The donor noted that, while James Robinson had intended having his hand-written account corrected and published, he did not know the whereabouts of any typewritten sheets. It turned out that the typescript, with Robinson’s hand-written corrections, had survived. It had come into the possession of one of his daughters from his second marriage and when she died at Hobart’s St Johns Park Hospital, it was given to a Mrs DJ Murdoch. In August 1968 she donated it to the Archives Office of Tasmania.²

While information that supplements Robinson’s account is available from a range of sources, such as newspapers, ships registers, crew

1 State Library of New South Wales, Mitchell Library, MSS 2135, Microfilm CY 1292, Captain JW Robinson Papers 1824–1906.

2 Archives Office of Tasmania, NS222, Reminiscences of Captain JW Robinson.

agreements and customs documents, it is the extraordinary number of surviving ships' logbooks and journals that flesh out the detail. William Edward Lodewyk Hamilton Crowther (1887–1981), the grandson of one of Robinson's business acquaintances, gathered the material that now makes up the Crowther Collection at the State Library of Tasmania. This is one of the largest assemblages of nineteenth-century ships' logbooks and journals in Australia, and at least twelve of these documents are directly related to Robinson's career.³ A further two logbooks, and a journal connected with Robinson are held by the Mitchell Library and the Australian National Maritime Museum. The Crowther Collection also contains a set of ninety-two hydrographical charts that are believed to have been part of Robinson's personal collection and, on some of these the details of his voyages are marked.

I first became aware of the Robinson document at the Archives Office of Tasmania when the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service was carrying out a project on shore-based whaling stations around the state in the 1990s. Robinson's account also proved useful for colleagues who were researching topics as diverse as whaling stations in South Australia, the Heard Island sealing industry and shipwrecks at Lady Elliott Island in Queensland. The publication in 2005 of a similar historic account, written by Tasmanian whaler and mariner Richard Copping, provided the inspiration to carry out more detailed research on Robinson's reminiscences with a view to publishing the document in full.⁴ This paper provides a summary of that research. While Robinson's original account was written as one continuous document, for the purposes of clarity I have divided this paper into sections corresponding roughly with major periods in his life and career.

George William Robinson

James Robinson's American father, George William Robinson, had shipped aboard the American brig *General Gates* out of Boston in 1818. The vessel was engaged in an extended sealing voyage to the Southern Ocean. The usual practice was to leave gangs of men in remote locations to catch and process the seals for their



Sir William Crowther, Caroline Wesley and Wilfred Robinson at the opening of the Robinson exhibition at the State Library of Tasmania, 30 June 1978. (State Library of Tasmania)

3 WELH Crowther, 'A survey of the ships' logs and journals and maritime material in the State Library of Tasmania', *The Royal Society of Tasmania, Papers and Proceedings*, vol. 106, 1972, pp. 59–68. The basis of the Crowther Collection was the family's long association with the whaling trade and other commercial enterprises out of Hobart. WELH Crowther also went to considerable trouble to track down a range of material related to these enterprises, and to write a number of articles about the collection. In addition, Crowther spent time with one of Robinson's sons, Alfred Bingley Robinson, before his death in 1934 and later became acquainted with James Robinson's grandson, Wilfred Robinson. When Wilfred Robinson's brother died in 1977, amongst his possessions Wilfred found a large wooden case containing James Robinson's marine chart collection and a number of ships' logbooks, all of which were donated to the State Library. *Mercury*, 1 July 1978.

4 I Walker, *Tall ships and cannibals: the story of Captain Richard Copping of Hobart Town*, Navarine Publishing, Hobart, 2005.

skins and oil. George Robinson, for example, worked on the St Paul and Amsterdam Islands in the Indian Ocean. When the *General Gates* arrived at Hobart for repairs in August 1822, it was clear that Captain Abimilek Riggs did not intend returning to the United States.⁵ George Robinson applied to Lieutenant-Governor Sorell to stay in the colony and approval was granted before the *General Gates* sailed. For his work during a voyage lasting more than four years Robinson received payment of one Spanish dollar and ten gallons of rum.

Robinson soon gained a position with the Hobart merchant firm of Charlton, McCloud and Company. In July 1823, he married 22-year-old Elizabeth Presnell the daughter of William Presnell, a successful carter and brewer. George Robinson became involved in the carting business and kept the Eagle Tavern at Argyle Street on behalf of his father-in-law. He was given fifty acres of land at New Norfolk by Presnell and received a government grant of another 200 acres on which he intended to grow tobacco.⁶ Robinson also purchased the sixty-one ton schooner *Hunter* (formerly named the *Endeavour*) in April 1825 but after two voyages sold it to the Van Diemens Land Company sometime around the end of 1826.⁷

James Robinson's early life

James William Robinson was born at Hobart on 25 April 1824, the first of George and Elizabeth Robinson's six children – twins Elizabeth and Sarah Ann born in 1825, Stella in 1827, Emma in 1829 and George in 1837. James's earliest recollections were of his parent's property at Sorell Springs where the Presnell family owned the White Hart Inn. He attended a number of schools around the Hobart area, eventually ending up at a boarding establishment in Macquarie Street run by Mr AC Mummery. In November 1835 his father struck up a friendship with Captain Moses Sargent of the *Esperanza*, a newly arrived barque from Buenos Aires. An arrangement was made whereby Captain Sargent's wife stayed with the Robinsons and James, at age 11, embarked on a voyage to South America. The *Esperanza* left Hobart on 30 December 1835 with a cargo of 'colonial produce' and after a rough passage reached the Chilean port of Valparaiso, where the ship's hull was recaulked and copper-sheathed. Robinson described the people and festivals in detail, and clearly enjoyed his first visit to a foreign port.

Being the first port I visited, I like Valparaiso very much. The captain used to take me on shore sometimes on Sunday, but the first Sunday he said 'James, tog yourself up, and come ashore with me'. I was soon got up, as I thought, to perfection, but instead of putting on a white linen shirt, I had put, I thought, the most sailor-like-rig, a regatta shirt. When the captain saw me, he said 'where is your shirt, you look like pork chops without gravy.'⁸

The *Esperanza* loaded a full cargo of wheat for Sydney but when the captain failed to pick up the trade winds the crew were forced to live on reduced rations until the ship reached Sydney in August 1836. James subsequently took passage from Sydney on the brig *Alice* and arrived back at Hobart on 23 September.

He once again joined Mr Mummery's boarding school but was soon to return to sea. Hobart's location, with easy access to the southern oceans, made it a favoured destination for foreign whaling vessels needing to refit and resupply. In January 1837,

5 For details of the voyage of the *General Gates* see R McNab, *Murihiku: a history of the South Island of New Zealand and the islands adjacent and lying to the south, from 1642 to 1835*, Whitcombe & Tombs, Wellington, 1909, pp. 294–305.

6 WELH Crowther, 'The Robinson saga: notes for an exhibition in the State Library of Tasmania', unpublished report, State Library of Tasmania, 1978, pp. 3–4.

7 IH Nicholson, *Shipping arrivals and departures Tasmania 1803–1833*, Roebuck Books, Canberra, 1983, pp. 104, 109, 120, 121.

8 AOT, NS222, p. 6.

the American whaler *Huntress* arrived in port. George Robinson became acquainted with the officers and organised for Captain John Cole to take his son to visit relations in the United States. The ship sailed on 7 February 1837 and the logbook noted that ‘we took a boy as passenger by the name of James Robinson to New Bedford’.⁹ Robinson’s account of his voyage in the *Huntress* closely matches the surviving voyage logbook. It is clear that he must have kept his own journal, something his father had encouraged him to do during his time on the *Esperanza*. From Hobart the *Huntress* sailed to the subantarctic Auckland Islands and anchored at the natural harbour of Sarah’s Bosom (now Port Ross). While not manning the whaleboats, Captain Cole kept his crew busy unstowing and re-coopering the cargo of approximately 2,500 barrels of whale oil and throwing most of the stone ballast overboard. During the stay of almost three months the ship’s boats took a total of fifteen whales, including one kill on 13 April when the twelve-year-old Robinson was part of the whaleboat crew.

The *Huntress* left the Auckland Islands on 21 May and sailed east, rounding Cape Horn in early July. An attempt to call in at the Falkland Islands almost ended in disaster when the *Huntress* came close to going aground. Reaching the coast of Brazil the ship called in at the port of St Catherines (Santa Catarina Island) for water and fresh food before reaching Bahia San Salvador on 26 September. This port had been the administrative centre of the Portuguese colonies in South America and the locus for the importation of slave labour from Africa. Robinson’s detailed account of the city and the crew’s adventures includes witnessing an escape by rebel prisoners, smuggling specie out of the port and being detained and searched by a Spanish warship. The ship reached the American whaling port of New Bedford on 5 November 1837, after some eighteen months out. Robinson’s experiences with the *Huntress* clearly influenced his later choice of career. He was particularly impressed with the running of the vessel and the relationship between the officers and the crew – ‘I never saw a better ordered ship, or a more capable set of men’.¹⁰

Captain Cole took James to his relatives at Providence, Rhode Island, where he resided with his paternal aunt and uncle. He had a particularly happy stay with his many American relatives in Massachusetts and New York – attending day school, learning how to ice skate and recounting his experiences on the whaling ship and life in Van Diemen’s Land. He was eventually summoned home by his father and left from Fair Haven on the whaler, *South Boston*, in April 1838. The *South Boston*’s captain, Peter Cole, was an acquaintance of Robinson’s father and James was given a berth in the steerage cabins with the officers and tradesmen. His training continued with regular turns at the wheel or the lookout, manning the aft oar on one of the whaleboats, and learning navigational skills. Although no detailed logbook for the voyage exists, Robinson’s account records that the *South Boston* called at the Azores Islands, the Cape Verde Islands, Tristan da Cunha and Madagascar before reaching the south-eastern coast of Western Australia – a favourite haunt of the American whaling ships. The *South Boston* hunted the southern right whales that congregated during the winter months and processed about 1,600 barrels of oil before continuing eastwards. As the captain of the *South Boston* did not wish to stop in Tasmania, James was transferred to the whaler *Maria Orr* and then the brig *Argo*, en-route from London to Hobart. The *Argo* docked in Hobart on 23 February 1839 and later that night Robinson arrived at his parents current home at Granton – ‘it was one of the red letter days of my life’.¹¹

James returned to school, but by mid-year he had been engaged to work at a whaling operation on Bruny Island owned by William Young and Charles McLachlan.

9 State Library of Tasmania, Tasmaniana Library, Microfilm PMB 285, Logbook of the ship *Huntress*, 14 May 1836 to 5 November 1837.

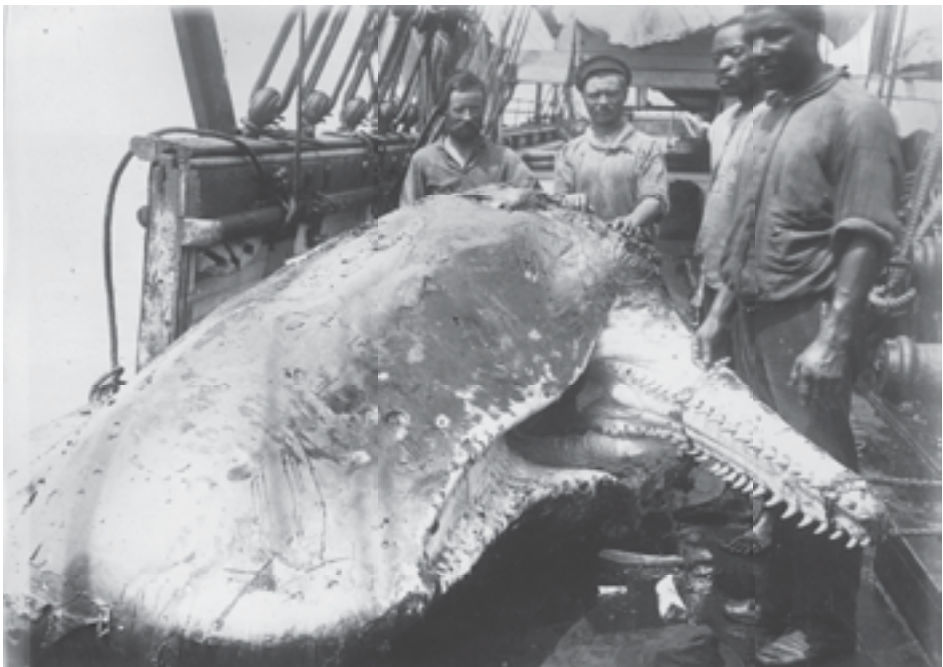
10 AOT, NS222, p. 17.

11 AOT, NS222, p. 23.

Hunting for southern right whales was at its height in Tasmania during the late 1830s and dozens of stations were established around the southern and eastern coasts in the relatively protected bays where the whales came to breed.¹² James travelled to Bruny Island on the schooner *Tasmanian Lass*, which was working in conjunction with the fisheries, and provided his accommodation during the 1839 whaling season. His record of daily life at the Trumpeter Bay and Adventure Bay stations is particularly valuable, and complements a similar account by whaler Richard Copping who worked for William Young during the 1834 season.¹³ In early September 1839, Robinson sailed on the *Tasmanian Lass* to the Freycinet Peninsula where William Young was establishing a whaling station in the south-eastern corner of Wineglass Bay. There was intense competition between this shore-based station and the boats from the whalers, *Camilla* and *Highlander*, and ‘there were often some terrible rows and disputes about the ownership of whales’.¹⁴ Under the leadership of William Young, who took twenty-three whales from his own boat, Young and McLachlan’s Freycinet and Bruny whaling operations returned a total of 376 tuns of whale oil for the season.¹⁵ This success was marred by the news that George Robinson senior had died in Hobart on 17 September, aged 39.

Establishing a career in whaling

At the time of his death, George Robinson was in financial difficulties, and James stated that, ‘I had no alternative but to follow a seafaring life’.¹⁶ As his experiences up to that time had been largely with whaling he decided to follow that trade, no doubt influenced by the number of voyages then being made by the Hobart fleet. On 5 April



The head and jaws of a sperm whale on the *Costa Rica Packet*. (National Library of Australia)

12 M Nash, *The bay whalers: Tasmania's shore-based whaling industry*, Navarine Publishing, Canberra, 2003.

13 I Walker, pp. 3–5.

14 AOT, NS222, p. 26.

15 Whale oil was measured in ‘tuns’, which was the equivalent of eight barrels or 252 gallons (1,296 litres) of liquid.

16 AOT, NS222, p. 28.

1840 Robinson shipped out to South Australia on the barquentine *Wallaby*, under Captain George Sinclair.¹⁷ The United Fishing Company and the South Australian Company had established shore-based whaling stations at Encounter Bay and Kangaroo Island. During the 1840 season the Hobart ships, *Wallaby* and *Marianne* were in direct competition with these two companies. The Hobart crews were reputed to have a newer and faster design of whaleboat and were able to ‘shoot past’ the local boats to fasten harpoons to their prey.¹⁸ The *Wallaby* left South Australian waters on 13 July and visited Wilsons Promontory in Victoria before returning to the Tasmanian east coast to continue whaling off Forestier Peninsula and Maria Island. According to Robinson, the vessel returned to Hobart on 23 October 1840 with about 100 tuns of oil.



‘The cutting in’ by William Duke. (Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery)

For his second voyage on the *Wallaby*, Robinson was promoted to boatsteerer (harpooner) under Captain Charles Bayley.¹⁹ The extended cruise lasted from 31 December 1840 until 2 November 1842, as they visited the eastern Australian coast and spent considerable time around the Solomons Group, the New Hebrides, Kiribati and New Zealand waters. The *Wallaby* journey was described in some detail by Robinson – his narrative of encounters with native inhabitants, crew desertions and poor-quality officers closely matched the vessel’s surviving logbook.²⁰ During the voyage three of the boatsteerers were demoted for failing to take whales and on at least eight separate occasions, crew members absconded when the *Wallaby* was at anchor or taking on supplies. In August 1842, at Port Nicholson (Wellington), the third mate was imprisoned for two months for an assault on the Captain and two of the crew were sentenced to thirty days’ hard labour for refusing to return to the ship. Robinson describes one of the whale hunts from the *Wallaby* in detail.

