

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR CONFLICT AT HANGING ROCK

MARVELLOUS MELBOURNE

In the 1880's Melbourne was known as Marvellous Melbourne. It was indeed a place of grand buildings and untold wealth stemming from the days of the gold rush and from the huge dividends arising from wool and other produce being exported to Great Britain. Many of these grand buildings still stand today.

Trove Newspapers, a service provided free by the National Library of Australia has digitised versions of many newspapers which date back to the early days of Australia and is a treasure trove of informative material for the researcher.

The following are transcripts from two articles that appeared in the Illustrated Australian News which vividly describe the state of the city in 1880 and the International Exhibition.

Illustrated Australian News (Melbourne, Vic. 1876 -1889) Saturday 9th October 1880, page 178

MELBOURNE IN 1880.

A view of Melbourne in 1880 appropriately supplements our Exhibition number, as it will stand as a record of the extent and characteristics of the metropolis at a very important epoch in the history of the colony. It exhibits not 'only the city proper, - with its various public buildings, gardens, and recreation grounds, but the far-reaching suburbs that spread around on every, side wherever suitable building ground can be obtained. To those who, thirty years ago, witnessed what Melbourne then was, and who take the trouble of comparing it with what it now is, the progress made in that time must seem amazing. From an insignificant township, the furthest; removed from the capital of New South Wales, it has grown and become the leading city of the South, the only really representative metropolis of the Australian colonies. It is not requisite to dilate upon the causes which have had a more immediate bearing upon its extraordinary development. The discovery of gold, the vast influx of immigrants, the impetus

thus given to trade, the settlement of the land, the fostering care bestowed upon native industries, and the peculiar energy and enterprise of Victorians have all contributed their share in building up Melbourne and rearing a monument of the colonising instincts of the Anglo-Saxon race. The city of Melbourne abounds in edifices which rival those of the older capitals of Europe, and which, though of recent and rapid construction, are as substantial and enduring as are those of any place in the world, the material bluestone of which most of the warehouses and many of the public buildings are in whole or in part constructed, being, so to speak, of an imperishable nature. The number, of churches (conspicuous amongst which is the Scots' Church, built of brown freestone, and the celebrated white Kakanui stone, in the early English style of architecture, and having a graceful and elegant proportioned steeple 211 feet in height), the Lonsdale street Wesley Church, the new Bank of Australasia, a commanding building of the Italian Doric order, the warehouses, public and Government buildings exceeds perhaps that of any other city of the - same size in any part of the world, although some of the most important, of them, the Parliament Houses for example, are in an unfinished state, and from all appearance likely to remain so for some time to come. The most noteworthy edifices are the Treasury Houses of Parliament, the new Law Courts now completing, the Public Library, containing over 100,000 volumes, the Post Office, Government Offices, an immense building at the back of the Treasury, the Custom House, having a fine frontage to the Queen's wharf, and being near the spot where Mr. John Fawkner moored the little craft that was the pioneer of the fleets of merchantmen that have ploughed the waters of Hobson's Bay, the Mint, the University, with the admirable Museum attached; the Town Hall, with one of the largest organs in the world; the various places of worship already alluded to, and other prominent ones being St. Patrick's Cathedral (Roman Catholic), which has for many years been in course of erection; the Independent Church, a large building of brick and freestone in the Saracenic style, with a massive square campanile; and the Baptist Church in Collins street, the insurance offices, theatres and many handsomely built hotels. Conspicuous from every part of the city is the Government House, a palatial building with a square tower, 145 feet high, from whose summit a magnificent panorama of land and sea is obtainable, and in which the representative of royalty is fittingly lodged. A cathedral for the Church of England is in course of erection, large sums having already been contributed towards it. The site chosen is at the intersection of Swanston and Flinders streets, where the Church of St. Paul now stands. The crowning efforts of Victorians in the matter of architecture has been the International Exhibition, of which Melbourne may be justly proud. Descriptive particulars of the structure are given elsewhere in our issue. In a general way it

may be said that though Victoria is the smallest of all the colonies in the island continent of Australia, containing about 57,000,000 acres, 40 years ago it was a wild and uninhabited country, but we now have a population bordering on 1,000,000. The value of our imports amounts to about £13,000,000 and our exports to £15,600,000 per annum. In 1851 the exports of the colony were only £1,422,209 and imports £1,056,437. The total revenue of the colony, according to the latest statistics, is about £4,500,000, as against an expenditure varying between £4,400,000 and £4,700,000. We have a national debt of £20,000,000, but on the other side of the accounts there will be found public assets, the chief item in which is 10,000,000 acres of unalienated Crown lands available for selection, and about 1200 miles of railways, extending to the principal inland towns. There are 172 municipalities, whose gross revenue, including Government subsidy, amounts to about £1,000,000 sterling per annum. The value of ratable property in the colony was in 1879 assessed at £83,000,000.



Exhibition Building 1880 (Source: Museum Victoria)

EPITOME OF EVENTS.

