

# THE AUSTRALIAN HISTORY TEACHER

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National Journal of the HTAA



2006

PUBLISHED BY THE HISTORY  
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION OF  
AUSTRALIA.

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# 'What a difference a ... [month] makes'

BY NICK EWBank, HTAA PRESIDENT • ACT

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When I sat down some weeks ago to write a President's piece for the National journal, I chose to write about the PM's Australia Day speech, and how it had generated sound and fury at the time, but no substantial outcome. I have, of course, been overtaken by events.

Partly in response to the Prime Minister's comments, I had written to the then-recently appointed Commonwealth Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Julie Bishop MP. When Ms Bishop replied, she restated the government's commitment to the teaching of History, and fell in line with the Prime Minister's opinions: 'I am very willing to work on this issue with...teachers of history...and all who are committed strengthening the teaching of history...'. However, nothing more happened; history sank below the waters of debate, seemingly following the Titanic to the darkest recesses of the oceans. Or so it seemed until June.

Then, Australian history, and the teaching of it, popped back to the surface. Ms Bishop decided to include History in research project being run by ACER (the Australian Council for Educational Research). The ACER study will 'examine and compare the content, curriculum and standards of studies in English (including Literature), Australian History, Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry for the Year 12 Certificate in every Australian State and Territory' (DEST Year 12 Study Specifications paper).

More significantly, and with greater publicity, the Minister has also announced her desire to revitalise the teaching of Australian History across the years of schooling, across the country. This is certainly a corollary of the PM's Australia Day speech. I would, however, be careful, of thinking of them as one and the same thing.

The Prime Minister called for a 'root and branch' reform of the teaching of History in Australian schools. Mr Howard's opined that

'You can't learn history by teaching issues...Too often, it [History] is taught without any sense of structured narrative, replaced by a fragmented

stew of themes and issues...too often, history, along with other subjects in the humanities, has succumbed to a post-modern culture of relativism where any objective record of achievement is questioned or repudiated'. (AAP)

The Prime Minister emphasised the role of chronological approaches, but suggested that the kind of History being taught needed overhauling. Mr Howard suggested that students needed to know the date of the Battle of Hastings, and the sighting of the Australian east coast by Captain Cook. In short, Mr Howard's preferred History would seem to be a singular narrative of the advance of civilisation, with Britain solidly in centre frame. While he was careful to be inclusive through lip-service to non-Anglo perspectives, the Prime Minister seems to believe that Australia's History should be seen as a sub genre of a grand narrative of British progress.

Minister Bishop seems to be 'in the same ball park', but perhaps not as keen to restrict content to as narrow an Anglo-centric view of Australia's development. Ms Bishop has been keen to emphasise the 'sensible centre', eschewing the more extreme interpretations from both the left and right wings that have formed the main 'fighting ground' for the 'History Wars'.

To return to Mr Howard's speech - he seems to feel that questioning 'established facts' has no value. As any History teacher knows, questioning established interpretations is a key function of the teaching of History. History, well taught, makes our students curious and independent thinkers. A danger to all those peddlers of political 'spin' and the like, who would force interpretations upon them.

As we in the classroom know, however, it is often these controversies that engage students, along with study of 'real people'. We must be cautious of allowing the development of a singular, unquestioned (and unquestionable) version of the Australian story to be developed. This, I suspect, will be the real task of the 'think tank' being held by the Minister on 17 August in Canberra. There will probably be a

push for common content across the country. While there is much common experience that unites us as Australians, there is also the particular, and it is the particular rather than the grand narrative that often 'hooks' students.

Mr Howard's comments on 25 January came 'out of the blue', and then appeared to be going nowhere. But History is back on the national political agenda. It is the HTAA's task, and also a task for State HTAs, to ensure that what comes out of this situation is improved teaching, that engages our students and improves their understandings of the past. After all, if we are to have a better future, surely it's necessary to understand where we have been. That's our task, and I relish the contests to come.

# Cartoons in the classroom - a 'scaffolding' and a 'chunking' we will go!

BY ROS MARSHALL, JOHN CURTIN PRIME MINISTERIAL LIBRARY • HTAWA

## Summary

Ros Marshall from John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library has written about new cartoons that are available for interpretation and analysis in the classroom. These examples add to those contained in Cartoon PD in a Package.

Aspirations of a Working Class Man: Achievements under John Curtin's Leadership, a new web resource from the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library, offers teachers a series of cartoons that have been 'scaffolded' or 'chunked' for classroom use.

This web project focuses on the achievements of the Labor Government under John Curtin's leadership. Believing that 'the peace must be won for the masses', Curtin used his war time prime ministership to further his lifelong dream of a fair go for all Australians, implementing Labor programs in the areas of economic reform, social services and immigration, education, public broadcasting, and foreign policy, while maintaining confidence in the power of Parliament.

Ten political cartoons illustrate the resource and the online activities feature two cartoons which have been 'chunked' and a third which has been 'scaffolded'. Education activities for the three cartoons use similar format to the JCPML online resource Cartoon PD in a Package. The activities give teachers two options: students can analyse the cartoons on their own with immediate feedback as they progress through the activities or teachers can download the cartoon of their choice to 'chunk' or 'scaffold' in the classroom. To whet your appetite, a classroom teaching resource using 'chunking', taken from Aspirations, is provided below. For more resources go to <http://john.curtin.edu.au/aspirations/activities/index.html>.