One day as we were cruising about the large sheet of water outside Cloudy Bay,
when I was boatsteerer or harpooner, and was standing up with a coat on and mitts

17 State Library of Tasmania, Tasmaniana Library, Logbook of the barque *Wallaby*, 5 April 1840 to 15 September 1840.

18 JS Cumpston, *Kangaroo Island 1800–1836*, Roebuck Books, Canberra, 1970, p. 171.

19 P Mercer, *A most dangerous occupation: whaling, whales and the Bayleys*, National Trust of Australia, Hobart, 2002.

20 Australian National Maritime Museum, Logbook of the barque *Wallaby*, 31 December 1840 to 31 October 1842.

on my hands, with muffer round my neck, my arms folded, but leaning partly on the harpoon in the crutch ready for use, when all at once a black [southern right] whale rose within dart, and I drove the harpoon into it, and threw out the box line, and helped to get the sail made up for a minute, but I was soon aft at my place at the steering oar, and the third mate, Mr. Hines ran forward. It so happened that the whale, instead of running, as they sometimes do was rolling about in front of the boat for a minute. It was our officers good chance, and he sent his six-foot lance into it between his fins, as he did so the whale struck one of the pulling oars in such a way that the boom of the oar hit the man who had been using it, and the oar struck the man on the side of the head and the poor fellow was soon laying in the boat apparently dead, but of course we had the whale to attend to. Fortunately the lance killed the whale, for the whale never rose to the surface again, but must have died on the bottom.²¹

Following the arrival of the *Wallaby* back at Hobart, Captain Bayley transferred to the whaling barque *Fortitude* and Robinson went with him as second mate for two voyages. His time with the *Fortitude* appears to have been particularly satisfactory as the ship was well run and had good officers and men. On the first voyage they departed from Hobart on 7 January 1843. Robinson badly cut himself with a small hatchet while collecting firewood at Spring Bay and had to be taken to the nearby penal settlement at Darlington (Maria Island) for three days' treatment. During the voyage, the *Fortitude* operated mostly in New Zealand waters and Robinson's boat took a total of twelve whales. The *Fortitude* returned to Hobart on 15 October 1843 with a cargo of 17½ tuns of sperm whale oil, 161 tuns of right whale oil and 7 tons of whalebone (baleen).²² The second voyage in the *Fortitude* lasted from 10 November 1843 until 17 April 1844 and was noteworthy for the discovery of forty pounds weight of ambergris in a sperm whale that was processed on 18 March. Ambergris is a waxy, rather foul smelling substance, occasionally found in the intestines of whales, and commands a high price as an agent used in expensive perfumes. The voyage reportedly returned 400 barrels of right whale oil and 300 barrels of sperm oil as well as baleen and the ambergris.²³

Although happy with his position on the *Fortitude* Robinson accepted Captain Bayley's advice and in May 1844 transferred to the whaler *Eamont* as first mate. Captain John Lovett of the *Eamont* proved to be a tyrannical master and Robinson described the eleven-month voyage as the most miserable he had ever experienced. Robinson's boat took a number of whales, but the captain's violent and unreasonable behaviour eventually resulted in Robinson refusing to do his duty and being moved into the steerage accommodation. When the vessel reached Jervis Bay (New South Wales) sixteen of the crew also refused duty and were confined to their quarters and fed on biscuits and water until they reached Hobart on 10 April 1845. Only the intervention of the owner, Charles Seal, ensured that Robinson received his lay (agreed share) of the cargo of 119 tuns of oil. Robinson then rejoined Captain Bayley on the *Fortitude* and made one more voyage with him out of Hobart – from 2 May 1845 until 14 March 1846 – returning with 120 tuns of oil.²⁴

James takes command

While in port, Robinson's former employer, William Young, offered him the command of the ninety-eight ton brigantine, *Abeona*, whose regular master had taken sick. The *Abeona* sailed to Streaky Bay in South Australia to deliver men and supplies for a whaling

21 AOT, NS222, p. 38.

22 State Library of Tasmania, Tasmaniana Library, Logbook of the barque *Fortitude*, 13 January 1843 to 15 October 1843.

23 Logbook of the barque, *Fortitude*, 10 November 1843 to 10 April 1844.

24 *Hobart Town Courier*, 18 March 1846.

station that Young had established in 1843. Streaky Bay was described by Robinson as a 'risky harbour' and contained the visible remains of the brig, *Camilla*, which had been wrecked on 2 August 1844 while supplying the station.²⁵ Robinson then ventured on a whaling voyage to Denial Bay in South Australia, and westwards to Cape Riche and Two People Bay in Western Australia, before returning to Streaky Bay at the end of the season. The *Abeona* was back at Hobart on 1 November 1846 with seventy tuns of oil and most of the whaling station staff.²⁶ Robinson's second whaling voyage as captain of the *Abeona* – from 8 December 1846 until 16 July 1847 – returned only thirty barrels of oil (less than four tuns) as the vessel was small and leaked badly in rough weather. Robinson then wisely transferred to the command of newer 204-ton brig *Pryde* (built 1842) and undertook two whaling voyages out of Hobart between January 1848 and December 1849.²⁷

In between these voyages James Robinson had married Jane Parsons Bentley in Hobart on 25 November 1847 and although she received little mention in his reminiscences, she accompanied him on many of his subsequent ventures. They had six surviving children.²⁸ The Robinson children were with their parents on many sea voyages and one child, James, was born at the subantarctic Kerguelen Islands during a sealing expedition in the barque *Offley* – an event noted in the journal as 'Mrs Robinson gave birth to a son, mother and son quite well as expected'. The sons also worked on their father's vessels and, in later years, in his mining operations. The second oldest, Alfred Bingley Robinson, went on to serve with a number of whaling and trading vessels out of Hobart and was with the Tasmanian lighthouse service for eighteen years.²⁹

The gold rush years

Events on land were now to change the course of Robinson's career. The discovery of gold in California during 1848 led to a massive demand for shipping to transport passengers and all manner of supplies and foodstuffs. Eighteen Hobart vessels made the journey across the Pacific during 1849 and, the following year, the owner of the *Pryde*, David Hecksher, entered his brig into the trade. The *Pryde* left Hobart on 1 March 1850 with general cargo that included foodstuffs, alcohol, building materials, machinery and furnishings.³⁰ The owner had heavily overladen the vessel and, four days after departure, Robinson was forced to put into Port Arthur to offload part of the cargo and supplies. North of New Zealand the *Pryde* was caught in a gale and Robinson had to carry out the risky manoeuvre of bringing the ship about in heavy seas.

I went aloft under the main top and waited for what appeared twenty minutes to me, when two or three tremendous seas passed by. In the very middle of the last sea I gave the officers the signal with my hand, up went the foresail, cut the foot of the topsail, down helm and the poor brig came up to the wind. For a moment it was very doubtful in appearance, the lee rail was under water fore and aft nearly, but she rose and shook herself like some huge waterdog, and it was wonderful. In a few minutes she lay like a duck on the water. Before long most of the passengers (adults) were on deck, and the screams of the women ceased.³¹

25 *Hobart Town Courier*, 15 October 1844; 17 December 1844.

26 In apparent revenge for a shooting by the *Camilla*'s crew the three men who were left behind to mind the Streaky Bay station were killed by Aboriginal tribesmen. The body of James Hawkins, with a pencilled message describing the events, was not located until November 1847 at nearby Franklin Island. *South Australian Government Gazette*, 14 December 1847.

27 G Broxam, *Shipping arrivals and departures Tasmania 1843–1850*, Navarine Publishing, Canberra, 1998, pp. 116, 138, 173.

28 The Robinson children were George William (born 1849), Alfred Bingley (1851), Charles Bayley (1857), James Kerguelen (1859), William Arthur (1862) and Flora (May 1865).

29 *Weekly Courier*, 18 October 1934.

30 AOT, CUS 36/1/432, Customs Department.

31 AOT, NS222, p. 64.



The rush to the Ballarat goldfields. (National Library of Australia)

The *Pryde* called at Bora Bora, in the Society Islands, and Honolulu where stranded passengers from the wreck of the *Caroline* were taken on board. Arriving at San Francisco, Robinson noted that hundreds of vessels in the harbour had been deserted by their crews to go to the goldfields. He was soon to lose most of his own men, but managed to retain four hands by offering higher wages. Despite the small number of crew, the return passage was carried out fairly rapidly – they left San Francisco on 23 July 1850 and reached Hobart on 20 October.

Shortly after his return to Hobart in October 1850, Robinson was offered the captaincy of the barque *Panama* for a voyage to San Francisco. At 313 tons, the newly built *Panama* was, at the time, the most valuable of Robinson's commands and indicated his standing in the maritime community. This voyage also marked his first commercial venture with Dr William Lodewyk Crowther (1817–1885), who purchased twenty tons of freight space with Robinson. For the next thirty years Robinson was to be associated with Crowther in many ventures, sometimes as a commercial partner but most often as master of Crowther's vessels, and later as manager of his mining operations. Crowther was an eminently successful, though sometimes controversial, surgeon, naturalist and businessman who became Premier of Tasmania in 1878.³² The relationship between the two men was an interesting one. Robinson, despite his skills and experience, clearly followed the lead of Crowther in most of their enterprises. Robinson had nothing but praise for 'the Doctor' whom he regarded as friend as well as employer but while Crowther usually profited financially from their association, Robinson often did not. While residing at Melbourne for example, Robinson was persuaded by Crowther to purchase his half of a property that they jointly owned, and pay only the interest of eight per cent on a price of £2,000. The price of land went down and Robinson subsequently handed over the whole property to Crowther in order to release himself from the liability for the interest.

32 WELH Crowther, 'A surgeon as whaleship owner', *Medical Journal of Australia*, vol. 25, no. 1, 1943, pp. 549–54.

The *Panama* left Hobart on 22 January 1851 with seven passengers and a cargo consisting of 5,770 boxes of potatoes, 151 boxes and barrels of onions, 200 bags of barley, 21 boxes of apples, one case of seeds, and 843 joists and 906 boards of timber.³³ With the exception of some timber, the cargo was disposed of in San Francisco. Robinson decided to use his freighting profits to purchase and equip the American built schooner, *Montezuma*, and it left San Francisco for Hobart on 3 May 1851 under the command of Captain Simmons. The *Panama* was delayed by a massive fire that evening that destroyed at least thirteen blocks of San Francisco's timber buildings, including the bank where the voyage funds were held. The money was later retrieved unharmed from the vault.³⁴ The *Panama* was able to sail on 28 May and arrived at Hobart on 11 July 1851, after a relatively fast passage of forty-four days. The *Montezuma* had reached Hobart only two days earlier.

Robinson had agreed to undertake another voyage to California for Dr Crowther, this time in the *Montezuma*, but the schooner was diverted to Port Phillip Bay. Between August and October 1851, the *Montezuma* completed two voyages to the port of Geelong as the discovery of gold in inland Victoria had led to a rush of prospectors to the new fields. The ever pragmatic Robinson, realising that his crew would desert for the goldfields, organised equipment and supplies and took his men overland to Mount Alexander where the latest discoveries had been made. Mount Alexander lies just north of Castlemaine and, like many of the earliest gold discoveries, the mineral deposits lay relatively close to the surface and could be mined with minimal equipment and expertise. During a three-week period the party obtained enough gold to make the venture worthwhile but narrowly missed out on finding a larger quantity close to their original diggings. Robinson later learnt that over one hundredweight of gold had been recovered a few feet below the bottom of their mining pit.

Robinson returned to Hobart at the end of October with a cargo of sheep he had purchased for £500. Bad weather forced him to offload them at Spring Bay, but two of his passengers with experience in livestock were able to bring the animals overland to Hobart. At Crowther's urging Robinson commenced fitting out the *Montezuma* for a voyage to San Francisco, although he remained convinced that the Bass Strait trade to Victoria offered a greater chance of profits. The *Montezuma* departed from Hobart for California in late January 1852 with Robinson's wife and



Dr William Lodewyk Crowther (State Library of Tasmania)

33 AOT, CUS 36/1/412, Customs Department.

34 *Hobart Town Courier*, 16 July 1851.

three-month-old son Alfred Bingley on board, and a cargo of 1,309 boxes of potatoes and 1,203 boxes of onions.³⁵ By the time they arrived, the California trade boom had moderated and there was little profit from the sale of the goods. The *Montezuma* was reported to have left San Francisco on 6 June 1852 and arrived at Sydney on 9 August with thirty-two passengers, including survivors from the wreck of the *Legerdemain*, who had been taken on board at Apia in the Samoan Islands.³⁶ In partnership with Crowther, who remained at Hobart, Robinson moved with his family to Melbourne to concentrate on the Bass Strait trade. With the population of Victoria increasing dramatically that year, the *Montezuma* undertook at least five voyages between Tasmania and Victoria between August and December 1852.

Robinson says very little about his life in Melbourne during this period but by 1854 there was an economic depression. On the advice of one of his former passengers from California Robinson ventured back into goldmining, this time at the Clunes Station, near Ballarat. He set up a mill and steam engine to process gold-bearing quartz ore but after two years of work the expenditures of his drunken partner, a Mr Stephenson, forced him to give up the lease in disgust. He returned to the employ of Dr Crowther, and between June 1857 and May 1858 was engaged in command of the *Offley*. The barque was used to ferry cargoes of blue gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*) from Long Bay, in Tasmania's D'Entrecasteaux Channel region, to Port Phillip Bay for use in constructing the Sandridge Pier. The logs were in lengths of up to sixty feet and squared into beams measuring eighteen by fifteen inches in section. Due to the size of the timbers some vessels, such as the *Offley*, were equipped with loading ports cut into the bow so that the beams could be winched directly into the hold.

The Heard Island venture

During what would prove to be his final voyage carrying timber, Robinson met the officers of the American vessel, *Pioneer*, in Melbourne and learnt about the intensive sealing operations being undertaken on subantarctic Heard Island. The first reliable report of this island in the southern Indian Ocean was made by Captain Heard of the *Oriental of Boston* in November 1853.³⁷ American vessels had commenced sealing in March 1855 and their activities peaked during the 1858–59 season when an estimated 27,000 barrels of oil were collected.³⁸ By mid-1858, Robinson and Crowther had fitted out and equipped the *Offley* for a sealing voyage, with the brigantine *Elizabeth Jane* acting as a tender. The venture to Heard Island was to prove to be one of the most difficult of Robinson's commands and he was later to write, 'I have been at all kinds of trades in my time, merchant service, whaling, guano trade etc. etc.; but that sea elephant voyage to Hurds Island capped all'.³⁹

The *Elizabeth Jane* left Hobart for Heard Island on 11 June 1858. The *Offley* followed on 4 July and reached Corinthian Bay at the northern side of Heard Island by late October. To stay at the anchorage Robinson had to put three anchors out and was eventually forced to take down the ship's topyards and sails to reduce windage. Sealing operations at Heard Island were largely concentrated at Fairchild's Beach and Elephant Spit, which extends out from the south-eastern extremity of the island. The sealing gangs lived ashore during the hunting season and built crude huts and tryworks,

35 *Hobart Town Advertiser*, 30 January 1852.

36 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 August 1852; 22 December 1852.

37 M Downes, *First visitors to Heard Island*, ANARE Research Notes 104, Australian Antarctic Division, Kingston, 2002.

38 M Downes, *Indexing sealer's logbooks from Heard Island*, ANARE Research Notes 97, Australian Antarctic Division, Kingston, 1996, p. 13.

39 For the published account of this voyage see WELH Crowther, 'Captain JW Robinson's narrative of a sealing voyage to Heard Island, 1858–60', *The Polar Record*, vol. 15, no. 96, 1970, pp. 301–16.

often on raised platforms.⁴⁰ Robinson recalled that the huts were very dirty and smoky with the fires fuelled by seal or penguin blubber – the birds’ skins being used to make ‘moccasins’ for the men. Given the extreme weather conditions at Heard Island, a smaller vessel with a fore-and-aft rig was required to transport men, supplies and blubber oil between ship and shore. The glacial ice down to sea level largely prevented movement by land. Unfortunately for Robinson’s plans, the *Elizabeth Jane* had been condemned at Mauritius en-route, and its failure to arrive at the island crippled the operation from the start. Robinson’s account provides details about the frustrations of working at Heard Island. It was probably taken from the private journal that he kept on board ship, which is now in the collection of the Mitchell Library.⁴¹



Sealing operations at Heard Island. (State Library of Tasmania)

After a difficult season, in February 1859 the *Offley* went northwards to a more sheltered anchorage at Royal Sound in the Kerguelen Group. While at Royal Sound, an unauthorised trek by some of the *Offley*’s crew almost ended in disaster when the men were caught out in bad weather. Robinson was forced to amputate most of the carpenter’s frost bitten hands. An attempt to despatch the schooner *Flying Squirrel* from Hobart to assist Robinson ended ignominiously when the crew mutinied and deserted at Valparaiso, forcing Captain Ledwell to return to Tasmania empty handed.⁴² While at Kerguelen, Robinson organised for the American schooner, *Mary Powell*, to act as his tender at Heard Island but, while loading the season’s oil in October 1859, it was wrecked in a gale. With little hope of obtaining a full cargo, the *Offley* returned to Hobart on 10 January 1860 with around 1,000 barrels of whale and seal oil from a voyage of over twenty months.⁴³ In the aftermath of the Heard Island venture, members of the crew levelled accusations about their rations and conditions against both Robinson and Crowther. A court case brought against Crowther found that he was liable for extra crew payments for the extended voyage, but not liable to charges of neglect on the grounds

40 A McGowan, ‘On their own: towards an analysis of sealer’s sites on Heard Island’, *The Royal Society of Tasmania, Papers and Proceedings*, vol. 133, no. 2, 2000, pp. 61–70.

41 State Library of New South Wales, Mitchell Library, MSS 2135, James William Robinson private journal on board the barque *Offley*, 26 July 1858 to 30 April 1859.

42 *Hobart Mercury*, 5 November 1859.

43 *Hobart Mercury*, 11 January 1860.

that the expedition had been adequately supplied and the failure of the support vessels to arrive was due to unforeseen circumstances.⁴⁴

With sperm whale oil fetching the high price on the London market of £80 per tun, Robinson returned to whaling and undertook two extended voyages in the *Offley*. The barque cleared out of Hobart on 24 February 1860 and when a dispute arose in April about wages and conditions, returned briefly to Port Esperance in southern Tasmania. The *Offley* arrived in Hobart on 29 April 1861 with sixty tuns of oil and was back at sea on 21 May.⁴⁵ This voyage ended at Hobart on 7 October 1862 with a relatively low take of forty-seven tuns of oil after sixteen months.

The guano trade

During this period, Dr Crowther, with advice from Robinson, had begun another speculative venture – obtaining guano from islands off the Queensland coast.⁴⁶ Guano is the name given to the collected droppings of seabirds and bats and is highly prized as an agricultural fertilizer due to its high levels of phosphorous and nitrogen. Following unsuccessful attempts to find guano locally, at Port Davey and the Bass Strait islands, Crowther had formed the Anglo-Australian Guano Company in 1861 and obtained an exclusive licence from the British Government to mine guano from islands in the western Pacific.⁴⁷ Provision was made in the agreement for twice yearly reporting of tonnages taken and for the payment of annual royalties to the Crown. With the loss of Crowther's chartered schooner, *Harp*, on a guano voyage in June 1861, the *Offley* was fitted out to undertake both whaling and guano ventures under Robinson's command.

The *Offley* left Hobart on 11 November 1862 and returned on 24 January 1863 with its first load of guano from Bird Island, which is some 400 kilometres north-east of Bundaberg. The vessel was due to leave Hobart on 10 March but its customs clearance was delayed while additional port duties were sought. On its previous voyage the *Offley* had been entered 'out' as a whaling vessel and was therefore exempt from some charges, but was liable for additional payments on its cargo of guano.⁴⁸ The *Offley* sailed from Hobart on 13 March, with Mrs Robinson and two children on board, and returned on 10 November with 250 tons of guano and 17 tuns of sperm whale oil. According to the logbook for the third voyage the *Offley* departed from Hobart on 27 January 1864 and took sperm whales on 1 March and 21 May, before proceeding to Bird Island to load a total of 5,628 bags of guano. As there were no port facilities this had to be ferried out to the ship, and filled 234 boatloads.⁴⁹ The *Offley* returned to Hobart on 29 August with a reported 16½ tuns of oil and over 300 tons of guano.

On its fourth voyage north the *Offley* left Hobart on 24 October 1864 and, after unsuccessfully testing for guano at Cato Island, reached Bird Island on 8 November. Provisions, hardwood sleepers and railway iron were unloaded before the ship proceeded to Lady Elliot Island, located some ninety kilometres north-east of Bundaberg. The guano mining lease for Lady Elliott Island had been transferred to WL Crowther from A Askunas in August 1864. Supplies and equipment were offloaded on the island, and 7,632 bags of guano (400 tons) were taken on board. The *Offley* departed on 26 November,

44 S Chamberlain, 'The Hobart whaling industry 1839–1900', doctoral thesis, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 1988, pp. 166–8.

45 AOT, MB 2/33/1/301, Marine Board of Hobart. The crew agreement for this voyage details the lays (proportional payments) for the crew based on agreed prices of £12 per tun of right whale oil, £40 per ton of right whale baleen, and £40 per tun of sperm whale oil.

46 B Daley and P Griggs, 'Mining the reefs and cays: coral, guano and rock phosphate extraction in the Great Barrier Reef, Australia, 1844–1940', *Environment and History*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2006, pp. 395–433.

47 WELH Crowther, 'The development of the guano trade from Hobart Town in the fifties and sixties', *The Royal Society of Tasmania, Papers and Proceedings*, 1938, pp. 213–20.

48 *The Mercury*, 13 March 1863.

49 State Library of Tasmania, Tasmaniana Library, Logbook of the barque *Offley*, 21 January 1864 to 28 August 1864.

accompanied by three men who had been working on the island, and returned to Hobart on 28 December 1864.⁵⁰

On 1 August 1865, a prospectus was issued for the Anglo-Australian Guano Company offering 3,000 shares at £20 each. Henry Hopkins was appointed Chairman of Directors and Dr Crowther accepted £10,000 in shares for his guano rights, as well as his investment in infrastructure and stores. For his role in helping to establish the guano operations, Crowther gave Robinson 200 shares in the public company along with the right to purchase another 100 shares at a greatly reduced price.

Crowther asked Robinson to manage the guano operation at Lady Elliott Island and he arrived there on the barque *Isabella* on 8 September 1865 with his wife and five children. There were two store buildings on the island capable of holding about 2,000 tons of guano, with small cottages for the men and a larger house for the manager. Robinson was in charge of up to twenty-five labourers and his journal for his first year on the island records much of the activity (and the problems) involved in running the operation.⁵¹ The guano was stockpiled in sacks but difficulties arose when it had to be taken out to the transport ships. The anchorage at Lady Elliott Island was highly exposed and, on 13 July 1866, the 779-ton ship *Golden City* went on to the reef. Robinson was critical of the management of the *Golden City* and noted in his journal that when it was wrecked 'the crew of the ship, with few exceptions, behaved in a most disorderly manner and were soon drunk and fighting with our own men'. He subsequently agreed to purchase the wreck from the master when the ship's crew 'refused to work at her anymore', and over the next six months salvaged what he could with the assistance of his son Alfred and some of the labourers.

During his stay at Lady Elliott Island, Robinson made an arrangement with the Queensland colonial government to establish a light on a timber mast as a navigational aid, and it was first officially displayed on 14 August 1866. This temporary light reportedly blew down during a gale in 1871 and eventually, in 1873, the Queensland government replaced it with an iron clad structure on a hardwood frame.⁵²

After almost two years on the island, with his children's education to think of, Robinson decided to return to Hobart. The family left on the *Isabella* on 6 August 1867 but the vessel was forced by bad weather to shelter at Twofold Bay on the southern coast of New South Wales. The Robinsons transferred to the steamship, *City of Hobart*, which had called in to pick up cattle, and arrived at Hobart on 24 August.⁵³ Soon after returning to Tasmania, Robinson was offered the command of the barque *Island City*, whose captain was too ill to continue his voyage to New Zealand. The vessel sailed on 26 September 1867 to Port Welshpool in Victoria to pick up a cargo of cattle for delivery to the port of Nelson. Located at the northern end of New Zealand's south island, Nelson was experiencing a shipping boom in supplying the newly discovered gold fields on the West Coast.⁵⁴ Robinson made two more voyages to Nelson to deliver cattle from Newcastle, New South Wales, and he provides a useful description of the loading process.

The mode of shipping these cattle was as follows. In a properly shaped yard in front of the ship the cattle were herded. A man with two quick horses, in an ordinary light dray, had one end of a single four inched rope fast to the end of the dray. The other end went aloft through a single block and down to the deck. Slings were thrown round the beasts, with a proper headrope. At a given signal, off went the horses, and in a few seconds the bullock was high enough. The horse backed

50 Logbook of the barque *Offley*, 24 October 1864 to 28 December 1864.

51 State Library of Tasmania, Tasmaniana Library, Journal at Lady Elliott Island, 8 September 1865 to 29 August 1866.

52 G Reid, *From dusk to dawn: a history of Australian lighthouses*, Macmillan Australia, South Melbourne, 1988, pp. 98–100.

53 *The Mercury*, 26 August 1867.

54 R Allan, *The history of Port Nelson*, Whitcombe & Tombs, Wellington, 1954.

a little as soon as the beast was over the main hatch, and the end of the rope was slacked away. The patent hook clearing itself of the bullock. Men stationed below caught hold of the head rope, and before the poor beast knew what was happening he was run into the place intended for him. We carried three tiers of cattle, so many on deck, so many between deck, and so many in the lower hold.⁵⁵

A return to whaling

The following year, 1862, Robinson returned to his former trade as a whaling master. He purchased the 342-ton American built barque *Othello* at Sydney and it was transferred to the Hobart register on 14 April, with a half share in the vessel sold to George Johnson during the following month.⁵⁶ The *Othello* sailed from Hobart on 23 June 1868 with Alfred Bingley Robinson listed as a crewmember and James Robinson's wife and family on board. The barque travelled westwards as far as the Great Australian Bight, where a very large sperm whale was taken, before returning to South West Cape in Tasmania and then on to New Zealand waters. By the end of the year the *Othello* was working around the Chatham Islands, some 800 kilometres east of New Zealand, where a small resident population supplied fresh food for the whaling vessels.⁵⁷ The Robinson family spent some time ashore at the house of Mr Frederick Hunt. Four of the crew absconded for a number of days to work at the residence, threatening Robinson when he went to retrieve them. While at the Chathams, the *Othello* narrowly escaped being wrecked when its anchors dragged during a gale on 4 January, but fortunately one snagged on a rock just before the vessel went ashore.⁵⁸ The *Othello* returned to Hobart on 23 June 1869 with a full cargo of ninety-nine tuns of sperm and right whale oil.⁵⁹

Robinson's second whaling voyage in the *Othello* lasted from 11 August 1869 to 9 July 1870. The crew of thirty-two men included his son Alfred Bingley.⁶⁰ The voyage was plagued by bad weather and the barque lost spars and sailing gear twice during storms. Consequently the quantity of oil returned to Hobart (thirty four tuns from seven whales) was much lower than from the previous trip.⁶¹ On 15 July 1870, a week after he landed in Hobart, Robinson's wife Jane died aged forty-one. There is no mention of this in Robinson's account and the circumstances of her death are not known.

On Robinson's third whaling voyage with the *Othello*, he was accompanied by three of his sons – Alfred as boatsteerer, George as able seaman and Charles, aged thirteen, as ship's boy. The *Othello* left Hobart on 8 August 1870. In September the following year, when Robinson put two of the men in irons and confined eleven others for refusing to work, the *Othello* was anchored at Recherche Bay.⁶² The barque returned to Hobart on 5 December 1871, after a sixteen month absence, with seventy-one tuns of oil on board.⁶³ After a dispute with George Johnson over the employment of crew for another voyage, Robinson left the partnership. He sold his share in the barque to Johnson on 23 December 1871 for £1,000. By January 1872, Robinson was married to Annie Lucinda James, aged 26. They were to have seven children between 1874 and 1886.⁶⁴

Three months after his second marriage, Robinson left on another sea voyage. A Mr John Monger was looking for an experienced captain for his newly purchased brig, *George H Peake*, operating out of Western Australia. Robinson and his oldest son, George,

55 AOT, NS222, p. 128.

56 National Archives of Australia, 3/1868, Register of British Ships, Hobart.

57 R Richards, *Whalers and sealers at the Chatham Islands*, Roebuck Books, Canberra, 1982.

58 State Library of Tasmania, Tasmaniana Library, Logbook of the barque *Othello*, 10 May 1868 to 21 June 1869.

59 *The Mercury*, 23 June 1869.

60 Logbook of the barque *Othello*, 11 August 1869 to 7 July 1870.

61 *The Mercury*, 11 July 1870.

62 Logbook of the barque *Othello*, 1 August 1870 to 8 November 1871.

63 *The Mercury*, 6 December 1871.

64 The children of James William Robinson and Annie Lucinda James were Tasman (1874), Annie (1875) who died in 1877 at Goulds Country, Raymond (1878), Blandia (1880), Hally (1882), Leonard (1884) and Grace (1886).

travelled from Melbourne to Albany via the royal mail steamer *Bangalore*, but had to go overland to Fremantle as the port facilities at Albany were considered inadequate for larger steamships.⁶⁵ When Robinson arrived at Fremantle, both the entrance to the Swan River and the port were choked with seaweed, and were being cleared by convict gangs.⁶⁶ Robinson provided an interesting description of the town of Fremantle with its streets, 'all sand', and its lively night life.

All the drinking shops were full and money was plentiful. I never saw such a place for drinks and billiards as Fremantle was at that time. The ships coming here from the Old Country were half loaded, I was afterwards informed, with spirits and English ale.⁶⁷

The cargo of the *George H Peake* was native sandalwood (*Santalum spicatum*) bound for Singapore where there was a market for the aromatic timber. The vessel left Fremantle on 25 July 1872 and sailed northwards through the Sunda Strait to Angier Point, where ten Muslim pilgrims were taken on board as deck passengers. The *George H Peake* reached Singapore on 18 August after a short passage of twenty-four days from Fremantle. Established as a trading post in 1819, strategically-located Singapore became a British colony in 1867. With the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, it became a major entrepôt for the redistribution of goods to and from South East Asia. As it was a free port, Robinson did not have to pay customs duties for his cargo, which was discharged into smaller craft to be taken ashore from the ships anchored in the 'roads'.

Through agents, Bhen Myers and Company, a charter was obtained for the *George H Peake* to take a cargo of sugar from the island of Java to Melbourne. The barque sailed from Singapore on 17 September, and reached the port of Tagal on 10 October where it loaded 3,000 bags of sugar before departing for Semarang. Robinson was impressed with the efficiency and facilities of the port, as a further 5,620 bags of sugar were loaded in three days to complete the cargo.

The mode of doing business here is with the Dutch Company very good. They expect the Capt. of the chartered ship to attend at their office every day and inform them what cargo he requires sent off the next day. They won't accept notes. At dawn of day the crafts arrive alongside the vessel. The man in charge calls the mate's attention to the seals on the hatches, before he breaks them. He then breaks the seals and hands out the cargo, which is tallied on board. We soon got off our supplies of water and stores, and by night were ready to sail for Melbourne.⁶⁸

Returning via the Sunda Straits and Western Australia, the *George H Peake* entered Bass Strait. Near King Island a heavy sea washed over the stern during a gale and almost sank the vessel. During the storm, the cargo shifted and, by the time the brig reached Melbourne on 19 December 1872, it was listing heavily.⁶⁹ Before the *George H Peake* had left Fremantle the ship's register had been annotated, authorising Robinson to sell the vessel in Melbourne; it was purchased on 19 February 1873 by a Mr James Lloyd and transferred to the local register.⁷⁰

This voyage may have sparked Robinson's interest in the northern trade as his next venture was to buy the thirty-nine ton schooner, *Twins*, at Hobart in April 1873 and equip it for a journey to Palmerston (Port Darwin). The *Twins* had been lying at Barnes

65 *Argus*, 25 April 1872.

66 *Perth Gazette and Western Australian Times*, 26 July 1872.

67 AOT, NS222, p. 140.

68 AOT, NS222, p. 146.

69 State Library of New South Wales, Mitchell Library, MSS 2135, Logbook of the brig *George H Peake*, 25 July 1872 to 18 December 1872.

70 National Archives of Australia, Register of British Ships, Melbourne 14/1873.



The Camp and Fort Hill at Palmerston (Darwin) in 1873. (National Library of Australia)



Captain Adcock's store and jetty at Southport, near Darwin, in 1878. (National Library of Australia)

Bay for eighteen months prior to its purchase and, while Robinson's employees were sailing it up to Hobart, it sank off Ralphs Bay. The vessel was successfully refloated and taken to John McGregor's dockyard for inspection and minor refurbishment.⁷¹ The *Twins* left Hobart on 27 June 1873 with a cargo of 6,000 palings, 92 cases of potatoes, 6,000 feet of hardwood timber, 3,500 feet of pine, 3 tons of flour, 100 bushels of bran, 6 barrels and 22 cases of beef, 9 jars of butter, 40 cases of jam and a quantity of twine.⁷² Robinson, with his son Charles and a small crew, successfully navigated the heavily-laden vessel up the inner passage of the Great Barrier Reef and reached the port of Rockhampton, Queensland, on 20 July. Crewmember William Cox was discharged at Rockhampton 'for being drunk and using abusive language to the Captain' and nine Cornish miners were taken on board for the passage north. The *Twins* left Rockhampton on 5 August and sailed through the Torres Strait to reach Palmerston on 5 September.⁷³

This settlement had been established for only four years and was being administered by the South Australian government. After unloading his cargo, Robinson was able to find employment for the *Twins*, lightening cargo from the barques, *Annie* and *EJ Spence*, to Southport. Lying on the Darwin River some fifty kilometres south east of Palmerston, the facilities at Southport were primitive and goods could only be unloaded at high tide. Robinson had difficulty coping with the climate and noted that, 'the mosquitoes and sandflies rendered life here not worth living for, and then, in those days it was an Indian climate with European customs, and ship fare'.⁷⁴ Robinson also lost two of his crew: they had refused to do their duty on board and had been taken before a local magistrate and sentenced to one month imprisonment. After accepting an



The whaler *Velocity* at McGregor's shipyard, Hobart, in 1878. (State Library of Tasmania)

71 *The Mercury*, 8 April 1873; 17 April 1873.

72 *The Mercury*, 26 June 1873.

73 State Library of Tasmania, Tasmaniana Library, Logbook of the schooner *Twins*, 26 June 1873 to 30 October 1873.

74 AOT, NS222, p. 154.



Alfred Bingley Robinson (centre) on the dismasted barque *Kassa* at Hobart. (Archives Office of Tasmania)

offer of a charter of £50 per month for the *Twins* to remain in the north, Robinson left on the steamship, *Gothenberg*, for Sydney and was back at Hobart by the end of 1873. Before completing its charter, the *Twins* was wrecked on a reef near Timor. Robinson subsequently received £600 insurance money – and considered that he had had come out well from the venture.

Robinson's next command was the barque *Isle of France*, carrying timber from Hobart to Adelaide and coal from Newcastle to Melbourne on behalf of the Hobart-based owner, Edward Lucas. At the request of shipowner Alexander McGregor, he then went to Adelaide by steamship for the delivery voyage of the 672-ton ship *Lufra*. Robinson considered the *Lufra* the fastest craft he had ever sailed in and it took only four days for the passage. They reached Hobart on 19 August 1874 and, with the *Lufra* in harbour until Captain Richard Copping took command of the vessel, Robinson remained on full pay.⁷⁵ In March 1875, Dr Crowther offered Robinson the 139-ton whaling brig, *Velocity*. His stay on board was short lived. Robinson was struck down with fever two months after leaving and had to return to land at Oyster Cove on 9 May. Alfred Bingley Robinson took over command of the *Velocity* in May 1875 a position he held until its return to Hobart in March 1876. The trip yielded only three tuns of oil from a single whale.⁷⁶

In April 1876 James Robinson was back in command of the *Velocity* and he ventured to the Solomons Group where he had previously worked. While repairs were being carried out at Makira, on San Christobal Island, five of the crew deserted. This left the *Velocity* short-handed for the remainder of the voyage. Members of the crew contracted a 'low fever' (probably malaria) and one man, Henry Mitchell, died on 27 October. With enough healthy men for only one boat crew, Robinson obtained quinine from a trading

75 Between 1875 and 1877, Captain Richard Copping undertook three return voyages between Hobart and London in the *Lufra*. For details of these voyages see Walker, *Tall ships and cannibals*.