## 'It's up to him' – Cartoon Interpretation: Teachers' Resource

This is a step by step resource for classroom teachers to use with senior school students, based on the concept of 'chunking' as a method of interpreting cartoons. Teachers should familiarise themselves with the 'chunking' process which is fully explained in the freely downloadable JCPML publication Cartoon PD in a Package before using this cartoon activity in the classroom. The address for this package is: <http://john.curtin.edu.au/education/cartoonpd/index.html>

Note: Student responses to the questions will vary according to their understanding of the symbols and captions in the cartoon. Due acknowledgement should be given to a range of answers where valid explanations, logically explained and justified are given.

Cartoon by Samuel Wells published in the Melbourne Herald, 23 January 1945

Once you are on the web you can click on the cartoon below for a larger image to use with your class. Use the 'landscape' option when printing the cartoon.



Melbourne Herald 23rd January 1945

## Context

### The homefront

- In 1942 John Curtin set up the Department of Post War Reconstruction (PWR) with the aim of: avoiding the economic dislocation associated with the end of the previous war; helping to create international financial structures that would prevent the devastating economic chaos of events like the Great Depression; and ensuring full employment.
- An important objective of the PWR was the improvement of welfare provisions for needy Australians such as the unemployed, disabled and widowed.
- In the 1943 election the Curtin Labor government won a huge majority. Curtin said his government would not use its power to force the socialisation of industry during the war. The government felt, however, that it needed greater powers for the period of post war reconstruction.
- In 1942, the government failed persuade the states to voluntarily transfer the specified powers it wanted for the duration of the war and five years afterwards.
- The Fourteen Powers referendum in 1944 also failed to give the Commonwealth the powers it sought over banking, employment, trade and commerce.
- Curtin was overseas in the lead up to the referendum and also had a heart attack in late 1944 resulting in his hospitalisation for 2 months. When he returned to work in January 1945 cabinet had put up a proposal to legislate for Commonwealth control of aviation.
- Curtin was criticised for supporting the aviation proposal which many conservative members of parliament and the media saw as quasi socialism. The media believed that public opinion had sanctioned the controls necessary to run the economy in wartime but thought that the government should get right out of industry in peacetime.

### The war effort

- As a result of the success of the Allied landing at Normandy, the Germans were now being steadily pushed back towards Berlin.
- By early 1945 the front in the Pacific war had moved well north of Australia, the Americans had re-occupied the Philippines and were steadily pushing the Japanese back to their homeland.

## Copy 1

### Highlight: name of cartoonist, publisher and date of publication

The Cartoonist: Samuel Garnet Wells, born Victoria 1885, died Victoria 1964. Wells joined the staff of Melbourne Punch after World War One and later he worked for the Melbourne Herald drawing sporting cartoons. In about 1923 he put out a book of cartoons based on his work at the Herald called Wells Cartoons. In the early 1930s he was involved in the drawing of the Ben Bowyang comic. Wells left the Herald in 1933 to work in England on the Daily Dispatch in Manchester but returned to the Herald in 1939 to take on the job of principal political cartoonist, a position he held until 1950. Wells then took a job drawing sporting cartoons for The Age. He died in 1964. He also had cartoons published in the Newcastle Herald. Information courtesy Lindsay Foyle, Australian Cartoonists' Association.

Publisher: The Melbourne Herald was a conservative newspaper owned by Keith Murdoch. Murdoch helped get the United Australia Party (UAP) under way and supported Joseph Lyons' election to the leadership of the party and the country in 1931. The Lyons Government recommended Murdoch's knighthood in 1933. Murdoch was close enough to Lyons to offer him advice on the makeup of his cabinet in 1934 but fell out with him later over radio licensing. When Robert Menzies took over the leadership of the UAP in 1939, Murdoch gave him his support. Menzies appointed Sir Keith Murdoch to oversee wartime censorship. Curtin was very critical of Murdoch in this post accusing him of trying to make himself editor-in-chief of every newspaper in Australia through his suggestion for changes to the National Security Regulations.

- Ask students about the information they can glean just from the introductory information, especially for questions about CONTEXT.

## Copy 2

### Highlight: train tracks, train (including 'Australia'), rock and tunnel

- What does the train represent?
- What does the divided track represent?
- Describe the position of the tunnel. What could this mean?  
(The tunnel is drawn in the distance. Things come to mind like 'the light at the end of the tunnel' or 'Is there light at the end of the tunnel?' Tunnels are dark scary places.)
- Describe the location of the tracks in relation to the large rock on the left.

(The tracks have to go around this obstacle – they can't go over it or under it – it's in the way – like a difficult decision.)

### Copy 3

**Highlight: signal, signal box and the man in the signal box**

- What is the purpose of a signal box?
- What does the signal box represent? How does the labelling help?
- Who is in the signal box?
- (Prime Minister John Curtin)
- Describe what he is doing?
- (He appears to be thinking as he has his hand on his chin. He has a hand on the signal equipment ready to give a signal to the train.)
- What do you think he is thinking about?
- (He has to make an important decision about which way to send the train [Australia] – he can take two tracks (two choices) and he is not sure which way to go.)
- How does the contextual information help you to work out what the Prime Minister is thinking about?

(The contextual information tells you that the federal government had been trying to widen its powers to deal with the period of post war reconstruction (the extensive wartime powers will end with the conclusion of the war). A request to states to refer the necessary powers to the federal government for five years after the war had been refused. None of the states wanted to give up any of their powers. The Fourteen powers referendum of 1944 received a 'no' vote from the people. Now the government was trying a new tack by putting forward legislation to allow it to take control of aviation in the post war period. The cartoon is set against the background that the Australian people had clearly shown they opposed government control (socialisation/nationalisation) of industry. So Curtin is probably weighing up the relative risks and benefits of the routes he must choose between.)