76 State Library of Tasmania, Tasmaniana Library, Logbook of the brig *Velocity*, 13 May 1875 to 9 March 1876.

station operated by the Sydney firm of Cowlshaw Brothers on the island of Savu, near Guadalcanal. The Savu station was run by a Louis Nixon who traded for beche-de-merc (sea cucumber), copra and shell for export.⁷⁷ Robinson was particularly impressed by Nixon's bravery as he was living with the volatile inhabitants of the island, who had a tradition of cannibalism. The practice of 'blackbirding' – obtaining native labourers for European plantations – was also in full swing at the time. Nixon related to Robinson how the crew of the recruiting schooner, *Dancing Wave*, had been massacred at nearby Florida Island in March 1876. As a result of the problems with the crew, sickness, and the poor condition of the *Velocity*, the whaling voyage was singularly unsuccessful. The return of the brig to Hobart on 20 March 1877 marked the end of Robinson's time at sea.⁷⁸

Some years later Robinson received news that his two sons, George and Charles, were missing in the pearling schooner *Kingston*, at the Torres Strait. It was a long time before he could accept the fact of their deaths. After being overhauled at the John Lucas slip, the thirty-eight ton *Kingston* had sailed from Hobart on 7 September 1875 and arrived at Timor in December, but divers could not be signed on because of new Dutch regulations. George Robinson became ill with fever and after his recovery the *Kingston* was engaged in trading voyages to Timor. It was reported that Captain Robinson had left Port Essington on 31 August 1877 and obtained divers from Dewar Island in Torres Strait. In early November, the *Kingston* was in company with the schooner, *Trois Amis*, but disappeared one night from its anchorage near Warrior Reef. The anchor and chain were subsequently found on the seabed and it was speculated that the islanders had murdered the crew and slipped the mooring.⁷⁹

Tin mining in Tasmania

During the 1870s tin had been discovered at Mt Bischoff, in western Tasmania. Prospectors investigating areas with similar geology in the north-east of the state found payable deposits around the Blue Tier in 1874. Dr Crowther's son, Edward, was involved in the location of tin ore at the Blue Tier at what came to be known as the Marie Louise and the Wheal Tasman mines. On the basis of Robinson's previous mining experience in Victoria, Dr Crowther employed him as manager of the Wheal Tasman mine and Robinson moved with his family to nearby Goulds Country. At the Blue Tier fields, most of the early tin mining was done by hydraulic sluicing of the surface deposits. Many of the mining operations, including the Wheal Tasman, were run on a system known as 'tributing', where lease owners paid the miners for the volume of ore they produced rather than fixed wages. Robinson worked with some of the Chinese labourers who had followed the mining boom to Tasmania.⁸⁰

I engaged two Chinamen who each took separate sections. I paid them so much a ton for the tin they raised, and they sent me the tin, which I forwarded to either Hobart or Launceston, mostly Launceston. As soon as I got paid the returns from the smelting works, if the assay and weight was correct, I paid for the tributes. This arrangement was fair, and all parties were satisfied. But after a time the price of tin was so low I threw up the sections, and let the Chinamen pay the rent, if they thought fit to work the ground.⁸¹

77 JA Bennett, *Wealth of the Solomons: a history of a Pacific archipelago, 1800–1978*, University of Hawaii, Honolulu, 1987. Louis Nixon was the nephew of Francis Nixon, who was the Anglican Bishop of Tasmania from 1843 until 1863.

78 *The Mercury*, 21 March 1877. The 50 year-old *Velocity* was hulked at Hobart after the 1876 voyage and demolished in 1892.

79 *Cooktown Herald and Palm River Advertiser*, 16 February 1878.

80 Chinese miners were in the majority at the alluvial tin mines in north-eastern Tasmania from 1882 to c1897. For details see H Vivian, 'Tasmania's Chinese heritage: an historical record of Chinese sites in north-east Tasmania', unpublished report, Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, 1985.

81 AOT, NS222, pp. 178–9.

After three years at the Wheal Tasman, during 1880 Robinson shifted his attention to the Groom River on the south flank of the Blue Tier. With his two youngest sons, James and William, Robinson tried working the deep alluvial deposits along the river. This was unsuccessful and Robinson and his sons moved to a small spur at the south-eastern end of Crystal Hill. Water sluicing uncovered a seam of tin-bearing quartz in 1881, prompting the family to take up a lease at what would later be known as the Anchor Mine. On 7 February 1882 a formal objection to the Robinson lease was lodged by an adjacent land-holder, Mr Harbottle, and was heard by Commissioner Dawson at St Helens on 15 March. The Commissioner ruled against Robinson but the decision was reversed on appeal by Justice Dobson, of the Supreme Court, on 5 July 1882.⁸² This success was tempered by an accident at the nearby Cambria Mine on 23 June 1882 that killed James's brother, George Washington Robinson. The miners were in the habit of putting plugs of dynamite in a tin vessel near the fire to soften them and, in this instance, the charges had exploded while George was standing nearby.



The Anchor Mine at Lottah, Tasmania. (State Library of Tasmania)

The last part of James Robinson's memoir deals with his experiences with the Anchor Mine, and the eventual failure of the company set up to exploit the tin deposits. In September 1882 the Anchor Tin Mine Company was publicly floated with a total of 27,600 shares, having a nominal value of £41,400, going to 124 shareholders including members of the Robinson family.⁸³ The former manager of the Marie Louise mine, John Symons, was appointed manager and capital raised from the float was used to open two mining faces into the ore body and install a crushing plant driven by a massive water wheel. Insufficient water to drive the machinery, poor ore handling methods and some low-grade deposits meant that the mine closed in 1885 and the company folded two years later.⁸⁴

82 Robinson felt strongly enough about this court case to have his version of events published in JW Robinson, *A statement of the facts involved in the late mining case of Harbottle versus Robinson*, NH Propsting, Hobart, 1882.

83 Archives Office of Tasmania, Mines Department, MIN/66/1/262.

84 G Jackman, 'An archaeological survey of the Blue Tier Tin-Field, vol. 2: history and archaeology', unpublished report, Forestry Tasmania, Hobart, 1997, pp. 126–31.

After the failure of the public company, the Anchor Mine was purchased for £750 by a syndicate that included Robinson. Initially it was given over to ground sluicing by tributing. During 1891, new equipment for crushing and dressing the ore was installed. Robinson continued working there for another three years. Then, without Robinson's agreement, major shareholder Alexander McGregor sold the minor shares in the mine for £1,500, an amount that barely covered Robinson's expenses. McGregor then went on to sell his own shares, in 1895, to a British syndicate for a vastly inflated price. Robinson's account therefore ends on a bitter note, with him lamenting the effort that he had put into the venture over many years, and his lack of financial return from the 'Anchor swindle', as he referred to it. Robinson would have been in his sixties when he retired from mining and he had young children to provide for.

The family had moved back to Hobart in the 1880s. Alfred Bingley Robinson later wrote that after the failure of the mining ventures his father retired from public life 'and devoted all his attention to his books, never seeming to fully recover from his late losses'.⁸⁵ James Robinson died at his home at 255 Argyle Street on 16 August 1906 and was buried at the Cornelian Bay Cemetery. His obituary, compiled by Alfred, noted:

he was singularly successful in all he undertook at sea, and was considered a very skilful and careful navigator, never once losing a vessel ... Captain Robinson commanded the highest respect of the shipping community of Hobart.⁸⁶

85 *Tasmanian Mail*, 25 August 1906.

86 *Tasmanian Mail*, 25 August 1906.

MICHAEL SHARLAND: FOR NATURE AND HERITAGE

Michael Roe

This paper was presented at a meeting of THRA held on 11 December 2007.¹

The study of Nature is perhaps one of the most interesting of all hobbies — or professions ... It is a study of which one may never tire; in any path which we choose to tread there is certainly something to be found that has joy and surprises.²

So nineteen-year-old Michael Stanley Reid Sharland began a diary on 26 November 1918, its purpose to record pursuit of that study. These words spelled out the commanding theme of the near seventy years that lay ahead. Sharland's range always included human interaction with nature and, in time, cultural heritage became essential to his concerns. He spent almost three years in war-time service and fourteen in bureaucracy, but his most enduring role was as a writer of countless enjoyable and enlightening words – in newspapers, journals, and books. Often illustrating them were self-taken photographs of splendid quality. Sharland had many affinities with the 'nature writers' so well analysed by Tom Griffiths.³ While intellectually not equal to the best of them, he had remarkable range, and among Tasmanians of such style he is matched only by Louisa Anne Meredith and JR Skemp.

This man was born at Bellerive, 14 June 1899. Both parents came from Tasmanian elites. His mother was Violet Agnes, daughter of James Reid Scott, one of a family that contributed much to colonial settlement, especially as surveyors. James Scott succeeded also as politician and farmer, at his early death in 1877 leaving an estate of over £8,000, as well as nine children.⁴ Our subject's father, Alfred Fullarton Sharland, was the son of another notable early surveyor, he too enjoying broader distinction. Alfred grew up



Michael Sharland in the bush, June 1918. (Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.)

1 Beyond people named elsewhere, my thanks go to Roger Sharland, Tim Jetson, Elizabeth Thompson and Peter Fielding.
2 Sharland papers, Australian Museum.

3 *Hunters and collectors*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1996.

4 N Smith, 'Scott, James Reid', *Australian dictionary of biography*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, vol. 6, 1976, pp. 96–7.

in the handsome family home, *Woodbridge*, New Norfolk, and was a fine rifleman and sculler, but his further story is sombre. Born in 1857, between 1877 and 1885 he fathered five children by a Hobart woman of lower social class.⁵ At the Sharland-Scott marriage in August 1887 the bride overstated her age as 21, other evidence confirming that the event was clandestine. During the next year the couple re-married, with members of both families attending. First time around the groom was ‘farmer’, second ‘gentleman’. The couple spent some years at Branhholm, presumably on a property deriving from JR Scott, and then around 1893 moved to Hobart. There Alfred took the style, ‘architect’, and did some appropriate work, but in 1901 became municipal rabbit and codling-moth inspector at Campbell Town. He remained so until 1911, by which time he and his wife had become owners of nondescript pastoral properties. One was a few miles south of the town, on the main road at what is still known as Sharlands Corner; another, *Wellwood*, was towards Lake Leake.⁶ The family comprised three sons and two daughters.

Campbell Town ever held a place in the consciousness of our hero – ‘Toad’ to kin and ‘Stan’ otherwise. An early hint of historical sensitivity came with ‘feelings of awe’ as a nursemaid walked her charge to see a stone showing a rough-hewn cross, said to mark a murder.⁷ Some reminiscences, written in 1978, invoked rides aboard a bike pushed by Anglican clergyman, Edward Gordon; one memory from that experience was how deep went local poverty.⁸ Another childhood awareness was of ‘charm in following a track you’ve not been on before, feeling in a sense that you are a pioneer.’⁹ The boy’s first school was the ‘Campbell Town Grammar School’, as he later suggested, a pretentious title. Still, some of ‘the leading families’ sent children thither, and entries in *Who’s who in Australia* were to cite this as Sharland’s place of education. In fact, from age eleven he attended the government school, presumably to cut costs. Stan recalled harsh punishment for playing truant in order to see a steam thresher at work. ‘Belts were whirring, wheels turning, bundles of grain were flying from wagon into mysterious cavities, to emerge at the other end as chaff or grain.’ In counterpoint were memories of pre-tractor harvesting. Everyday farm labourers and their like always had honourable place in Stan’s conspectus.

Driving in a local nabob’s Daimler also remained in mind, the Sharlands themselves having a decrepit Oldsmobile. Campbell Town’s most colourful identity was a self-proclaimed veteran of the Crimean War, who donned flamboyant uniform at every opportunity. The town then boasted more pubs, and more churches, than in later years.¹⁰ Funerals, often held on the Sabbath but sometimes prompting half-holidays from school, were notable occasions, the undertakers’ splendid horses to the fore. More orthodox recreation came with paper chases and picnics, larking on an old swing bridge across the Elizabeth River, and attending football matches. Like countless others (including both his grandfathers), Stan collected birds’ eggs. From these activities, the swamp harrier earned a niche in the boy’s affections.¹¹ Magpies sometimes attacked him, as they did other urchins who might rob their nests.¹²

More positive empathy for nature soon came. The crucial locus was *Wellwood* – ‘in a tight little valley at Kearney’s Bogs’.¹³ Stan helped with the clearing there, probably

5 My great thanks are due to Joyce Purtscher for relevant information; all genealogical data is drawn from Archives Office of Tasmania materials.

6 I used assessment rolls in the *Gazette*, and electoral rolls. These suggest that the family remained resident in the town itself. The Tasmanian Museum holds a post card (Q1986.7.4) of Campbell Town, 1908, on which is marked the Sharlands’ home. I thank Vicki Farmery for relevant assistance.

7 *Oddity and elegance*, Fullers Bookshop, Hobart, 1966, p. 42.

8 Archives of Tasmania, NS1179/21; see too especially, *A pocketful of nature*, Mercury Walch, Hobart, 1971, pp. 73–8.

9 *Tracks of the morning*, Mercury Walch, Hobart, 1981, p. 1.

10 *Oddity and elegance*, p. 74.

11 *The Emu*, vol. 32, 1932, pp. 87–8.

12 *A pocketful of nature*, p. 35.

13 *Tracks of the morning*, p. 50.

even before leaving school, and more or less fulltime from 1915 to 1917. His sullen, silent father was around most of the while, their shelter a rat-ridden hut. Other companions were birds and mammals, and it was to them and their habitat that the boy responded. Memory told of one day looking for a sheepdog.

Suddenly a feeling struck me, and you could only call it the spell of the bush ... hitherto, I was under the impression, gained from my elders, that the bush was merely there to cut down, cleared for grass or a home, and the more bush you cleared, the better you were thought of as a progressive farmer.¹⁴

Since 1915 or so, the family domicile had shifted to Bridgewater, Stan spending most weekends there. His first extant photographs date from 1916, while another surviving artefact is a calendar for 1917 made from using simple printing apparatus.¹⁵ It presented some mottoes in French, others in Latin, all worthy. Entries were more prosaic: 'horses turned out'; 'cow put in the paddock.' By this time the eldest Sharland son had enlisted, while another had found work with the State railways. Perhaps the easing of family cares caused Violet Sharland to decide on desertion from her husband, at New Year 1918. Divorce came four years later, the husband suing. After another failed marriage, he died in 1929, leaving to Stan's young brother all his estate – which proved worthless.¹⁶ One can only speculate as to the impact of these events.

Stan, like his mother and sisters, moved to Hobart upon the separation. By now his strong, stocky figure would have taken form, and so too features that bespoke personality at once affable and self-contained. The youth found a job as a printers' rouseabout at the *Mercury*, but lost it first day through arriving late.¹⁷ Then he went to CD Haywood's confectionery business. Work there was long and piece-paid; Haywood's disciplines included staggered work-hours for males and females. 'Thus did drudgery for many go unleavened by a glimpse of the opposite sex,' remarked Sharland in a rare account of factory life in Tasmania.¹⁸ Soon he escaped back to the *Mercury*, first as a 'copyholder' for proofreaders, at thirty shillings a week.

The *Mercury* connection was to endure life-long and so too another, now commencing, with the Tasmanian Field Naturalists' Club. Founded in 1904, the Club is best honoured among this audience by saying that it has breathed a spirit like that of THRA.¹⁹ Sharland had joined two months before penning the dictum with which this paper commenced, and with such enthusiasm that in February 1919 he became Assistant Secretary. At year's end he told his journal that, while garnering enjoyment and knowledge, 'I have really learnt extremely little of the secrets which nature holds,' and so was the more conscious of 'the absolute necessity of solitary individual research'.²⁰ Ornithology was already the chosen field for this endeavour. Sharland's name appeared in the *Mercury* on 31 December, with a call for the protection of plovers.²¹ That summer he enjoyed a long trip to National Park, then the cynosure for local naturalists. Arndell Lewis was a close companion at this time; Leonard Rodway a mentor. Photography continued all the while. It appears that Sharland's first bird study was that of a ground thrush, taken in September 1920; about then too his 'Ensign Box Camera' delivered a superb example of that archetype view, Richmond Bridge and mill.²²

14 *Mercury*, 4 April 1971.

15 AOT, NS1179/70; NS1179/53 (early photographs); NS1179 designates Sharland papers.

16 AOT, SC89/15/501 (divorce), AD960/1/53 (will); AE763/1/47(54) (estate's non-value).

17 *Mercury*, 5 July 1979.

18 *Once upon a time: some Tasmanian tales*, Davies Brothers Limited, Hobart, 1976, p. 38.

19 J Fenton, *A century afield: a history of the Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club*, Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club, Hobart, 2004.

20 Australian Museum papers.

21 *Mercury*. See too L Robin, *The flight of the emu*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 2001, pp. 91–2.

22 AOT, NS1179/55.

Promotion to the *Mercury*'s reporting staff also came in 1920, with more advance the next year. By then, it seems, Sharland had published one specialist piece – on hiking – but further such efforts got nowhere until the journal's weekly complement, hitherto the *Tasmanian Mail*, transformed into modernity. Directed by the Editor, Frederick Usher, this revolution began on 7 April.²³ Now the journal became the *Illustrated Tasmanian Mail*; broadsheet gave way to magazine style; and among new features were 'Nature Notes' by 'Peregrine', Sharland's enduring tag. He received fifteen shillings for his early 'Notes', normally running to about a thousand words. Just how the task fitted with other *Mercury* duties is obscure. Whatever, Sharland thereby made his special contribution to the *Mercury-Mail*'s brightest years. Colleagues of the 1920s included maritime adventurer Alan Villiers, all-round litterateur Clive Turnbull, novelist Noel Norman and musician Robert Atkinson.

'Peregrine's' first essay invoked concern for nature's living things, in hope 'that at least a check should be put upon the rapid rate at which they are being killed out'. Tiger and devil had chief place, with illustrations – those of the devil taken at Beaumaris Zoo. The egg-laying of platypus and echidna also won mention. Next week the autumn flight of birds brought ornithology into play; now too were invited contributions and questions from readers. That evoked an immediate response, and so Peregrine explained that despite appearances no great affinity linked shark and dolphin. In following issues geology made its mark, with discussion of glaciation in the National Park and the (minute) presence of radium in rocks; astronomy, with reference to sunspots; botany via mushrooms and grasses. The author told of various jaunts, most interestingly in assisting a friend, evidently Arndell Lewis, look for aboriginal flints at Pitt Water.²⁴ Sharland was



Royal Australian Ornithologists' Union meeting in Hobart, 1923. Sharland is third from right, back row; at far back is Robert Hall, and centre (moustached) is Leonard Rodway. (Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.)

23 *Mercury*, 5 July 1929, tells something of this.

24 *Mercury*, 9 June 1921.

a tad scornful, but took heed as the mate claimed that, for him, ‘the stones served as a kind of mirror ... that enabled him to look into infinity.’ Withal, birds ever had pride of place in Peregrine’s ‘Notes’. So formed this marvel of journalism that was to continue weekly for sixty years.

Winter 1921 saw Sharland in Sydney, confronting ‘tall buildings and taller chimneys, belching smoke as if they were connected with the Eternal Furnace.’²⁵ Back home he became owner of a ‘Klito’ folding camera, birds his chief target. One Warren Crane was chief companion in this work, and the pair combined to write a paper on Hobart’s birds for *The Emu*, journal of the Royal Australian Ornithologists’ Union.²⁶ A briefer Sharland contribution to *The Emu* in 1922 discussed magpie cannibalism. Further instruction in bird-lore came from Robert Hall, world-ranging adventurer and former Director of the Tasmanian Museum. Stan remembered the mess he made in the Halls’ kitchen during a joust with taxidermy.²⁷ (In time he was to own Hall’s collection of bird skins.²⁸) Important among activity for the Field Naturalists was fostering interest among schoolchildren, a work associated with the Gould League of Birdlovers and driven in the Education Department by GW Knight, fine person and father of the future Sir Allan.²⁹ Through the Nats, Stan argued for widespread planting of native trees, restriction on shooting of native game, and for Lake Dulverton to be a preserve for wild fowl.