### Copy 4

**Highlight: nationalisation, political disunity and united war effort**

- How does your knowledge of beliefs of the Australian Labor Party help you to understand the cartoonist purpose in writing 'nationalisation' on the tunnel at the end of the left hand track?  
(The Labor Party began as a working man's party and is described as left wing. Left wing parties support more government control of industry, more interference in the economy and more

welfare measures than do most right wing or conservative parties. Nationalisation of industry is a left wing or socialist policy.)

- Why is the track leading to the tunnel labelled 'political disunity' and the track to the right labelled 'United War Effort'?  
(The cartoonist is suggesting that to take the left track is to head towards socialism and therefore nationalisation of industry. The ALP and the conservative parties have worked well together to carry out the war effort but if Labor takes the left hand track, the cartoonist believes it will adversely affect the war effort.)

### Copy 5

**Highlight: caption 'It's up to him'**

- What is the cartoonist's attitude towards nationalisation (or socialisation of industry)?  
(The cartoonist is against nationalisation.)
- How is nationalisation different from the provision of social policies such as widows' pensions?  
(Nationalisation implies that the government is going to take over and run industry rather than leave it up to private enterprise. (Government control of industry during wartime was acceptable to most Australians because of the particular circumstances of the war.) Providing social services such as widows' pensions was a way of looking after the needy in the community. This was acceptable to the community in both war and peace in a way that government control of industry in peacetime was not.)
- What is the cartoonist's attitude to the Prime Minister?  
(The cartoonist portrays Curtin as looking harried and indecisive. The cartoonist clearly believes that the prime minister should take Australia down the path of unity and maintaining a strong war effort, living up to his 1943 promise to not socialise industry.)
- What is the purpose of the cartoon? (Is it the sort of cartoon that you laugh at?)  
(This political cartoon raises people's awareness about a topical issue - the possible socialisation of industry, and more specifically government control over aviation. Drawing the prime minister as a procrastinating signalman is a humorous way to present a complex and potentially divisive issue.)

At the completion of this process, you may wish students to answer written questions on the cartoon which you can tailor to reflect the teaching points you wish them to cover. This cartoon is also available in 'scaffolding' format. Contact Ros Marshall on 9266 4391 or email [r.marshall@curtin.edu.au](mailto:r.marshall@curtin.edu.au) for further information.

# Evaluative adjectives and phrases for analytical students

BY JAN BISHOP • HTAWA

## More than *huge* and *enormous*

Document and essay questions ask for analysis with instruction words such as:

Evaluate...; Evaluate the importance of change..., How important was..., Assess the significance..., To what extent...; Analyse the extent to which...; Judge the extent to which...; Assess the extent of change and continuity...

In responses to these evaluative words, most students just use *huge* and *enormous* and use them over and over again. Students should be more analytical than this, especially if they are looking for high marks.

This table provides a vocabulary of more precise and analytical adjectives that can be used instead of *huge* and *enormous*.

Adjectives/phrases of increasing number or many changes	Adjectives/phrases of decreasing number or little change	Adjectives of little change or lack of noteworthy change	Adjectives of large extent of change or noteworthy change
a number of changes increasing on the increase some several many numerous sizeable copious various	decreasing number few reducing declining dwindling diminishing	inconsequential unsubstantial insignificant slight negligible limited narrow	large substantial extensive great vast widespread considerable pervasive

Adjectives/phrases of importance for actions/events	Adjectives/phrases of unimportance for actions/events
noteworthy notable important consequential significant effective essential vital far-reaching momentous of major importance remarkable crucial fundamental	trivial minor unimportant inconsequential insignificant ineffective non essential futile irrelevant of no importance immaterial

# Tracking the Native Police of Port Phillip (1837–1853)

BY LOUISA SCOTT & SEBASTIAN GURCIULLO, PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE VICTORIA • HTAV

*This article previews a forthcoming online exhibition to be published on the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) website in October 2005. The exhibition, about the Native Police Corps of Port Phillip, will be a useful education resource for teaching in several learning areas including SOSE, Humanities and History, from middle school levels through to VCE. Digitised records from PROV's collection and visual representations of the times from 1837 to 1853 provide primary sources that will complement historical accounts.*

The story of the Native Police in Victoria deserves to be better known as an example of the negotiation of relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. As with the New South Wales colonial government's attempt to establish an Aboriginal Protectorate in Port Phillip, the Native Police present us with a quandary. On the one hand, the Native Police were part of the government's policy to bring peace and order at a time of conflict, and for averting a possible escalation in violence and loss of life on both sides. On the other hand, it could be argued that the Native Police were themselves prone to excesses in the name of establishing an invader's code of right and wrong. Just like the Aboriginal Protectorate, which was meant to protect the welfare of the Indigenous population, whatever good intentions may have motivated the establishment of the Native Police were rendered more ambiguous by the reality of colonial society and politics.

From 1837 there were several attempts to recruit members of the tribes around Port Phillip to establish a mounted force of Indigenous troopers. The most successful of these was pulled together and commanded by Henry Pulteney Dana between 1842 and 1852. The early administration records of the Port Phillip District do show that this corps performed a crucial role in the survival and viability of the newly established colony. This was particularly the case in the early 1840s, when attacks by Aboriginal people on stations and livestock, and reprisals by settlers, became so frequent that the Native Police were called upon to enforce British law and order. In the late 1840s and early 1850s, the Native Police were also drawn into the upheaval that accompanied

the discovery of gold. It was at this time that they became a subject for early colonial artists such as William Strutt.

## The Native Police in PROV's records

The formation of the Native Police Corps was made possible only by an active decision taken by the Aboriginal clans from the areas surrounding Melbourne. Faced by the superior power of the colonial government, the Aboriginal elders carefully deliberated on their options. The idea of establishing a police corps gained acceptance as a way of securing a power-sharing arrangement with the British administrators. Many elders themselves would become part of the original corps of Native Police troopers.<sup>1</sup>

As this corps exerted its influence across the colony, other Aboriginal clans – in the Western District, the Wimmera and Gippsland – confronted their own decisions about whether to seek a similar compromise or to follow a path of struggle and resistance, and to contend with the violence that would ensue. Between 1842 and 1844, the Native Police undertook several expeditions into the stretch of territory between Geelong and Portland known as the Western District. The records include numerous reports of conflict between the troopers and Aboriginal groups they were tracking who had been accused of attacking settlers and livestock.

The records also show evidence of the displacement of Aboriginal people from their native lands into Aboriginal Stations. For instance, on 22 November 1842, Dana reported to Superintendent Charles J. La Trobe that the Native Police had 'proved themselves faithful and true on every occasion, and sometimes under very trying circumstances, particularly when driving a large number of (between two and three hundred) natives from Lake Boloke and the River Hopkins to the Aboriginal Station at Mount Rouse'.<sup>2</sup>

Although maintaining a British system of law and order was central to their work, the Native Police performed a remarkable range of other tasks and

duties. Aboriginal troopers escorted prisoners and VIPs alike, found persons lost in the unfamiliar bush and tracked down bushrangers and criminals. The Native Police also carried messages on horseback to far-flung outposts, set up the first delivery of mail to Gippsland by land, and guarded gold finds years before the mayhem unleashed by the 'official' discovery of gold. In the early days of the gold rush, members of the Corps acted as the first gold escort, were the first police on the goldfields of Ballarat, and collected the new goldfield licences. On 22 September 1851, Dana reported to La Trobe from the Ballarat goldfields. He claimed it was only the troopers' intervention that prevented serious injury to those volunteering to pay, who initially were pelted with stones by miners who had decided to protest against the onerous fee.<sup>3</sup>

On 14 February 1852, Dana observed that 'the extraordinary revolution of the times', the gold rush, had been one of the main factors leading to a dramatic fall in the number of officers and troopers in the Corps.<sup>4</sup> Many had left to try their luck on the goldfields themselves. The sudden departure of experienced officers had a huge impact on morale. The troopers that remained found themselves under commanders to whom they had no loyalty, and undertaking goldfields policing tasks which they did not like.<sup>5</sup>

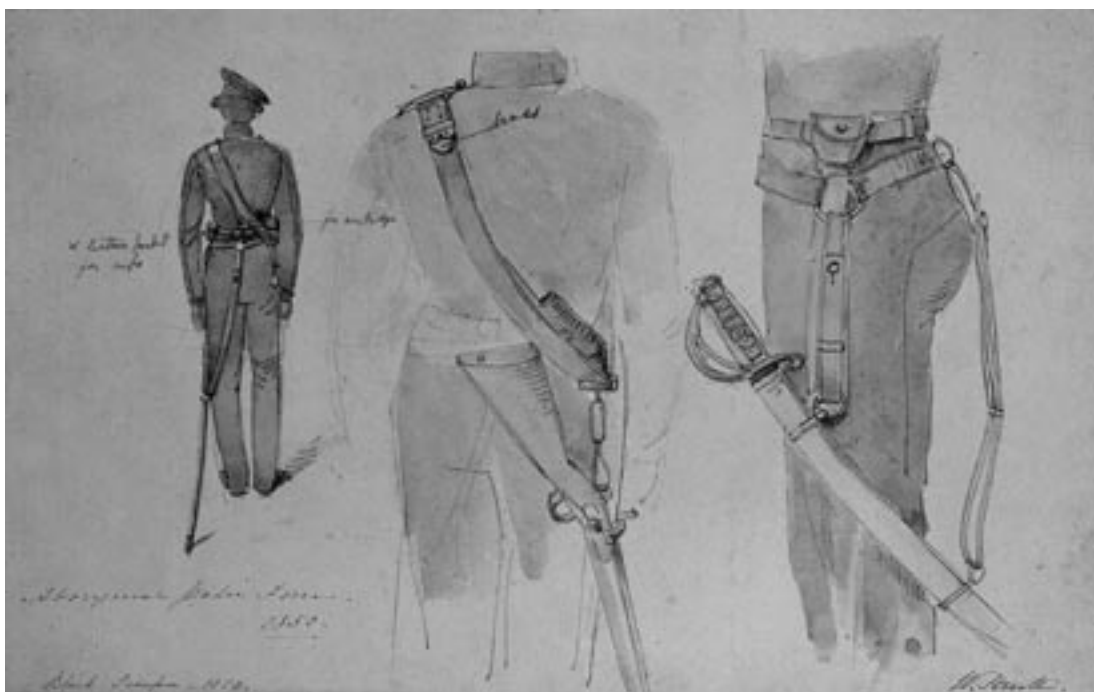
In the last few months of his own life in 1852, Dana attempted to reform the remaining Native Police into a mounted patrol for the Kilmore area. Dana's death in November 1852 led swiftly to the dissolution of the Native Police Corps. The last entry in the Nerre Nerre Warren Day Book, dated 20 January 1853, suggests an unceremonious ending: 'A blackfellow arrived with his horse (police) to be turned out in the paddock'.<sup>6</sup> La Trobe pleaded to the Home government for police to combat the increase in crime and recruited four

companies of the 59<sup>th</sup> regiment, Irish Mounted police and volunteers from the London police. Aboriginal trackers were used sporadically by the Victoria Police from the time of the Native Police Corps' demise, and more regularly from the 1880s into the twentieth century. Queensland trackers were engaged in the search for Ned Kelly. Following this use of Queensland trackers, Victoria Police set up a corps of Queensland trackers for use in Victoria, which continued until 1968.<sup>7</sup>

## The Native Police in pictures: the drawings of William Strutt

Our knowledge of the Native Police is nearly always mediated through the reports and impressions of Europeans. The most immediate of these impressions are the drawings of the members of the Native Police by colonial artists such as William Strutt. His drawings in particular give us a much more direct notion of the way the Native Police were regarded by the colonists.