Spring 1922 saw Sharland as a member of a team sponsored by ANZAAS that ventured to Lake Eyre.³⁰ Absence of rain frustrated the hydrologists, but our man found much delight and told of it, both in the *Sydney Mail* and in the journal of the Royal Colonial Institute.³¹ Next year he paid £20 for a camera (British Ensign Reflex, quarter-plate), his companion on many otherwise solitary bush forays. One early product of this research was a paper on the nesting habits of local birds, read when the Ornithologists’ Union held their annual congress in Hobart.³² The camera’s quality becomes evident in splendid photographs he took of snowfalls in National Park, in winter 1924. Soon followed six weeks in Queensland, a central purpose to attend that year’s congress of the Union, by then established as important in Sharland’s life. At home he spoke to the Royal Society on ‘Nomadic Birds’, and published on the subject in the Field Naturalists’ journal, *Tasmanian Naturalist*.

Major contributions to *Emu* in mid-decade discussed ‘Tasmania’s Indigenous Birds’ and ‘Haunts of the Heron’.³³ The former described thirteen species, accepting that they offered nothing extraordinary – but there they were. One remark concerned the speed with which the native hen could run, balancing its inability to fly. Ever conscious of bird-call, as any ornithologist must be, Sharland said that he found music even in the sooty cow-shrike’s ‘weird, unbirdlike noises’, for the sound ‘seems to harmonise with wintry conditions.’ The heron piece was most remarkable for telling how the author built a ‘hide’ (that is hiding tent) from which he could study the nest of a white-faced heron. There it appears, he spent ‘several hours three or four days a week’ during October and November, 1925. His research suggested that the usual egg-clutch was less than the five generally supposed and that Australian herons differed from European counterparts in actively seeking food (rather than waiting for it to come along). Accompanying

25 Australian Museum papers.

26 ‘Birds of Hobart’, *The Emu*, vol. 22, pp. 127–33; see too, p. 151 (magpies).

27 ‘Memories of Robert Hall’, *Australian bird watcher*, vol. 7, September 1978, pp. 222–8.

28 AOT, NS117/2. Letter to Australian Museum, 29 October 1974.

29 *Mercury*, 11 April 1981; AOT, NS689, FieldNats minutes; CEH Jenkins, *John Gould and the birds of Australia*, Gould League of Western Australia, Perth, 1983, pp. 45–6. Sharland helped Jenkins.

30 Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science.

31 Australian Museum papers; the *Mail* article appeared 15 November 1922; see, too, ‘The Mystery of the seven rivers’, *United Empire*, vol. 17, 1926, pp. 544–51.

32 *The Emu*, vol. 23, 1923, pp. 4–7.

33 *The Emu*, vol. 25, 1925, pp. 94–103; vol. 26, 1926, pp. 40–4.

photographs were probably the more excellent for the use of ‘super-speed Kodak film’ and a telephoto lens.

Stan now owned an ‘Indian’ motor-bike. Iris Kettlewell, who came to be his wife, was a frequent passenger. One result of these jaunts was the pair’s affection for the surrounds of Rokeby – ‘undulating fields, the curious old stone walls, the avenues of eucalypts ... most of all for the delicious mushrooms’.³⁴ Iris had been born in Hobart in 1905, the daughter of British migrants. Her father was a metalsmith, the family living near the school Iris attended – Goulburn Street. Alice Kettlewell appears as the stronger parent. In the early 1920s she had become tenant of *Melrose* in Hobart’s Hampden Road, formerly belonging to one-time Premier Sir James Wilson, but in 1918 acquired by the Commonwealth government for defence purposes.³⁵ Alice ran *Melrose* as a boarding house, and in 1923 became its owner; paying £500 towards the total cost of £3,500 – much money for any Tasmanian house in those days. The only record of the younger Iris was her appearance in amateur theatricals.³⁶ By 1925, it appears, Sharland was a *Melrose* boarder.

Courtship did not prevent Peregrine tripping to Lord Howe Island soon after he had written that praise of Rokeby, and in March 1927 he shifted to the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Around then, ‘Stan’ became ‘Michael’ for professional purposes. In Sydney he ‘soon found that ... work here was going to leave few opportunities for field observation,’ and that might have been why a year later he went to Melbourne – having some tie with the *Argus* there, but evidently not full-time, and probably always keeping liaison with the *SMH*.

Michael and Iris married at St David’s Cathedral, Hobart, on 14 March 1928. They settled in Melbourne and Iris shared in fieldwork, acknowledged by her husband in a paper on ‘Nesting Oddities’.³⁷ Sharland now met Tom Tregallas, a naturalist famed for his knowledge of lyrebirds. Superb photography resulted, wintry conditions helping:

Bright sunny days are far from suitable for photographing the Lyrebird for the sun causes either extremely dark shadows or unsightly light spots. On overcast, rainy days, the light is poor in quality, yet it has the great advantage of being even, and with a full exposure, it is surprising how bright the picture may be. Furthermore, the Lyrebird is at its best on these cold, wet days, for food seems more readily obtained, the singing and calling is carried on for many hours at a time, and the bird appears to lose much of its timidity and shyness.³⁸

The Sharlands could afford a car, and so have extended jaunts. In late 1929 a son, David, was born, and in January 1931 another, Douglas Roger Stanley. The family moved to Sydney early in 1932, Michael resuming with the *SMH*. Soon afterwards David died, while a daughter, Elizabeth, was born the next February.

In Sydney, Sharland extended his contacts, notably through the Ornithologists’ Union. A dramatic episode came at the Union’s 1933 camp, as Michael led a protest after one member shot a bird.³⁹ Friendships developed with such men as Keith Hindwood, charismatic personality and acute bird-observer, and AH Chisholm, a man of talents similar to Sharland’s, but yet more potent. Sharland’s two major contributions to *Emu* in the earlier 1930s, on the swamp-harrier and the black-throated grebe, both presented

34 Australian Museum papers.

35 The *Melrose* saga is best documented in National Australian Archives items, A6074:PO9396; A432:1937/1048, and P1325:7806341.

36 <http://images.statelibrary.tas.gov.au/Detail.asp?Letter=Z&Title=Zoe+Richardson+presents+...+Our+Miss+Gibbs&ID=AUTAS001125297929>.

37 *The Emu*, vol. 29, 1929, pp. 85–90.

38 *The Emu*, vol. 30, 1930, p. 91.

39 Robin, p. 102.

brilliant camera-work; in 1935 he received a certificate of merit from an exhibition of nature photography, sponsored by *Country Life* at the British Museum.⁴⁰

The Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales had interests overlapping those of the Ornithologists' Union, and Sharland served on its council from 1936. Hindwood was another Society activist, as were other notables like Neville Cayley and Tom Iredale. In yet further complement was the Gould League, Michael contributing an essay on 'the lyretail', to a handsome volume it published in 1935.⁴¹ All the while he sustained field observation, in both Victoria and New South Wales. One notable account was of the golden haired fantail-warbler, photographed at Curl Curl in December 1935.

As the light was directly against the camera, I had to stand off about 15 yards and reflect the light on to the nest and bird with the aid of a piece of old motorcar windscreen, which gave a nice quality illuminant, and not so harsh or glaring as a mirror. I 'collected' the disused nest, as it constituted a nice example of the habit of the bird to sew leaves about the structure, piercing the green matter with its bill and using cobweb for thread.⁴²

Peregrine's essays shifted to the *Mercury* after the *Mail* ceased in June 1935. A sample shows botany and history more prominent than before.⁴³ Sharland wrote similar pieces for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, beyond general reporting.⁴⁴

Apart from 'Peregrine's' work, the most interesting Tasmanian reference from these years concerns the tiger. A State government agency, the Animals and Birds Protection Board, in late 1938 sent an expedition to the Jane River district to search for survivors. Sharland joined, and wrote a splendid account, with photographs.⁴⁵ The party heard stories, took casts of footprints, but made no sightings. Sharland urged reservations in the area. His essay also told of the life of 'lonely bushmen'; among them piners of whom he wrote especially well, not only on this occasion.⁴⁶

On war's advent in September 1939, Sharland remarked that in grim times humanity had all the greater need to draw succour from nature. A few months later he and his family returned to Hobart and the *Mercury*. The move is a touch puzzling: Michael had found many positives in mainland life, and the *Mercury* pay could not have been bountiful. Perhaps the answer lay in distaff matters. Mrs Kettlewell, widowed since 1929 and by now a dealer in quality furniture, still owed the Commonwealth £2,000 on *Melrose*; and resumption threatened. 'Melrose' became the Sharlands' home (and in 1947 Mrs Kettlewell made the final payment).

By May 1941 Sharland was secretary of the FieldNats, and enlivening them.⁴⁷ He led the Club's successful opposition to proposals for foxes to be imported into Tasmania, fur-farming the intent. His annual report deplored the shrinking of local bird-life. To check that, authority should enforce rules about shooting, while native tree-planting should proceed everywhere. 'Imported trees attract only imported birds.'

Early the following year this 42-year-old father of two young children joined the RAAF.⁴⁸ Probably he hoped for aerial adventure. Tests approved the recruit's intelligence, but not his 'practical aptitude' nor capacity for routine! He fell just short of 68 inches tall, with chest expansion from 36 to 38. His service was spent as a photographer, within

40 *The Emu*, vol. 32, 1932, pp. 97–100 (swamp-harrier); vol. 36, 1936, pp. 354–6; AOT, NS1179/44 (certificate).

41 *Feathered friends*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney.

42 AOT, NS1179/30 and 31 (fantail-warbler).

43 AOT, NS1179/36. Here too is his response to the coming of war.

44 AOT, NS1179/2, Letter to Brian Plomley, 26 November 1982. This responded to the recipient's seeking biographical information, the request itself a point of interest, and unexplained.

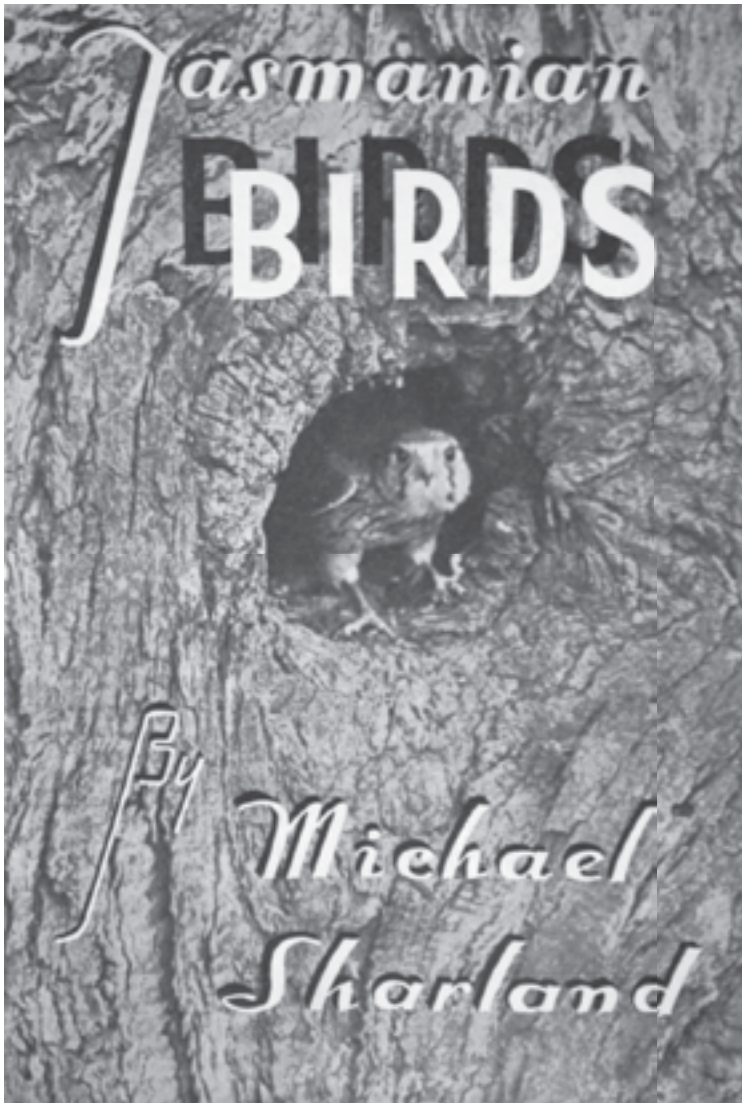
45 'In search of the thylacine', *Proceedings of the Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales, 1938–39*, pp. 29–38; see ER Guiler, *Thylacine: The tragedy of the Tasmanian tiger*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1985, p. 139.

46 See further, for example, *Mercury*, 5 August 1939.

47 AOT, NS689.

48 National Australian Archives, A9301:4587176. At this point the Australian Museum papers return to relevance.

Australia save for a brief period in New Guinea, in early 1943. When communication breakdown threatened to silence ‘Peregrine’, Iris cobbled homeward letters to fill the gap – although her chief war-related activity was leadership of the local ‘Servicemen’s Parents and Wives Association’.⁴⁹ Sharland tried for commissioned rank but in the event stayed a corporal. His service highlight was making a film in North Queensland that showed how to live off the land. Otherwise most time passed at Richmond, New South Wales. The corporal was not kept too busy. ‘This was one of my “work days”’, went one diary entry, ‘... bird observation, unfortunately, taking a secondary place.’ His ‘hide’ once attracted suspicion of being a spy-den.⁵⁰



Cover, *Tasmanian birds*, original edition, 1945. (State Library of Tasmania)

49 *Mercury*, 17 April 2004; AOT, NS1179/63–8.

50 *Birds of the sun*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1967, p. 70.

Many a night at Richmond, while his peers relaxed, Sharland would go off to a hanger and write what became *Tasmanian birds*: published in 1945.⁵¹ By then he had returned to the *Mercury*, and it was there that *Birds* was printed, with distribution by Hobart bookshop, OBMs. The cover-photo showed a nankeen petrel, gazing from its nest in a tree-hollow, and other such photographs followed. This was ‘a book for the bush’, its title-page told, aimed at ‘cultivating public appreciation of native birds, and recognition of the need for appropriate conservation’. Modest in size, it yet offered much about marks, calls, sightings, and prevalence. Some citations were esoteric, while the local co-enthusiast to win most reference was Jane Fletcher of Eaglehawk Neck. Occasional entries have more the style of ‘Peregrine’ than of a field-manual, such as that for the flame robin:

an attractive picture is presented by flocks of these birds in the fields and paddocks during Winter when they move out of the forests and down from the hills; the red breasts of the males contrast pleasantly with the green pastures, lichen-covered fences, and dark stone walls.⁵²

Another war-time writing told of the effective introduction, beginning in 1934, of the lyrebird to Tasmania.⁵³

Soon Sharland shifted again, in 1947 becoming Secretary of the Scenery Preservation Board.⁵⁴ Created by statute in 1915, the Board oversaw reserves established by government – most importantly National Park/Mount Field, Cradle Mountain; Mount Barrow, Frenchman Cap; and Freycinet Peninsula. Sharland’s further title was ‘Superintendent of Reserves’. Since 1945 the Port Arthur complex also came under the Board, as too some other historic sites. The Board was situated within the Lands Department, and chaired by its head, the Surveyor-General. Board members represented interest groups, including the key bureaucratic ones – forestry, tourism, the Hydro-Electric Commission. Lay influence had stronger effect through ‘subsidiary boards’ that attended to the major reserves. All proceeded on scant funding, most spent on the salaries of rangers. In retrospect all seems thin, even doomed. Yet wheels kept turning.

Creation of the post of Secretary-Superintendent, and inclusion of Port Arthur within its orbit, promised a brighter chapter in the Board’s history. Surely this was why Sharland took the job. At £629, the new salary was modest,⁵⁵ and the survival of ‘Peregrine’s’ weekly notes shows there had been no rift with the *Mercury*. A pertinent expression of Michael’s ideals had come in August 1945, as he joined with other super-citizens to urge cherishing of Hobart’s amenity.⁵⁶ This occasion, and indeed the whole Scenery Board episode, belonged to contemporary growth in historical awareness, a subject of splendid analysis by Stefan Petrow.⁵⁷

Through the near-fourteen years he spent with the Board, Sharland won most success in relation to ‘the built environment’. Central in this story was his persuading the Board to acquire *Entally* homestead and develop it as a showpiece of colonial life.⁵⁸ While plans were brewing, distinguished Melbourne architect Brian Lewis called for

51 DG Hird, ‘Michael Sharland’s *Tasmanian birds*’, *Tasmanian Naturalist*, April 1987.

52 *Tasmanian birds: how to identify them*, Oldham, Beddome & Meredith, Hobart, 1945, p. 86.

53 *The Emu*, vol. 44, 1944, pp. 64–71.

54 In finding my way through the Scenery Preservation Board story I follow G Castles ‘Handcuffed volunteers: a history of the Scenery Preservation Board in Tasmania 1915–1971’, Honours thesis, University of Tasmania, 1986; and JG Mosley, ‘Aspects of the geography of recreation in Tasmania’, doctoral thesis, Australian National University, 1963; copy held in Morris Miller Library, University of Tasmania.

55 AOT, PSC35/13.

56 *Mercury*, 9 August 1945.

57 ‘Conservative and reverent souls: the growth of historical consciousness in Tasmania 1935–60’, *Public History Review*, vol. 11, 2004, pp. 131–60.