Strutt was among the first of a group of artists to arrive in Victoria in the 1850s. From 1850 to 1862 he documented many facets of colonial life and its progress. Shortly after arriving in Victoria, Strutt found work as an illustrator for the *Illustrated Australian Magazine*. He experimented with civic heraldry and produced designs for the Arms of the City of Melbourne and of the Colony of Victoria.<sup>8</sup> He also designed one of Victoria's first postage stamps, which depicts the Queen holding a shield surrounded by a horn of plenty and bales of wool. Yet, he is probably best remembered for his visual accounts of the people and events he encountered while in the rapidly expanding colony of Victoria between 1850 and 1862.



William Strutt, *Aboriginal police force [uniforms]*, pencil and watercolour, 1850, in *Victoria the Golden: Scenes, sketches and jottings from nature, 1850-1862*. Reproduced with the permission of the Parliamentary Library, Parliament of Victoria.

One of Strutt's earliest jobs, commissioned by the Ham Brothers, a printing business located on Collins Street, was to sketch and engrave the portraits of several members of the Native Police Corps.<sup>9</sup> Thomas Ham also produced a number of lithographs based on Strutt's initial sketches.<sup>10</sup> Strutt's documentation of the Native Police Corps, however, became much more comprehensive than those initially required by the Ham brothers. He made notes of many of the sketches in his autobiography, explaining how and why he came to depict his chosen subjects. Moreover, he frequently expressed admiration for the troopers and his sentiments are echoed in his drawings.<sup>11</sup> Strutt compiled these images, and others, which depicted various aspects of the colony into an album *Victoria the Golden: Scenes, sketches and jottings from nature, 1850–1862*.<sup>12</sup>

Strutt spent many days at the Richmond police paddock sketching the men, their horses, uniforms and equipment. The pencil and watercolour sketch *Aboriginal police force [uniforms] (1850)* shows the Native troopers of Port Phillip in their winter uniform which was made from dark green woollen fabric, with a red stripe on the side of the pants, a jacket with red collar and cuffs made of the same woollen fabric, and a cap with a red stripe.<sup>13</sup> Strutt's drawings indicate that they also wore leather belts with brass buckles, leather cartouche boxes and carried quite a lot of equipment such as swords, short carbines and bayonets.



Above: William Strutt, *Charles Never Marunwilley*, pencil and watercolour, 1850, in *Victoria the Golden: Scenes, sketches and jottings from nature, 1850-1862*. Reproduced with the permission of the Parliamentary Library, Parliament of Victoria. Below: William Strutt, *Separation Rejoicings: Opening of the Princes Bridge near Yarra Yarra, Melbourne, 1851*, in *Victoria the Golden: Scenes, sketches and jottings from nature, 1850-1862*. Reproduced with the permission of the Parliamentary Library, Parliament of Victoria.



Not only did he document the uniforms but he also depicted the tailor to the Corps, for whom he seems to have had held a great regard. Charles Never Marunwilley was a native of the Lower Murray region that William Walsh, an officer of the Native Police, had brought to Melbourne as a young boy. Charles attended the Merri Creek school, which was administered by the Aboriginal Protectorate under Assistant Protector William Thomas. Between 1842 and 1844, the Native Police headquarters was located next to the school and so Charles often saw the troopers. He admired their gentlemanly poise mounted on horseback in their dark uniforms. Charles apprenticed to a tailor in Elizabeth Street in Melbourne and once accomplished, was appointed tailor to the Native Police Corps.<sup>14</sup> Unlike earlier colonial depictions of Aboriginal people which frequently addressed the subject by means of caricature or as the 'noble savage', the portrait Charles Never Marunwilley (1850) portrays the subject as a sophisticated young man in European garb – in Strutt's own words 'a civilised Aborigine'.<sup>15</sup>

It is through Strutt's sketches that we learn of the involvement of the Native Police at major events that shaped the colony of Victoria. For instance, the sketch *Separation Rejoicings: Opening of the Princes Bridge near Yarra Yarra, Melbourne (1851)* shows to the right of the composition the Native Police lined up in a guard of honour. Many of Strutt's sketches contain detailed annotations. In this depiction he records various Melbourne landmarks such as Batman's Hill, St Patrick's Cathedral and the Supreme Court and Gaol.

Another image, *Aboriginal Black Troopers, Melbourne Police with English Corporal (1851)*, is accompanied by a commentary by Strutt in his index to *Victoria the Golden*. It reads 'Black troopers drilling. This valuable force, so useful as bush trackers, were disbanded at the discovery of gold. These men ... were splendid horsemen'.<sup>16</sup>

It is clear from his depictions and additional notes that Strutt had great respect for the troopers and their capabilities. In 1851 he left Melbourne to try his own luck at the

diggings. He documented his journey with sketches and, in his autobiography, recorded his encounter with troopers escorting a prisoner. 'With my friend M. walked on to the diggings. Met on our way a prisoner and a villainous squint-eyed scoundrel he looked, hand-cuffed and escorted by two well mounted and smart looking black troopers (of whom I have made a drawing), on the road to Melbourne.'<sup>17</sup>

Strutt painted and drew his subjects with true dignity and seems to have known that, in depicting the troopers of the Native Police Corps, he was also recording an important and historic encounter between two cultures. In Strutt's drawings, the Native



Above: William Strutt, *Aboriginal Black troopers, Melbourne Police with English Corporal*, 1851, in *Victoria the Golden: Scenes, sketches and jottings from nature, 1850-1862*. Reproduced with the permission of the Parliamentary Library, Parliament of Victoria.