58 AOT, AA264, these minutes of the Board being essential for the following section. Next in importance are the Board’s annual reports, up to 1954–55 published as part of the Lands Department reports, available as Parliamentary Papers, and thereafter separately issued.

establishment of a National Trust to protect Tasmania's fine buildings. Sharland responded that the Scenery Board had this function, and indeed he had already boosted *Entally* as a 'National House'. After Parliament granted £10,000, in December 1949, *Entally* took its long-continuing place among Tasmanian sights.⁵⁹ The Secretary's personal force was nowhere else so decisive as with *Entally*, but still shaped similar work apropos Port Arthur, the Richmond gaol and Taroona shot-tower. He later claimed to have saved *Narryna* from destruction, and certainly urged development of a folk museum in September 1951.⁶⁰

A further complement, albeit in different mode was for Sharland in 1952 to publish his *Stones of a century*.⁶¹ While having its precursors, this book has a high place in developing consciousness of the island's past, especially apropos buildings. Pride in that heritage might cross all classes, Sharland argued; Tasmanians should feel no ignominy at their home-place being so deeply impressed by history. He presented the pioneers in heroic terms, and gave grand country houses a large part. Yet his scope was much wider – embracing churches, inns, cottages, roads, bridges, barns, mills, follies, walls. Hobart has its full place, the author speaking of his delight in night-time rambles through the town's older parts. Sharland later affirmed that *Stones* was intended to modify the centrality of convictism in Tasmania's image.⁶² Other purposes were exposition of the Scenery Board's work and urging further action, both public and personal, in the heritage cause. His camera provided many illustrations. Clifford Craig, who assisted with *Entally*, introduced the book. Its dedication was 'To the Memory of My Mother', she having died recently.

Stones won much applause.⁶³ When Clive Turnbull gave his praise in *THRA Papers*, Sharland told Robert Sharman of his pleasure, and wished our fledgling Association well.⁶⁴ Of similar style were Robin Boyd's compliments in the *Melbourne Age*. Karl von Stieglitz, Thomas Dunbabin and twenty-plus others wrote their congratulations. National Librarian, Harold White, reported that the book was among eighteen nominated by his institution for possible display by Britain's National Book League. Perhaps Sharland found comfort in re-reading these items as his role with the Scenery Board became ever more troubled.

A downside prevailed even in relation to 'the built environment'. *Entally* always had its difficulties – arising from staff, furnishing, maintenance, fluctuating visitor attendance, and more. Plans for a counterpart 'National House' in southern Tasmania, *Secheron* and *Timsbury* being chief candidates, came to naught. So did hopes for an official list of buildings that should be preserved, and for securing government aid towards their upkeep.

Several elements combined to create greater disaster for the Secretary-Superintendent. One was friction with those subsidiary boards that oversaw the major reserves and Port Arthur. Comprising voluntary enthusiasts, they often resisted such control as Sharland attempted, especially in directing the rangers. Michael stressed this situation in an exit interview from the service, suggesting his hurt at quarrelling with people who should have been allies.⁶⁵ Not that hostility failed to come from his natural foes – 'developmental' forces represented on the Scenery Board. In pertinent background stood the Board's vain resistance, between 1945 and 1959, to Australian

59 T Jetson, *In trust for the nation*, National Trust, Launceston, 2000, especially pp. 7–8.

60 *Oddity and elegance*, p. 32 (claim); *Mercury* office file (folk museum). I am most grateful for being granted access to this file.

61 *Stones of a century*, Oldham, Beddome & Meredith, Hobart. A second edition, 1969, had but minimal changes.

62 AOT, 1179/3, Letter to Max Bourke, 12 July 1982.

63 AOT, NS1179/10.

64 *Papers and Proceedings*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1952, pp. 14–16.

65 AOT, PSC5/29, in association with AA264 crucial for the following. For the Glover episode see minutes of 19 March and 5 May 1954. Simon Kleinig has helped me in these matters.

Newsprint Mills being granted timber rights over a large section of National Park. The Forestry Commission approved the ANM concession, and Sharland's chief antagonist came to be Forestry's spokesman, Harold Payne. Hydro's Allan Knight was initially more sympathetic, but came to deplore the Board's financial management. Other friction arose from matters of bureaucratic protocol. In earlier years this was most evident vis-à-vis the Public Service Board, Surveyor-General Colin Pitt admitting in 1951 that 'Mr Sharland has been dilatory on several occasions while on leave, but his services have been very satisfactory.' By decade's end the Surveyor-General was Frank Miles, and in July 1958 his troubles with Sharland caused the Public Service Board to adjudicate:

Mr Miles feels that Mr Sharland does not comply with departmental procedures and that he makes no effort to keep him ... informed of the activities of the Section. His failure to keep him informed of his movements has caused Mr Miles to have grave doubts as to whether he devotes the whole of his time away from the office to official business ... The Superintendent feels the Head has no real interest or understanding of the work of the Section.⁶⁶

Sharland was now under more pressure as, in 1957 at the Scenery Board's behest, Parliament had passed an Act giving the Board control over roadside signage and advertising. In the event, this piled administrative horrors on the Secretary's desk.

While the victim of an impossible situation, Sharland appears to have been deficient as a bureaucrat. It stands against the Secretary that in some years the sums allocated to the Board – all too modest posterity might think – were not fully used. One possible expenditure was £350 for two large paintings by John Glover, offered from Britain; on Clifford Craig's advice the Board stopped at £200, and negotiations ended. When, in 1958, the Board was granted another bureaucrat especially to look after accounts, Sharland saw this as insult rather than help. Whether or not misusing Board time, he certainly had long periods of unpaid leave, which must have disrupted administration. Three months thus passed in 1948, and six in both 1951 and 1954, travel to Britain occurring on each of the latter occasions.

Other activities away from the Board offered pleasure and achievement. Michael found solace in a 'Cabin in the mountains'.

I like it best when I am the only occupant, and can watch the animal life that comes to the door without being disturbed or listen to the songs of birds in the enclosing forest, chop my firewood from fallen pines, cook my meals and eat them at the door while watching the fading sun painting the tops of mountains opposite before dusk sets in.⁶⁷

Not all was so private. The FieldNats retained Sharland's devotion, he serving as President from 1945 to 1948 (and again in 1955 and 1958), probably the Club's peak years. One active member was Professor Charles King, THRA's foundation chairman. King attended the camp at Wilmot Harbour, Easter 1948, and when all had hiked to the Tasman monument, he read pertinent extracts from the discoverer's journal.⁶⁸ Work for the local Gould League returned as part of Sharland's round. Now, too, he became honorary ornithologist at the Tasmanian Museum, and member of Hobart's 'Biology Club', comprised chiefly of academic and professional people.

National standing came with a term as President of the Ornithologists' Union from 1949 to 1951. In that office Sharland affirmed that:

66 *Papers and Proceedings*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1952, pp. 14–16

67 *Wild Life*, vol. 11, 1949, pp. 555–60.

68 'Field naturalists' camp', *Tasmanian Naturalist*, vol. 1, no. 3, May 1948, p. 22.

most of our members are less deeply interested in the science of ornithology than in field studies, and *The Emu* must retain its appeal to this general body of readers, while educating them in more academic matters.⁶⁹

These words hinted at tensions that were to strengthen. The presidential address further called for united effort 'to help conserve the diminishing bird life of the nation'; one means being to stress birds' economic value, especially as insect-eaters. In mid-decade Michael became a Fellow of the NSW Zoological Society, an honour he prized.

The leave that Sharland received for June to September 1948 had enabled him to join an Australian Geographic Society expedition to the Kimberleys, Western Australia, Arthur Upfield its leader. Michael's £10 a week contract required him to compile descriptive material with both pen and camera.⁷⁰ It duly appeared in *Walkabout*, then Australia's chief medium of interest in the natural world. Sharland placed some Tasmaniana with *Walkabout*, most interestingly, 'Symbols of an Extinct Race'.⁷¹ This addressed discovery of possible aboriginal carvings on the Blue Tiers. 'The early Tasmanians were elevated by only a small margin of mental development from the wild animals they hunted,' wrote Sharland, arguing that such primitivism made their study all the richer. He dismissed surmise that Chinese miners made the carvings, but thought that an earlier Aboriginal race might have. 'Was this then, a ceremonial ground or tribal boundary line, deep in the primeval forest behind the façade of which strange rites were practised?' The next year came a new edition of *Tasmanian birds*.⁷² Edmund Hillary's return visit to Tasmania in 1960 prompted a fine article on his interest in the tiger and its possible survival.⁷³

During the fifties Sharland applied for various jobs, but in vain, and escape from the Scenery Board came through his wife. In recent years she had been active with the Red Cross, especially at the Royal Hobart Hospital, and in early 1961, became the organisation's agent in the Northern Territory.⁷⁴ At £2,000 the salary was almost that then earned by Michael. His notice of resignation in mid-March prompted a message of 'extreme regret' from Eric Reece.⁷⁵ Applauding Sharland's work for *Entally* and Port Arthur, the Premier hoped that he might reconsider. Instead, the couple were in Darwin by month's end.

Iris worked with characteristic efficiency, providing welfare at various institutions throughout the Territory and helping younger women, recently arrived and distraught. Michael paid part of his matrimonial debt, as he 'drove the car, fixed the camp, cooked the outdoor meals'.⁷⁶ Journalist activity included work for the Australian Broadcasting Commission, but of course his chief concern was bird-life.

Wood-swallows, birds of prey, parrots, honeyeaters, ground-feeding pigeons, finches and ducks and related waterfowl offer in amazing abundance. ... There are spectacular gatherings of predatory kites, ibis, and egrets. The monsoonal scrubs hold numbers of sweet-singing whistlers and fly-catchers, and tidal flats produce the melodious whistling of waders. The inland yields its gems in high-coloured chats and chattering nectar-parrots that flash their tinted raiment among scrub and forest trees. ... At daybreak every bird sings.⁷⁷

69 *The Emu*, vol. 52, 1952, pp. 194–8.

70 AOT, NS1179/18. Consequent articles are in *Walkabout*, January, February, March April, May, June, and August 1949, and February and April 1950

71 *Walkabout*, 1 October 1957.

72 *Tasmanian birds: a field guide to the birds inhabiting Tasmania and adjacent islands, including the sea birds*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1958.

73 'Hunting the Thylacine', *Hemisphere*, vol. 4, no. 5, May 1960, pp. 7–11.

74 File graciously made available by Red Cross Office, Melbourne.

75 AOT, NS1179/69.

76 *Birds of the sun*, p. 40.

77 *A territory of birds*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1964, p. 26.



Iris Sharland and a termite mound in the Northern Territory.
(from *A territory of birds*. Photo: Michael Sharland.)

That was a keynote from *A territory of birds*, duly published in 1964. 'It is difficult in a short notice to give some idea of the quality of this quietly impressive book', declared the *Times Literary Supplement*; 'the photographs are every bit as good as the prose'. Professional zoologist DL Serventy judged it 'pleasant reading' rather than 'an informed reference work', but granted that 'Sharland manages to impart many important biological generalisations'.⁷⁸ The author lamented that his publishers cut the text by a third, and inserted linking passages that had 'howlers'.⁷⁹

In the Territory as at home Sharland called for conservation, bewailing destruction of native trees and remarking that rice-growing at Humpty Doo cost much, while disrupting avian patterns. Aboriginals disappointed him in plundering nature; they were so "'civilised" and dependent on Government benevolence that they have forgotten the old tribal arts and customs.' Mankind otherwise came within Sharland's purview. Darwin 'is full of innuendos,' he wrote, 'narrow, poorly lighted lanes, ... taverns where stockmen gather and Orientals huddle over some mysterious gambling game.' A hospital patient served by Iris had worked at Elsey station in Mrs Aeneas Gunn's day.

This Northern Territory chapter ended with the death of Alice Kettlewell in March 1962, the couple returning to Hobart to settle her estate. Valued above £10,000, it went equally between Iris and her sister.⁸⁰ *Melrose* remained the Sharlands' home until a late-1965 shift to nearby Erina Place. Far from Michael moving into slothful ease, his interests burgeoned. He made six trips overseas between 1960 and 1977⁸¹ – to Europe, United States, West Indies, South America, Canada (where both children lived in the 1960s, although Elizabeth was later to reside chiefly in the United States, Roger in Britain). While away he had sometimes to compose 'Peregrine' pieces on coin-in-slot typewriters, a gadget otherwise unknown to this historian.⁸² The impetus behind their travelling, wrote Sharland, was that Tasmania offered relatively little to his and Iris's dominant interests – birds and railways.⁸³ Such touring challenged finances. In response, Michael established an advertising agency, and sought various jobs. His many publications also raised money, although less than the effort they demanded. He surely wrote for the sake of it.

The first book from this period was not *Territory of birds*, but *Tasmanian wild life*, published in 1962 by Melbourne University Press; in both hardback and paper, the run approached 2,600.⁸⁴ Dedication was 'To my wife, Iris, who so often stayed at home.' Pride of place went to the tiger and the devil. Sharland told well of the early hunting of the tiger, and of latter-day efforts to discover survivors. The devil, he warned, might also face extinction.

Steps must be taken to prevent, or at least postpone the day when we may be forced to admit that yet another of the world's most primitive carnivorous marsupials has been added to the list of lost animals.⁸⁵

Sharland wrote of mice, bats, and snakes, as well as more obvious species. One of his rare attacks on any creature smote the introduced rat.

Oddity and elegance, 1966, was somewhat like *Stones of a century*. A fine piece about mills reached its peak in telling of the use of tidal power near Spreyton. Having like value was an essay on changing modes of water transport. Passages about the east coast gave the best regional picture. Sharland paid honour to Louisa Anne Meredith, suggesting

78 AOT, NS1179/1.

79 AOT, NS1179/1, Letter, 10 May 1964.

80 AOT, AD960/94.

81 Autobiographical notes, *Mercury* office file.

82 AOT, NS1179/2, Letter to Plomley.

83 AOT, NS1179/19.

84 AOT, NS1179/1.

85 *Tasmanian wild life: a popular account of the furred land mammals, snakes and introduced mammals of Tasmania*, Melbourne University Press, Parkville, 1962, p. 18.

that she confirmed HD Thoreau's dictum, 'that genius is essentially feminist'.⁸⁶ Apropos Hobart, the book scarcely escaped the obvious, claiming that recent years had seen loss of its quality as:

a city of mellowed charm, with a character of its own, its streets lined with gracious buildings, its people aware of the links with its exciting past, and proud of them.⁸⁷

Our beaver's next work, written in 1966–67, was a double-header – surveys of Hobart and Tasmania, intended mainly for the tourist market and commissioned by the Australian offshoot of American publisher, Doubleday. The books' tone was more upbeat than, say, relevant passages in *Oddity and elegance*. Modernity had enlivened the capital:

old and new are so interwoven that the picture must be studied as a whole, the varying degrees of antiquity counterbalancing the enlightened principles of modern times, which together bring a peculiar fascination.⁸⁸

One doubts if Sharland believed this, and certainly his happier passages were those telling about the 'old'. Even more distant from his values was praise for hydro-electric power: 'Nature has made Tasmania an ideal generating station.' Further glories were the climate and scenery, while all traces of the convict past had gone. Intra-island regionalism made for strength, while overall, residents proudly thought of themselves as 'Tasmanians' rather than 'Australians'. A nice touch invoked Hobart's 'waterside aromas', notably 'the sweet, fresh smell of raspberries' as they became jam. Michael put some sour in the mix. Now he affirmed that Aboriginals 'were treated like wild animals, ... in time exterminated by the invaders.' The island's night life and accommodation were modest, while enthusiasm for sport contrasted with meagre interest in theatre or other culture.⁸⁹

Sharland must have been happier with *Birds of the sun*, 1967.⁹⁰ His introduction celebrated the amity of bird-watchers, and told that he had used an old-fashioned 'stand' camera:

there is something more relevant, more appealing, about a picture of a bird taken with a lens optically suitable to the environment in which you find it, or as the eye really sees it.

A reader's report had enthused over the visual material, while finding the text 'padded', but the published text has only a little trace of that.⁹¹ Sharland drew material from a recent trip to North Queensland, and linked this with Northern Territory data. The book ranged widely in space and time. Speculation arose on such matters as whether the mallee fowl *did* neglect its young; birds were not like that, and perhaps the apparent negligence was a survival mechanism. Of different order was the claim that 'rocks are alive; they are elastic, and bounce and grow and smell.' Tasmania dominated the book's later pages, including vignettes of Bert Fergusson, bushman and Scenery Board ranger, and 'Taffy [Huxley] the bee man', likewise rich in nature's lore.

Sharland had appropriate links with Tasmania's National Trust, established in 1960 by Clifford Craig and other enthusiasts. In 1968–69 he wrote a competent sketch about the Trust's jewel in southern Tasmania, *Runnymede*.⁹² When his draft called the place 'Victorian', Craig asked for change to 'Georgian': 'we would not have taken it over

86 *Oddity and elegance*, p. 101.

87 *Oddity and elegance*, p. 21.

88 *Hobart*, Nelson Doubleday (Australia), Sydney, 1967, p. 19 ('old and new').

89 *Hobart*, p. 47 (culture), p. 12 (raspberries); *Tasmania*, Nelson Doubleday (Australia), Sydney, 1966, p. 9 (generating station), p. 53 (Aboriginals).

90 *Birds of the sun*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney; p. xiv (camera), p. 161 (rocks).

91 AOT, NS1179/1.

92 *The history of Runnymede*, National Trust, Hobart, 1969; see too NS1179/4.

if it had been a “Victorian” home.’ Evidently this work, like some other for the Trust, was done for free.

‘Peregrine’s’ golden jubilee in 1971 had due celebration in the *Mercury*. An autobiographical piece presented a conservation creed: ‘we have no right to hand on a riddled, raped and ravished planet.’⁹³ Further, the *Mercury* now published *A Pocketful of nature*, comprising 24 of ‘Peregrine’s’ more recent essays. They ranged into reminiscence and history. Michael’s readiness to speculate led him to ponder if birds might yet evolve further: ‘the spurs on the wings of the plover and some other birds, if not used for defence, could develop into claspers.’⁹⁴ Vegetation, insects, animals, water, and weather all crammed the *Pocketful*. References show that, as from earliest days, ‘Peregrine’ related with his correspondents, answering their queries and using material they provided. The book sold bounteously.⁹⁵ One indicative appreciation came from Alice Elliott, a community worker rather like Iris Sharland but on a bigger scale, sister of Charles King, and married into a family that had been crucial throughout the FieldNats’ history.⁹⁶ Warmest among other admirers was Kelsey Aves, Hobart optometrist of culture and virtue.