Below: William Strutt, *Black troopers escorting a prisoner from Balaarat [sic] to Melbourne*, 1851, in *Victoria the Golden: Scenes, sketches and jottings from nature, 1850-1862*. Reproduced with the permission of the Parliamentary Library, Parliament of Victoria.



Police take their place within the momentous events of the gold rush and Victoria's separation from New South Wales. His sketches and the large body of work that eventuated from several commissioned portraits make him the only artist to have comprehensively documented the Port Phillip Native Police Corps, ironically just as they themselves disappeared from view.

PROV's exhibition on the Native Police Corps will feature illustrations from William Strutt and other colonial artists in addition to digitised images of PROV records. The exhibition and education resources will be online in October 2005. For further details, visit our website ([www.prov.vic.gov.au](http://www.prov.vic.gov.au)) or contact Sebastian Gurciullo on 9348 5600 or email [sebastian.gurciullo@dvc.vic.gov.au](mailto:sebastian.gurciullo@dvc.vic.gov.au)

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup>This interpretation of the participation of Port Phillip elders in the establishment of the Native Police is one of the key arguments that Marie Hansen Fels makes in her comprehensive study of the Native Police, *Good Men and True: The Aboriginal Police of the Port Phillip District 1837–1853*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1988.
- <sup>2</sup> PROV, VPRS 19/P0 Inward Registered Correspondence, unit 38, item 42/2153.
- <sup>3</sup> PROV, VPRS 2878/P0 Inward Registered Correspondence II [Land Branch], unit 1, item 51/417. The presence of the Native Police and Aboriginal people in general on the goldfields has recently been explored in Ian D. Clark and David A. Cahir, *Tanderrum: 'Freedom of the Bush'*, Friends of Mount Alexander Diggings, Castlemaine, 2004 and Ian D. Clark and David A. Cahir, 'Aboriginal People, Gold, and Tourism: The Benefits of Inclusiveness for Goldfields Tourism in Regional Victoria' in *Tourism, Culture and Communication*, vol. 4, pp. 123–36.
- <sup>4</sup> PROV, VPRS 1189/P0 Inward Registered Correspondence I, unit 16, folder 6, item 52/605.
- <sup>5</sup> See Fels, esp. pp. 212–220.
- <sup>6</sup> PROV, VPRS 90/P0 Day Book of the Native Police Corps, Narre Warren, entry for 20 January 1853.
- <sup>7</sup> For a history of Aboriginal trackers since the demise of the Native Police see Gary Presland, *For God's Sake Send the Trackers*, Victoria Press, Melbourne, 1998.
- <sup>8</sup> The designs for both the arms of the City of Melbourne and for the Colony of Victoria were included in William Strutt's album *Victoria the Golden: Scenes, sketches and jottings from nature, 1850–1862*, Parliamentary Library of Victoria.
- <sup>9</sup> Some of Strutt's images of the Native Police were reproduced in the *Illustrated Australian Magazine*

between February and May 1851 together with an accompanying article on the Port Phillip Native Police. See Marjorie Tipping's foreword to *Victoria the Golden*, p. 11.

- <sup>10</sup> A number of Thomas Ham's lithograph prints are held in the picture collections of the State Library of Victoria and the National Library of Australia, some of which can be viewed online on their respective web catalogues.
- <sup>11</sup> See William Strutt, *Off for Australia: emigration, every body and every thing, now, all, is now: autobiography of William Strutt*, unpublished manuscript, NLA, MS, 4367.
- <sup>12</sup> The album was sold by William Strutt to the Premier and Treasurer, Sir Thomas Bent in 1907 and it is now in the collection of the Parliamentary Library.
- <sup>13</sup> It seems likely that the Native Police Corps of Port Phillip had more than one uniform. For a full description of their uniforms see Fels, *Good Men and True*, pp. 83–88.
- <sup>14</sup> Fels, *Good Men and True*, p. 90.
- <sup>15</sup> This comment from Strutt appears as an annotation on his drawing Charles Never Marunwilley, from 1850 shown on page 13.
- <sup>16</sup> Strutt, *Victoria the Golden*, p. ii.
- <sup>17</sup> *Autobiography of William Strutt 1850–1862*, p. 50, quoted in Heather Curnow, *Life and Art of William Strutt 1825–1915*, Martinborough, Alister Taylor, 1980, p. 92.

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# The Royal and the Rabbits, the Feast and the Fenian: Australia's first Royal Tour

BY STEVE THOMPSON • HTAV

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In these days of growing republican sentiment, Australians view royal visits with a strange mixture of detached curiosity, faint affection and derisive doubts about the costs and relevance to our nation. The last significant royal visit – Charles, Prince of Wales, in February – cost taxpayers more than half a million dollars. The first royal visit to our shores, almost 140 years ago, found the Australian colonies divided yet cocky and somehow assured of their future prosperity. However with so many petty colonial politicians and officials ready to prostrate themselves at the feet of a royal visitor, it was clear that we were far from politically or socially mature.

Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh and Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, then fourth in line to the British throne, arrived in Australia to exultant strains of loyalty and unified adulation; he departed it with a bullet wound in his back as clear evidence that affection for the monarchy disguised intrinsic divisions in 19th century colonial society. The story of the first royal visit merits another retelling for what it reveals about our past.

## Our first royal visitor

Prince Alfred, born 1844, was the fourth child and second son of Queen Victoria and the German-born husband Albert. Despite being a particular favourite of the Queen's, at age 14 he was spirited off to join the Royal Navy. There was some speculation that this was arranged to remove Alfred from the 'unhealthy' influence of his older brother, the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII), however it was a career that Alfred would persevere with successfully. Despite criticisms that his life as a midshipman was 'eased' by his royal status, it became apparent that Alfred was considerably talented and would obtain a command through his merits alone. Almost killed in 1862 by a bout of typhoid fever (the same disease that would later claim his father) the prince recovered and four years later was given command of his own steamship: HMS Galatea.

In 1867, Galatea received orders from the Admiralty to embark on a world tour that would take in

South America, Cape Colony in southern Africa, India, China and Australasia. This news sped to the colonies via two routes: on ocean-bound cargo ships travelling around the Cape of Good Hope and east to Australia; and by train and ship through Europe, to the Middle East and via Ceylon. The 'colonial democrats' who held the reins of government in Victoria had, according to Manning Clark, were self-serving political dilettantes engaged in bickering and positioning; yet with matters of true importance such as defence and foreign policy still in the hands of the British imperial government, colonial politicians were just moderately big fish in the smallest of ponds (they had the 'same prerogatives as the harlot: they had power but not responsibility.')

News of Prince Alfred's tour – the first visit to the Australian colonies by a significant English royal – delivered into their hands a golden opportunity to rub shoulders with royalty and elevate themselves socially and politically. Throughout the royal visit these colonial wannabes would take obsequious toadying to new levels; cartoons of the day would portray them as ladder-climbing or hot in pursuit of knightships.

## The arrival of the prince

The prince's landfall in Australia took place in Adelaide on October 31 in sweltering weather. The public excesses of the South Australians in welcoming him were extreme: festoons of flowers, ribbons and banners; red carpets along Glenelg Pier; countless portraits of Alfred that even he acknowledged looked little like him; even the words of the national anthem were questionably altered to 'God Save our Prince'. Attempts were made to light the streets of Adelaide with gas lighting, although it was not fully successful because 'there was an insufficiency of gas'.

On this first day Alfred listened to the first of literally hundreds of repetitive and long-winded 'declarations of loyalty', delivered by members of colonial parliaments, town mayors and councillors, business representatives and members of social groups. Many of these speeches went two hours or more, in sharp

contrast to Alfred's own spoken remarks, which were generally described as polite and warm yet generally brief. A crowd of over 4000 children formed a choir; 'there was an absence of the poor and rowdy class', it was noted.

## The departure of good intentions

One of the more remarkable attempts at philanthropic goodwill ever attempted in Australia was the ostentatiously named 'free public banquet', the brainchild of a Melbourne physician, Louis Smith. The good doctor was himself a person of enterprise and entrepreneurial spirit, offering 'mail-order prescriptions' if you were willing to post him a list of your symptoms along with a pound note. He first mooted the idea of a free banquet for "the deserving poor" in the columns of *The Age*. At Smith's request, dozens of local businesses donated foodstuffs for the banquet: 'one cwt of bread from E. Harrison, baker, of North Melbourne... 50 pounds of sausages from E. Timms, butcher, of Collingwood... 100 cases of apples from an orchardist at Doncaster.'

As the food rolled in and the publicity grew, Melbourne's upper-class rolled in their philanthropy and good intentions like pigs in mud. Ordinarily the gulf between the colonial elite and the working classes would have made such a suggestion laughable (the more right-wing *Argus* was certainly derisory, calling it the 'free feed') however the spirit conjured into existence by the royal visit attracted some influential supporters, including the governor's wife.

The banquet was scheduled for Thursday November 27th; the grassy Yarra Bank just to the east of Flinders Street was chosen as the venue. *The Age* suggested that 'Victoria will long remember this day' and that a crowd of 10,000 may be expected (the latter prediction was wrong while the former proved correct, though for all the wrong reasons). Winding crowds made their way to the venue all morning as the bright sun and dust-carrying northerly winds pushed temperatures towards the mid-30 degrees Celsius mark. The organisers, who had not catered for such large numbers, began to worry.

By 2pm an estimated 70,000 Melburnians had reached the site, waiting impatiently in roped-off areas, staring eagerly at the long tables of free food and (perhaps more pointedly) at the reservoirs of free wine. Within a half-hour the chief of police decided the numbers were too great to guarantee the prince's safety, so it was decided to abandon plans for Alfred to open the banquet; the public responded to this news by rushing the food and drink stalls, their restraint giving way to what the *Argus* would call 'a frightful saturnalia.'

The scene came to resemble a veritable riot as the hoi polloi raced to grab food not only from their serving tables, but from storage tents where extra food was being kept in reserve. Whole hams, loaves of bread and boxes of fruit were carried off by dozens of free-loaders, while more still gathered around the wine fountains, filling everything from glasses to fire-buckets with the gratis grappa. The well-to-do ladies took refuge in their tents, only to have urchins cut the guy ropes, bringing canvas down on top of them; some even had their hats and finery pinched in the ruckus.

In an hour or two, hundreds of drunken Melburnians lolled around on the grass, some indulging in the pursuit of more carnal pleasures. The whole event had descended into a frightful orgy of disrespect, uproar, thievery and vandalism. In the coming days the *Argus* and *The Age* – perpetually at war anyway – would apportion blame accordingly; the Sydney press merely pointed to the large delinquent underclass present in Melbourne. The prince's own thoughts on the debacle were not recorded.