Neither coldly scientific nor anthropomorphic his weekly articles have sustained the attention of the naturalist of wide interests, the man in the street, and the expert ornithologist – for this is Michael Sharland – a quiet and patient observer, an outstanding photographer, conservationist and journalist who sees into the hearts of men and nature.⁹⁷

Making 1971 yet more remarkable was publication of a commissioned history of East Loddon Shire, north-central Victoria.⁹⁸ This was of different order than Sharland’s previous oeuvre. It had some flaws – there was padding, and scissors-and-paste, and indulgence of particular interests (birds most obviously); farming had to be glorified in a way that contradicted young Stan’s life-changing insight at Kearney’s Bogs. Yet the work has substance. Especially notable was grasp of how water usage dominated the local economy and politics – and individual fortunes. Sharland also noticed that settlers clustered by their place of British origin. He used some academic literature, such as Serle’s *Golden age* and Buxton’s *Riverina*.

Sharland’s writing of the time regularly invoked conservation, and he otherwise pursued that cause. He became distressed by ‘development’ in south-west Tasmania, first as it affected Lake Pedder, then the Gordon River.⁹⁹ The Queensland trip of 1966 led to a plea to that state’s government for a fauna reserve in Cape York Peninsula.¹⁰⁰ After the local bushfires of 7 February 1967 Michael urged a campaign against all slaughter of animals, and next year he deplored oil-drilling off Gippsland as a threat to birds.¹⁰¹ His efforts helped in securing a ‘reserve’ at the Steppes, near Bothwell.¹⁰²

In 1968 Sharland’s persistent job-seeking included application as Director of the Australian Conservation Foundation.¹⁰³ This indicates loss of judgment, a story that might have extended. In 1971 the Scenery Board gave way to the National Parks and

93 4 April 1971.

94 *A pocketful of nature*, p. 22.

95 *Mercury*, 26 February 1972.

96 AOT, NS1179/2, 4 April 1971; A Rand, ‘Elliott, Alice Gordon’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 14, 1996, pp. 90–1.

97 *Tasmanian Naturalist*, May 1971 (Sharland’s membership of the South-West Committee).

98 *These verdant plains*, Hawthorn Press, Melbourne, 1971.

99 AOT, NS1179/1; *Tasmanian Naturalist*, February 1966.

100 AOT, NS1179/12, Letter from Queensland Government, 7 November 1966.

101 AOT, NS1179/38; *Mercury*, 18 February 1967; AOT, NS1179/1, letters to Wildlife Preservation Society and Zoological Society of NSW, December 1968.

102 AOT, NS1179/1, various letters.

103 AOT, Letter, NS1179/1, 17 June 1968. He sought two other jobs that day.

Wildlife Service. Sharland's next book, *Tasmanian National Parks*, aimed to reveal 'the true extent of Tasmania's heritage' and called for its survival.¹⁰⁴ Hypothesis goes that Michael hoped to become foundation Director of National Parks and Wildlife Service.¹⁰⁵ Was *National Parks* not only a pleasant and informing read, but originally meant to foster its author's claim for appointment? If so, the ploy failed, for by publication-time (1972) the Service existed, led by Peter Murrell.

In 1973 Sharland published a brief history of the Cascades Brewery,¹⁰⁶ and around this time he wrote about old pubs for the local *Hotel Review*. Forays into the past ever had their place in 'Peregrine' columns, and in a further series, 'They Made History' in the *Saturday Evening Mercury*. From this source came *Once upon a time: some Tasmanian tales*, 1976. 'The trade' had its place here too, one splendid essay being about 'Cooleys' at Moonah, with stress on the hotel's coaching service, and its centrality to the sporting world. Trotting at the Ascot course, cricket, cycling and show-jumping were like topics. (No mention went to tennis, Michael's own favourite.) Here came that reminiscence of Haywood's factory, while another featured entrepreneur was penguin-boiler, Joseph Hatch. Early hydro-electric works and the building of the Queenstown road proved further rich subjects, the latter especially strong in appreciating navvies and their women.

In 1971 was established the Bird Observers' Association of Tasmania, and its *Tasmanian Bird Report*. Sharland joined and contributed, the more interestingly as the Association had an academic style. In these years the Ornithologists' Union was alienating him by adopting such abstruse scientism as his 1951 presidential address had protested.¹⁰⁷ Another coolness was with the National Parks Service, their relationship (he duly said) comprising mutual 'disregard',¹⁰⁸ a *Mercury* photograph of him with Peter Murrell shows both men trying to smile, scarcely succeeding.¹⁰⁹ Life's supreme tie endured, fifty years of marriage being reached in March 1978. Iris was reported to have read all her husband's words.¹¹⁰ Some years before, she had spoken of the excitement of being wed to an ornithologist – 'there is seldom a dull moment, even on a half-day excursion.'¹¹¹

'To Iris, who so frequently carried the cameras' ran the dedication of *Tracks of the morning*, published by the *Mercury* in 1981 to mark another decade of 'Peregrine'.¹¹² These essays touched many erstwhile interests – birds, bush huts, mills, fences. More novel was musing on the 'sound of nothing', a mysterious whatever that Michael heard in the bush. Conservationist themes began with lament of the television towers on Mount Wellington as 'typically Tasmanian vandalism', and continued with an attack on the Hydro for having 'grabbed every bit of water it can'; if the world were to become dryer, as some were forecasting, conflict over water-use would intensify. Wood-chipping also was condemned, for threatening the ecology on which especially small animals depended. Some might find it paradoxical that 'Peregrine' praised gum-tree bark as incomparably good kindling, and boasted that he had ever lived with open fires.

Also appearing in 1981 was a new version of *Birds of Tasmania*.¹¹³ It described 290 species, 108 illustrated – not by Sharland's photography, but by the hand of Jane Burrell; she tells of Michael as 'a real gentleman, easy to work with and obviously dedicated'.¹¹⁴ From another quarter rang a different note. 'An attractive little book which

104 *Tasmanian National Parks*, The Mercury, Hobart, 1972, p. 3.

105 Frank Bolt has proposed this possibility. I thank him for his advice.

106 *The Cascade story*, Cascade Brewery, Hobart, 1973; AOT, NS1179/21 for *Hotel Review*.

107 AOT, NS1179/3.

108 AOT, NS1179/2, Letter to J Whinray, 28 February 1980; *Mercury*, 13 August 1981 (photograph).

109 13 August 1981.

110 *Mercury*, 16 March 1978.

111 AOT, NS1179/62.

112 *Tracks of the morning*, p. 37–9 (sound of nothing), p. 47 (vandalism), and p. 55 (hydro).

113 *A guide to the birds of Tasmania*, Drinkwater Publishing, Hobart, 1981.

114 Email to M Roe from Jane Burrell.

will interest the casual bird lover,' went *Tasmanian Naturalist's* review; 'it is not an accurate or authoritative reference for the student of Tasmanian ornithology.' That the author, David Rounsevell, hailed from National Parks flavours the episode. His words must have hurt, notwithstanding Sharland's scorn for ultra-academic modes. The criticism had some force: even a layman can notice the difference in sophistication between this book and, say, the contemporary work on Tasmanian ornithology by RH Green.¹¹⁵ Withal, the review seems sour and awry.¹¹⁶

Another book came in 1983, *Vintage railways*.¹¹⁷ As remarked above, Michael declared railways to be an interest second only to birds. His earlier writing scarcely reflected that, although the childhood memory of steam-driven farm machinery is apropos. One of his coups at the Scenery Board was securing the mighty beam engine now situated outside Hobart's TAFE building.¹¹⁸ *Vintage railways* offers some interesting anecdotes and comments, but photographs bested the text. This proved our man's final book, although projects ever remained.

Earlier Sharland had corresponded with Max Bourke, then Director of the Australian Heritage Commission, who asked as to the purpose behind *Stones of a century*. 'I am sure,' wrote Bourke, 'that book, and other activities of your Board played a major role in developing the conservation consciousness of many Australians.'¹¹⁹ This cause remained important to the veteran. He congratulated Robert Hawke's government for stopping the Franklin dam, and decried high-rise buildings on Hobart's waterfront.¹²⁰ While 'Peregrine' ended in 1981, similar Sharland journalism continued. A piece for *Islander*, a *Mercury* offshoot, scorned 'the old egotistical belief that humans are superior beings and that the world was made for them'; every form of life was precious and irreplaceable.¹²¹ On 6 June 1986, *Islander* presented Michael's account of the Wilson family of the Steppes. This appears to have been his last publication, although *Tasmanian Bird Report* for 1987 records his sighting a white-headed petrel at Prion Beach the previous April.

In early 1984 the Sharlands had considered migrating to Rarotonga!¹²² Such was all the stranger as by then Iris suffered ill-health. The next year she entered St Ann's, Hobart. Late in 1986 her husband followed, a report of this also telling that overall he



Cartoon of Michael Sharland by Kevin Bailey. (Reproduced with his gracious permission.)

115 *Birds of Tasmania*, 1959, 1977, 1989.

116 For pertinent comment, I am grateful to Gillian Lord – writer of the only ornithological item ever published by THRA, 'The history of ornithology in Tasmania', *Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Papers and Proceedings*, vol. 33, no. 3, 1986, pp. 87–102.

117 *Mercury* Walch, Hobart.

118 AOT, NS1179/2.

119 AOT, NS1179/2, 2 September 1982.

120 AOT, NS1179/2, Letters to Prime Minister, 11 April 1983; to 'The Editor', undated.

121 24 November 1985.

122 AOT, NS1179/2, Letter to government of Rarotonga, 24 January 1984.

admired new-style radical conservationists.¹²³ That December, Ronald Strahan, Director of the Australian Museum, applauded the man and his work.¹²⁴ Years before Michael had donated his notable collection of vintage cameras to what has become the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, and now many papers and photographs went to the Australian Museum.¹²⁵

Death came 11 February 1987, with burial at St Luke's, Campbell Town, marking Sharland's sentiment for that place. A service followed at St Georges, Battery Point, with both Roger and Elizabeth there. 'Twinkling eyes, dry wit' were invoked among Michael's characteristics.¹²⁶ Some weeks later, *Mercury* writer Mike Moore added:

Arrogance was not part of his nature. He knew his worth, and was aware of the contribution he had made ... he possessed the kind of open honesty one would expect to find in a person so appreciative of the works of nature.¹²⁷

Moore referred to Michael having told his daughter that an area close to the Steppes reserve, and given by the Wilson family to the State, 'would make a nice Sharland Nature Reserve'. Doubtless Elizabeth Sharland was prompting Moore, and the pertinent Minister promised action, but Michael's wish was not fulfilled. So, too, failed Elizabeth's hope that the Tasmanian Museum recognise her father.¹²⁸

Iris died on 19 July 1988, duly noted for her philanthropic work. Her estate had scarcely more value than the legacy from her mother.¹²⁹ Michael, that is to suggest, left little mundane, much aloft. Both Sharland parents were joined in the dedication of Elizabeth's 1997 book, *From Shakespeare to Coward ... a guide to historical theatrical London*.¹³⁰ Elizabeth already had written of her fascination with theatre, beginning in Hobart.¹³¹ That complements the one shard of knowledge about young Iris Kettlewell. *Shakespeare to Coward* linked further to that story, while Michael's ghost must have approved its concern with historic sites. Elizabeth still keeps her theatrical ties, and Roger an involvement with photography.¹³² Failure to meet the promise of that memorial reserve was somewhat redeemed, in 2003, with the naming as 'Sharland's Sugarloaf' of a hill south of Steppes homestead.¹³³ This happened only after nagging by Tom Wragg, once a Burnie bookmaker. Pilgrims to the Sugarloaf include Don Knowler, latter-day *Mercury* nature-writer, who has remarked on 'Peregrine' remaining strong in public memory.¹³⁴

Notwithstanding the disposals mentioned above, Sharland material remains in Tasmania, especially at the Archives Office. This paper has drawn much from that source, which yet offers far more. It includes, for example, letters from many fellow-spirits, such as the Wilson family, Denny King, and Jane Fletcher.¹³⁵ Apropos ornithological history perhaps the prize is data relating to an earlier collector, GK Hinsby, with second place

123 *Sunday Tasmanian*, 28 October 1986.

124 *Mercury*, 7 December 1986.

125 Both institutions hold excellent descriptive lists. The oldest camera is said to date from the 1840s; there is a descriptive article in *Saturday Evening Mercury*, 22 December 1962.

126 *Mercury*, 21 February 1987.

127 *Mercury*, 1 April 1987.

128 Information from Don Gregg to M Roe.

129 AOT, AD960/203. The absence of a will by Michael presumably resulted from registration not being necessary where all the estate went to a living spouse.

130 Barbican Press, London.

131 NS1179/62.

132 <http://sharland.com/>; <http://www.novelexplorations.com/tours/paris/parisa.html>;
<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0788847/>.

133 *Mercury*, 10 May 1973. There are some interesting letters from Wragg at NS1179/2.

134 *Mercury*, 17 April 2004.

135 Nearly all these are scattered through NS1179/1, 2 and 12. Hinsby matter is at /35, Scot at /34, Lhotsky's *Information for the People* at /43, and Gunn at /1. The last is an off-print from the *Australian Zoologist*, vol. 14, 1968, pp. 257–8; it describes papers now held in the National Library of Australia. *Information* bears an inscription to 'The Honble H. Elliott', who (correctly 'Elliott') was then an aide-de-camp to Sir John Franklin, later a top-ranking British diplomat.

to a catalog of bird eggs collected by JR Scott. There is a reminder of Ronald Campbell Gunn's enthusiasm for birds, and his creation of the (hand-written) *Circular Head Scientific Journal*, 1836 to 1838. Similarly interesting is a file of a short-lived magazine published in Hobart in 1837 by Polish scientist and radical, John Lhotsky. The Archives Office also holds photographic work by Sharland, as does the Tasmanian Museum.

This paper has even greater flaws than underplaying matters just mentioned. It ignores great quantities of Sharland's journalism. Even the writings that have been cited offer far more of interest than is here suggested. Worst of all, Michael Roe lacks capacity to pass authoritative judgment on Sharland's achievement in those two crucial areas, ornithology and photography. May others do the man full justice.

BOOK REVIEWS

John McPhee, *The painted portrait photograph in Tasmania: 1850–1900*, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston, 2007, 112 pp., paperback, \$25.00

The history of Tasmanian photography was well served by Chris Long's 1995 *Tasmanian Photographers 1840–1940*, and now John McPhee's decorative and well-researched publication is a most worthy addition to the field. As with Long's work, *The painted portrait photograph ...* is a catalogue to accompany the eponymous exhibition at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, 23 November 2007 to 23 March 2008, and it, too, will find itself placed with the essential reference material relating to this important field. In this respect, it will continue the admirable work of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery – temporary exhibitions leave a lasting legacy of invaluable research through their catalogues and associated publications. Caroline Miley's *Beautiful and useful*, Therese Mulford's *Tasmanian Framemakers 1830–1930*, Diane Dunbar's *Thomas Bock and Tasmanian Inventions and Innovations* are all excellent examples.

McPhee became aware of the painted portrait photograph in the nineteen seventies when he was Curator of Art at the Queen Victoria. A hybrid form of artistic expression, it was then of no interest to art or photographic historians, a situation McPhee has now reversed, and in doing so, has added information about the other two forms of artistic expression. The biographical note about HH Baily has shown that he was the son of Bishop Nixon's steward, and not born in England as previously thought, and McPhee's close examination of the Dixon portrait of Nixon has revealed that it was painted over a photograph taken, not by Dixon, but by George Cherry.

Technical details for each catalogue item are given, and there are brief biographical accounts about the sitters, many of whom are not well-known. It is ironic that the most fascinating biographical details are provided for the relatively unknown Mr and Mrs John Caparatus, whose photograph (no. 43) is arguably the most poorly-executed in the exhibition. Of similar interest are McPhee's references to the backdrops used in the photographs, where special effects provided by purpose-built studio furniture could be adjusted to cater for the whims and interests of the sitters. RC Gunn (no. 29) and Sir James Agnew (no. 37) are shown in situations reflecting their status; others have no clearly defined background (numbers 14 and 36); the ill-at-ease young men (no. 26) hold a whip and a cane, and for some the backgrounds are imaginary landscapes, Ellen Archer (no. 23) and Catherine and William Townsend (no. 15).

The photographic base for most overpainted portraits is revealed in the even detail in the final portrait. Even frontal lighting of the subject's face and hands usually makes it obvious where a photograph has been used, and in some instances, additions to the photograph belie the work's origins. The meticulous catalogue notes call our attention to badly-proportioned features and unconvincing poses (numbers 3 and 4), and crude colouring (no. 26), examples which are far removed from the skilful work in WP Dowling's 'George Ritchie' (no. 20), and RJ Nicholas's 'Sir James Agnew' (no. 37).

Biographical information has been put in a social, as well as a technical, context. With the advent of photography, it was possible for those who could not afford sittings for traditional portraits to have a likeness taken, and then rendered in a traditional manner by being overpainted. Small likenesses could be sent to overseas relatives, photographs could be taken when convenient for the sitter, and portraits could be made posthumously from photographs. The artists themselves, such as Alfred Bock and WP Dowling, adapted to the technical demands of the new medium, as much from economic necessity as inclination, while those who were themselves photographers, like JW Beattie and RJ Nicholas, employed artists to enhance the finished item.

Although the influx of Chinese-made goods may seem a relatively recent phenomenon, McPhee has revealed that this is not the case. Companies in Hong Kong and southern China regularly advertised that they would copy photographic likenesses, guaranteeing results which would meet the purchaser's requirements. Two are included in the exhibition (numbers 38 and 39), with number 38 illustrating the problems of cultural differences – part of the subject's brilliantined hair, reflected in the flash, has been interpreted as a bald patch.

If there are any short-comings in the catalogue, the tendency to speculate about circumstances and situations is somewhat exaggerated in some instances – Mrs Walch (no. 12) *may* have been coming to the end of mourning, she *may* have been wearing a malachite brooch, which *may* have been the work of an Australian jeweller; an unknown woman holding a book, '*perhaps* a bible' indicates devotion (no. 44); the portraits of Susannah and Letitia Fisher, *probably* taken in about 1865, '*perhaps* even with the knowledge of Susannah's imminent death, and intended as a memorial' (numbers 27 and 28) are some examples. Alfred Bock is referred to as the son of Thomas in one instance (page 36) but this has been corrected in the biography (page 96). There are some typographical errors and defects, but these are minor and do little to detract from this very fine publication. Thanks to John McPhee's interest, the overpainted portrait will no longer be overlooked as a subject for serious research.

Margaret Glover

JM Bennett, *Sir Valentine Fleming: second Chief Justice of Tasmania 1854–1869, Acting Chief Justice 1872–1874*, Federation Press, Leichhardt, 2007, xv, 189 pp., \$49.50

The well-known and well-respected legal historian Dr JM Bennett has begun one of the most ambitious projects in Australian historical writing – writing the lives of the Australian Chief Justices. His new book on Sir Valentine Fleming is number twelve in the series and in train is the most taxing subject of all, Alfred Stephen, who spent time in Van Diemen's Land and New South Wales. Both author and publisher deserve full commendation for their efforts in making available this valuable series. The subject of this volume, Valentine Fleming, has not attracted much historical attention perhaps because he fell under the shadow of his predecessor, Sir John Pedder, the island's long-serving first Chief Justice. There is also the issue of sources and, in particular, the apparent absence of personal papers and private correspondence by others who referred to Fleming. When he had almost given up hope, Bennett was approached by a collateral descendant with some personal papers. Newspapers remain his major source and Bennett has trawled them to very good effect.

Born in Ireland in 1809, Fleming graduated with an Arts degree from Trinity College, Dublin in 1832 and, moving to London, was admitted to Gray's Inn as a barrister in 1834. Seeing little hope of forging a successful career at the crowded English Bar, Fleming, 'a lawyer of ability considerably above the average' according to Bennett, decided to try his luck in the colonies and, at the same time, left Catholicism behind to become a communicant member of the Church of England. With little experience and limited patronage, Fleming was able to secure only a minor appointment as Commissioner of the Insolvent Debtors Court at Hobart, where he arrived in 1842. This quasi-judicial office offered no salary but had 'attractive perquisites' and, not being a government employee, he could continue a private practice as a barrister. Although the colony's insolvency law was deficient in many respects, and therefore unpopular, Fleming discharged his duties as Commissioner 'with distinction' and certainly more impressively than did his eccentric predecessor TC Anstey. The colony went through rocky times in the 1840s and Fleming,

known for his integrity, did well out of the fees generated by numerous insolvency cases. As a barrister he was more a great reasoner than a great orator. As a master of detail, he took advantage of the 'quirks and quibbles of the law'.

Fleming determined early on that the best way to succeed in the colony was to support the policies of the Lieutenant-Governor of the day and 'make himself indispensable to the government'. His other strategy was to use his brothers as lobbyists on his behalf in England, an egregious form of what today we would call networking. Thus when legal vacancies arose in Van Diemen's Land (as they often did due to the incompetence, or worse, of incumbents), Fleming was well placed to fill them. When Attorney-General Thomas Welsh was dismissed after breaching the peace by duelling with Thomas Macdowell, and Solicitor-General Thomas Horne was appointed to replace him, Fleming was offered the position of Solicitor-General in 1844. He was allowed to continue his private practice as long as it involved no conflict of interests. Horne and Fleming worked well together and gave Lieutenant-Governor Denison the advice he wanted in some important cases, not least the Dog Act dispute. Bennett gives a careful analysis of this intricate dispute. Here we should just note that Horne, in emotional language, and Fleming in more rational terms ruled that Judges Pedder and Montagu were wrong to rule the Dog Act invalid and Denison took this opportunity to remove the chronically indebted and generally difficult Montagu from the bench. Montagu was replaced by Horne (himself heavily in debt) and the vacant Attorney-Generalship was filled by Fleming.

Fleming proved to be an efficient, talented and impartial Crown Prosecutor. He also remained a dutiful servant in his new position and did the bidding of his master in drafting legislation to remove doubts about Denison's actions in the Dog Act. Denison appreciated Fleming's guidance 'through many of the legal difficulties occurring during his administration', such as the case involving the treatment of Irish Exile Terence Bellew McManus. Interestingly, it was the 1849 libel case, *Hadley v Best*, prosecuted by Fleming in his private capacity as a barrister against the managers of the *Courier* that threatened his career. Fleming was attacked for trying to limit the freedom of the press and for traducing the character of ex-convicts in the most outrageous manner. As Attorney-General, Fleming also became an *ex officio* member of the Legislative Council, where his defence of Denison's increasingly unpopular policies, most notably the continuation of transportation, attracted great derision from the press. Fleming disliked the hurly-burly of politics but doggedly upheld the interests of the Crown as conceived by Denison, in areas such as education, local government and customs duties, against strong Legislative Council opposition.

When Pedder retired after a stroke in 1854, Denison pushed hard for Fleming to replace him as Chief Justice ahead of Horne as a reward for his services to government, not necessarily because he was the best man for the job. Horne was nine years older than the 45-year old Fleming and had been admitted to the English Bar for eleven years longer, but his promiscuous use of money told against him. Fleming's appointment was resented by Horne and many anti-Denison Vandemonians, but Denison advised the Colonial Office to ignore their petitions. Fleming bore no grudge and helped Horne in 1860 when he suffered mental and physical collapse and had to resign. Unlike his predecessor, Fleming was 'purposeful and professional, quickly exposing the issues in contention and bringing them to a resolution', and was prudent not hasty or reckless in his judgments. He was 'a model of judicial integrity, ability and demeanour' and 'courteous to a fault to all appearing before him'. There were 'no personal clashes' between Fleming and his fellow judge, first Horne and then Francis Smith, and unanimity usually prevailed. When a dispute arose in 1863 over whether Tasmania should appoint its own judges or not, and Smith's reputation for independence was attacked by TG Gregson, both judges combined to defend themselves.

Chapter 7 provides an extended discussion of the engrossing constitutional tussle between the Governor and Parliament in *Hampton v Fenton* (1855) and the subsequent unsuccessful appeal to the Privy Council by Fenton. Describing Fleming's judgment as 'one of the best pieces of judicial writing produced in Australia down to that time', Bennett believes that it effectively stymied his critics from further questioning his judicial ability. Chapter 8 deals with a series of notable civil and criminal cases (involving some well-known characters of the period such as John Davies, JD Balfe and the Reverend John Storie) among the many presided over by Fleming. In criminal cases, Fleming enforced the criminal law more severely than Pedder as a deterrent for evildoers and was generally 'less compassionate'.

Fleming retired aged 60 in November 1869 on a pension of £1,000 (two-thirds of his salary) for life. He was almost universally praised in the colony, but received no word of thanks from the Colonial Office. Fleming left for England but was soon back as Acting Chief Justice for two years while Francis Smith revived his health. At the end of his term, Fleming decided to return to England and he died there in 1875 'all but forgotten in Australia'.

Although Fleming lived circumspectly so as to retain his judicial independence, we are given glimpses of his private interests and achievements. He married local girl Elizabeth Oke Buckland and had two boys and after Elizabeth's death married Fanny Maria Secombe in 1872. Showing a liking for the high life, he built the grand residence, 'Holbrook' in Davey Street, which was designed by the ex-convict architect James Alexander Thomson. Fleming's 'fastidious' dressing was often poked fun at by the press. He had been a shooter in Britain and indulged that interest in the colony whenever he could. He liked walking and was an amateur naturalist. He showed a lively interest in educational and religious questions. But it is his judicial career that JM Bennett has so masterfully and succinctly illuminated in this book, a very welcome addition to the small but growing corpus of Tasmanian legal history.

Stefan Petrow

Euphemia Grant Lipp, *William Borrodaile Wilson and his family*, the author, Fyshwick, ACT, 2007, 92 pp., \$15.00, including postage. Available from Phemie Grant Lipp, 86 Dexter Street, Cook, ACT 2614.

There are family histories and family histories. As far as non-family members are concerned, this is one of the more interesting: informative, pleasant to read and well produced. It tells the story of William Borrodaile Wilson, born in London of Scottish heritage and well educated, who in 1818 emigrated to Australia with his brother and the Terry family, of New Norfolk milling fame. The first, brief, section of the book describes the family's life in England before they migrated; the second is based on William's farm journals; and the third tells the story of the Wilson children and their families.

William was initially employed at the commissariat store in New Norfolk, and had enough money to gain a land grant at Gretna. By purchase and more grants his property eventually comprised 2000 acres, and he named it Clarendon. Here he built a large house and lived with his wife Grace, née Terry, and their eleven children – eleven children in sixteen years for Grace. William's farm journals give an excellent picture of farming in this period, describing the crops, various building projects, sales of produce and so on. He had up to twenty employees, a mixture of convict and free labour.

The author comments that Karl von Stieglitz, in an unnamed source, described William as an inefficient farmer, and in the depression of the 1840s he went bankrupt. Clarendon was auctioned, and William moved to a small farm, where his daughters

made butter to sell. The later journals describe farming on a much smaller scale, a useful reminder of the ups and downs of colonial life – being wealthy in one period did not necessarily mean a leading position in the next. Not surprisingly, like many Tasmanian men, William went to the Victorian goldfields, and he died in Bendigo in 1854. Grace died of cancer in New Norfolk the following year.

Another useful reminder of conditions of the times is that eight of William and Grace's eleven children migrated to the mainland or New Zealand, again not surprisingly considering their unfortunate financial history. (The author is descended from one of these children.) The exceptions were three daughters, Amelia, Sarah and Mary Anne. Amelia married James Mitchel, a Presbyterian missionary, and after his death Thomas Read, a farmer who eventually went mad and died in the asylum at New Norfolk. Sarah never married, and lived at home, caring for her parents. It is not clear what happened to her after her mother's death, though she lived another thirty years – it was easy for a woman to avoid documentation if she did not marry or have children. Mary Anne married Charles Simson, the Presbyterian minister at the beautiful St Matthew's Church in Glenorchy. Like her mother she had a large family, and when she died young of cancer her unmarried sister Ellen returned to care for the children. Eventually she took them to the mainland.

This history documents lives not usually described in Tasmanian biographies, which tend to deal with achievers – successful farmers or graziers, convicts or businessmen. The Wilsons rose to prosperity then fell again – when he married, William's eldest son was described as 'labourer'. Many family members died youngish, in their twenties, thirties or forties, of disease. Other misfortunes overtook some, such as lunacy. Biographies of the successful – Andrew Inglis Clark, the Denisons, Charles Davis, for example – while important and interesting, do not show the whole picture. For many people, life was difficult in colonial Tasmania.

This book has an index, and though there are no references, there is a list of sources, the text usually making it clear which source has been used.

Alison Alexander

Marilyn Quirk, *Echoes on the mountain: remarkable migrant stories from the Hydro villages of the Tasmanian central highlands*, the author, Heybridge, 2006, revised and reprinted 2007, 178 pp., \$37.00.

In 1948 Marilyn Quirk's family moved from Western Australia to the Hydro-Electric Commission's village of Tarraleah. There they lived in a comfortable prefabricated house and wondered who lived in distant rows of small wooden huts. The answer was: migrants from Europe, 'Displaced Persons' recruited to work on hydro-electric schemes. Marilyn's family were intrigued by their music, food and winter fashions. Decades later, after retiring from teaching, Marilyn decided to write up some of the migrants' stories. Her writing style is fluent, and this book makes pleasant reading. The designers, Bokprint in Launceston, have produced a physically attractive book with font which is easy on the eye.

The stories are introduced by a short history of hydro-electric power development in Tasmania, information about the migrant program, and a description of life in the Hydro villages – a balanced description, neither overstressing nor minimising the problems. There is also an extensive 'HEC Construction' timeline, and many photographs, often provided by the interviewees and not previously published.

Each story begins with a description of how Marilyn Quirk met the interviewee, where he/she is living now and in what circumstances, and how the interviews proceeded.

Sections of the interviews are interspersed with background information or author's comments. This is a chatty way of using interviews, and works well in a book which is not meant to be an academic text as much as interesting reading for the general public.

The author interviewed eleven post-war migrants, eight men and three women. They came from Poland, Italy, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, Germany and England. Born between 1919 and 1934, but mostly in 1925 or later, they were mostly too young to have fought in the war. Their childhood memories were of generally happy, though often hard, family life before the war; the disruptions and sometimes devastation of war (one interviewee spent time in a concentration camp) and uneasy post-war years until they decided to emigrate to Australia. Ironically, some chose Australia over Canada or Venezuela because it was warm – and they all ended up in Hydro villages in the Tasmanian highlands, freezing in winter.

Interviewees' comments about living and working in Hydro villages are varied, though most enjoyed it overall, appreciating the freedom from war and their many and varied workmates. They are generous about the small huts, the repetitive Australian food, and the lack of machinery at work – many were 'pick and shovel' men. They describe not only their work but their way of life, their entertainments, their states of mind at this time, their aims in life. Though many of their fellows returned to Europe, obviously these eleven people all stayed, and all remain in Tasmania. Some became extremely successful, notably Milan Vyhnalek of Lactos Cheese, while others continued to work for a salary, but all settled down happily, most marrying, either other migrants or Australians.

If I have a criticism it is that these stories, told by those who liked Tasmania enough to remain, and interviewed by someone who also enjoyed life in a Hydro village, give a little too rosy a picture of work in the highlands – but it would have been difficult to find those who hated it and returned to Europe. Though many secondary sources are listed there are no footnotes, but in a general work perhaps the list of sources is enough. Overall, this is a useful and interesting addition to published material about post-war migrants, and the book's success is clear, for it was reprinted only a year after publication.

Alison Alexander

In brief

Keep it for the future! How to set up small community archives, National Archives of Australia, Canberra 2007, 64 pp., \$4.95 plus postage. Available from National Archives of Australia, PO Box 7525, ACT 2610.

This book explains the value of old records (well known to historians) and more particularly the importance of, and principles involved in, the handling and storage of archival material. There are chapters on organising, preserving and accessing archives, as well as on preparing a disaster recovery plan in case of a crisis. There are tips, tables and clearly laid out sample documents which, together with the pictures, give a good idea of what is required of an archivist. The book is written in straightforward terms and is easy to use.

Family history societies, local museums and other groups that have already established collections of archival material will find a great deal of helpful information in this book. The book makes it clear, however, that to establish its own archival records an organisation will have to make a substantial on-going commitment requiring not only facilities and personnel, but also plenty of enthusiasm. The chapter entitled 'Preserving archives', which describes the ideal type of building and storage area for records, might well deter many from embarking on a project of this kind. Those who feel overwhelmed by the scale of the task should turn to the section on grants available for community collections. Historians everywhere will hope that important heritage material from local collections will continue to be retained. This book will do much to ensure that aspiring archivists are well prepared for the task.

Sally Rackham

Thompson, John, *Probation in paradise: the story of convict probationers on Tasman's and Forestier's peninsulas, Van Diemen's Land, 1841–1857*, self published, Hobart, 2007, bibliography, list of illustrations, endnotes, index, 282 pp., \$69.95. (ISBN 978 0 646 48111 1)

Written and published by John Thompson, this book provides a general overview and description of seven probation stations. Part one of the book places the probation system in its historical context, while part two provides details about each station, including reproductions of early plans, maps, diagrams, sketches and paintings. The quotations from official documents are generous, and the author's interpretations are sensible. The history of each site after the closure of the station is described in part three, and includes changes up to the present day. Part four is about the archeology of each site and, like the rest of the book is generously illustrated, in this case with detailed site photographs, maps, plans and computer reconstructions. The author stresses that much of the area once occupied by probation stations is now in private hands, limiting public access and thus increasing the importance of this book.

Andrew McKinlay

Rees, Sian, *The Ship Thieves*, Hodder Australia, Sydney, 2005, index, a note on sources, 231 pp., \$35.00. (ISBN 0 7336191 4 2)

The story of Jimmy Porter has had several incarnations. Sian Rees has based her version on Porter's original manuscripts and on British Government records, as well as referring to newspaper archives and other published material, and has produced a readable book.

Sadly, the reader cannot go beyond the information given by Rees, as detailed references are absent.

Andrew McKinlay

Castles, Alex C, *Lawless Harvests or God save the Judges: Van Diemen's Land 1803–55*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Victoria, 2007, index, bibliography, 239 pp., \$44.00. (ISBN 1 74097 142 6)

Alex Castles' exposition of the development of law and the legal profession in Van Diemen's Land in the years between white settlement and the cessation of transportation paints a picture of the colony in a way which will entertain and inform all those interested in Tasmanian history. The book has been introduced and edited by Stefan Petrow and Kate Crowley, and includes an epilogue contributed by Stefan Petrow. Written for a general readership, no citations or explanatory notes have been provided, except for the introduction. The editors are to be congratulated in making Alex Castle's text available.

Andrew McKinlay

Recent titles

Boyce, James, *Van Diemen's Land*, Black Inc, Melbourne, 2008, notes, references, index, 400 pp., \$29.95. (ISBN 978 1 8639541 3 6)

Hirst, Warwick, *The man who stole the Cyprus: a true story of escape*, Rosenberg Publishing Pty Ltd, NSW, 2008, notes, bibliography, index, 224 pp., \$29.95. (ISBN 978 1 877 05861 5)

Lake, Marilyn and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the global colour line: white men's countries and the question of racial equality*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 2008, notes, index, 371 pp., \$36.95. (ISBN 978 0 522 85478 7)

McFarlane, Ian, *Beyond Awakening. The Aboriginal tribes of North West Tasmania: a history*, Fullers Bookshop, Riawunna, Community, Place & Heritage Research Unit, University of Tasmania, Hobart, 2008, notes, bibliography, index, 320 pp., \$29.95. (ISBN 978 0 980 47200 4)

Maxwell-Stewart, Hamish, *Closing Hell's Gates: the death of a convict station*, Allen & Unwin, NSW, 2008, notes, bibliography, index, 312 pp., \$24.95. (ISBN 978 1 741 75149 9)

Rieusset, Brian, *Maria Island convicts 1825–1832*, the author, West Hobart, 2007, bibliography, index, 64 pp., \$15.00. (ISBN 978 0 957 72142 5)

'Tasmania on the Map Maritime History and Heritage', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, vol. 12, 2007, 121 pp. (ISSN 1324-048X)

Volume 12 includes articles by Edward Duyker, Cindy McCreery, Stefan Petrow, Jacquie D'Arcy, Michael Hess, and Alison Alexander's interview with Professor John McManners. Contact: Executive Officer, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, School of History, University of Tasmania, Private Bag 81, Hobart, Tasmania 7001. Membership subscription: \$30.00.

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