## The arrival of the rabbit

Three points in Alfred's tour of the colonies will be of particular interest to Australian history buffs. The first was his visit to Barwon Park, the sprawling pastoral estate of Thomas Austin, located at Winchelsea. It was not then the palatial mansion of today; that was built in 1869, inspired by Mrs Austin's embarrassment at having to host royalty in a sizeable but hardly stylish bluestone and timber homestead. But what Barwon Park lacked in opulence it certainly made up for in hunting stock – specifically, rabbits, literally in their thousands.

Thomas Austin's desire to recreate and re-enact traditional hunting scenes from his English childhood led him to import two-dozen rabbits, along with numerous other species including hare, sparrow and partridge. He released the rabbits onto his property on Christmas Day 1859; within a year they had multiplied alarmingly and denuded large sections of his property. Austin was able to fulfil his hunting dreams, and then some – and he kept good figures too, recording a 'kill' of over 14,000 rabbits in 1867, the year of the prince's visit.

Prince Alfred arrived at the Austin's in mid December, after calling at Winchelsea to lay the final stone in the bluestone bridge that still spans the Barwon River there today. After dining, the party took advantage of the warm summer evening to embark on a rabbit shoot, strolling to 'the Warrens', an area near the river where the rabbits were as thick as flies. In three hours' shooting the prince bagged over 400; the

party together shot almost 1000. The proceeds were distributed, by Austin, among the local residents, who no doubt feasted heavily on 'underground mutton' through the following week.

Prince Alfred continued on a tour of western Victoria that took in several more set-up hunting expeditions, including kangaroos near Warrnambool and one strategically placed black swan at Hexham ("the swan was as drunk as the locals", wrote the travelling Argus correspondent). This and subsequent trips around Victoria saw the prince welcomed in Geelong, Colac, Ballarat, Bendigo, Castlemaine and dozens of hamlets and railway towns in between. At each stop he was publicly feted, subjected to relentless speeches and 'declarations of loyalty', and presented

with ornamental trinkets and mementos. The royal entourage would leave Victoria on January 4th, 1868, making its way to Tasmania, Sydney, Queensland and then back to Sydney.

### The departure of good order

It was during the second visit to Sydney and the final leg of the tour, in March 1868, that its most widely known event occurred: an assassination attempt on the prince. While being ushered around a retirement home for sailors in the harbour-side suburb of Clontarf, the prince was approached by a pistol-wielding Irishman, Henry James O'Farrell, who shot him in the back at near point-blank range. Wounded, the prince fell to his hands and knees, exclaiming



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‘Good God, I am shot, my back is broken’ while the crowd fell upon O’Farrell, beating him incessantly and calling for his lynching.

The police eventually rescued O’Farrell from the crowd while the prince was carried into a tent to be examined. It was discovered that the would-be assassin’s bullet had been slowed by Alfred’s thick leather braces, hitting a rib before deflecting around his torso and lodging in his abdomen. They were not life-threatening injuries but he would require hospitalisation and some surgery. He was transferred to Government House, where the pellet was removed and spent several days in recovery. O’Farrell was charged with assault with intent to murder, put on trial and executed within six weeks of the event – a measure of the common disgust which most colonials felt about the whole affair.

O’Farrell’s crime touched off a long and often bitterly waged vendetta against Irish nationalists, their sympathisers and the Irish generally. It also produced acrimonious dialogue between the colonies of Victoria and New South Wales, each blaming the other for the embarrassing event (to be fair, these colonies needed only flimsy excuses for their rival newspapers to engage in endless bickering). Among the clamouring expressions of shock and indignation at the shooting were vague and not-so-vague insinuations: first, comments about Sydney crowds and the lack of security; then it emerged that O’Farrell was actually from Melbourne, a ‘haven for Fenianism’. The issue would keep colonial writers and typesetters busy for months throughout 1868.

## The departure of the prince

Alfred left Sydney in April, abandoning plans for further visits and making his way back to Britain. He arrived there in June, having been away for 17 months. In 1869 he embarked on a second royal tour of the southern hemisphere, returning to Australia and becoming the first British prince to visit New Zealand, Hong Kong and India. Alfred married the Grand Duchess Marie Alexandrovna of Russia in 1874, an aunt of Nicholas II, the last tsar. They adopted Clarence House (later the home of the Queen Mother) as their London residence, and although their marriage was, from accounts, not a happy one, nevertheless it yielded six children. Alfred devoted much of his life to his naval duties, rising through the ranks to admiral and, in 1893, earning the rank of Admiral of the Fleet, commander of all British and imperial navies. Later that year he acquired the dukedom of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha in modern Germany, where he was to reside until his death from throat cancer in 1900.

## Other legacies of Prince Alfred’s visits

- Following the attempt on his life, public collections were taken to build a lasting memorial in gratitude for Prince Alfred’s recovery; construction of the Royal Prince Alfred (RPA) Hospital (Sydney) and the Alfred Hospital (Melbourne) were initiated by these funds
- The prince visited dozens of wineries while touring the colonies, including several in the Geelong region, including a Waurin Ponds venture that was later to assume the honorific name Prince Albert Vineyards; it still exists today
- The Melbourne Town Hall had its cornerstone laid by Prince Alfred on his return visit to Victoria in 1869
- The prince also laid the cornerstone of the planned Wesley College in Adelaide, becoming the first royal to inaugurate a non-Church of England institution. It was decided, two years later, to rename it Prince Alfred College in his honour, a name it still bears today
- The Ballarat suburb of Alfredton was named in honour of the prince

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