The Melbourne International Exhibition was opened on Friday, the 1st October, by his Excellency the Governor, in the presence of an immense concourse of spectators. The affair passed off with immense success. The day was proclaimed a public holiday, and all classes of

citizens united in doing honor to the occasion. The weather was somewhat dull and a high wind prevailed; nevertheless the various trades of the city, the volunteers, the seamen from the British and foreign warships in the bay turned out in force and assisted in the preliminary display, which consisted of a grand procession through the principal streets of the metropolis. The spectacle was one of a very, impressive character, each trade or society carried its banner, and at intervals military bands were stationed and discoursed music throughout the forenoon, while the line of march was quite blocked with spectators. The interior of the building presented a most brilliant scene. His Excellency arrived shortly before eleven o'clock at the head of the procession and was received at the main entrance by the commissioners, and immediately escorted to the dais. Accompanying Lord Normanby were his Grace the Duke of Manchester; Lord Augustus Loftus, Governor of New South Wales; Sir W. F. Jervois, Governor of South Australia; Sir F. Smith, Acting-Governor of Tasmania; Sir Wm. Robinson, Governor of Western Australia, and various military and naval officers. The National Anthem having been sung, three cheers were given for the Queen and the rest of the royal family, and also for the Governor, after which the performance of the cantata was proceeded with. An address was presented to the Governor, who suitably responded, and in conclusion declared the Exhibition duly opened.

Also of interest in this same issue was a small snippet relating to the trial of Ned Kelly.

The venue of the trial of Kelly, the bushranger has been changed from Beechworth to Melbourne, where it will take place on the 15th.

And what of our First Nations People. Early newspapers are littered with articles relating to the injustices that were meted out to the traditional owners of the land on which Marvellous Melbourne was built.

In 1863 the First Nations Peoples were allocated a site near Healesville which became known as the Coranderrk Mission. By the 1880's as the city and surrounds grew, the land they occupied had become more valuable and there was talk of moving them on again.

Argus (Melbourne, Vic. 1848 – 1957) Thursday 8 June 1882, page 9

THE CORANDERRK BLACKS

TO THE EDITOR OF THE ARGUS

Sir, - The correspondence which has appeared in the Argus respecting the condition of the aborigines at the Coranderrk Station induces me to call attention to one or two facts which seem to be worthy of consideration.

Some 22 years ago a board was appointed for the protection of the aborigines and it included the names of four or five honoured and distinguished men – men who were really anxious to benefit the natives. They fixed up stations for the blacks in localities remote from settlement, and as far as possible from public houses, beer shops, and wine-shanties. Such places at Yelta, on the Murray, Lakes Hindmarsh, Oondah, Wellington, and Tyers, and Coranderrk were chosen. All went well for 15 years. There were no scandals, no mismanagement, and no disorders, such as are now the subject of remark where you travel. Coranderrk 20 years ago was untouched forest land, and the village of Healesville did not then exist. The station was all that could be desired. Natives were brought from all parts of the colony and located at the foot of Mount Juliet. They never quarrelled; they were only too glad to meet, and for long Coranderrk was an asylum for blacks from the west, from the Murray, indeed from all parts of the colony, and nearly all those now here are, so to speak, “foreigners.” I would propose to remove all the natives to Lake Wellington or to Lake Tyers. Under the care of the Rev. Mr. Hagenauer, or Mr. Bulmer, their temporal wants would be supplied and either of these gentlemen would watch carefully over their morals and conduct and impart religious instruction. Both of these estimable men have had the care of the

aboriginal stations for 20 years or more, and they have discharged their difficult duties as to meet with approval from all. Are there any influential persons desirous of smoothing the path of the now neglected natives to their last resting-place. Then let them exert themselves at once, send the black to Gipps Land and put an end to the bickerings, fights, and other scandalous doings now of daily occurrence at our doors.

This proposal will of course meet with violent opposition from those who are either directly or indirectly interested in maintaining the station at Healesville, but all those who have the welfare of the blacks at heart will support the change proposed.

Those who say that the natives have such an affection for Coranderrk as a place of abode as to prevent them from settling comfortably in Gipps Land prove themselves wholly ignorant of the natives, character. Yours, &c KAUBERR. Healesville, June 5.

Another item of interest

The Weekly Times (Melbourne, Vic. 1869 – 1954) Saturday 8th March 1854

The Eucalyptus manufactory and laboratory of Mr. Bosisto, M.L.A. who is at present absent from the colony, were almost completely destroyed by fire between 3 and 4 o'clock on Tuesday afternoon.

THE PRINCESS THEATRE



The Princess Theatre (Source: State Library of Victoria)

The Princess Theatre was built in 1857 but by 1885 had fallen into a state of disrepair and was closed on January 3rd. The theatre received a new lease of life when it was partially rebuilt and reopened on December 18th, 1886, with a performance of the Mikado.

Melbourne Punch (Vic.: 1855 - 1900), Thursday 10 February 1887, page 8

On Friday night last, Nellie Stewart took a (temporary) farewell of the Melbourne public, the opera of the Mikado being played for the last time. It is unnecessary to say anything about the crowded state of the house, or the enthusiasm with which “Yum Yum” was greeted. Miss Stewart goes to Europe for a twelve month’s spell. Gilbert and Sullivan have since been deposited at this pretty and comfortable place of amusement. They are now playing “Billee Taylor” and “Charity Begins at Home.”

HANGING ROCK

Much was also written about Hanging Rock around this time.

Australasian Sketcher with Pen and Pencil (Melbourne, Vic. Saturday 17
February 1877

THE HANGING ROCK, NEAR WOODEND

Of all the places of holiday resort for the picnic purposes open to the choice of the pleasure-seeker, there is none at once more interesting, picturesque, popular, and readily accessible than the Hanging Rock, which lies some four or five miles from Woodend. Its situation and surroundings are interesting and picturesque. All around its base stretch farm clearings, cutting the forest into alternate squares, like the white* and black squares of a chess-board. Away to the north and east lie bold hills scattered in groups, or linking themselves into regular chains of ranges, some covered with farm holdings, other dark with almost unbroken forest. To the south rise high and dark the sombre masses of the Mount Macedon range, and in the middle of the crowning ridge stands up bare and rugged the rocky, roughly fissured cone of Mount Diogenes.

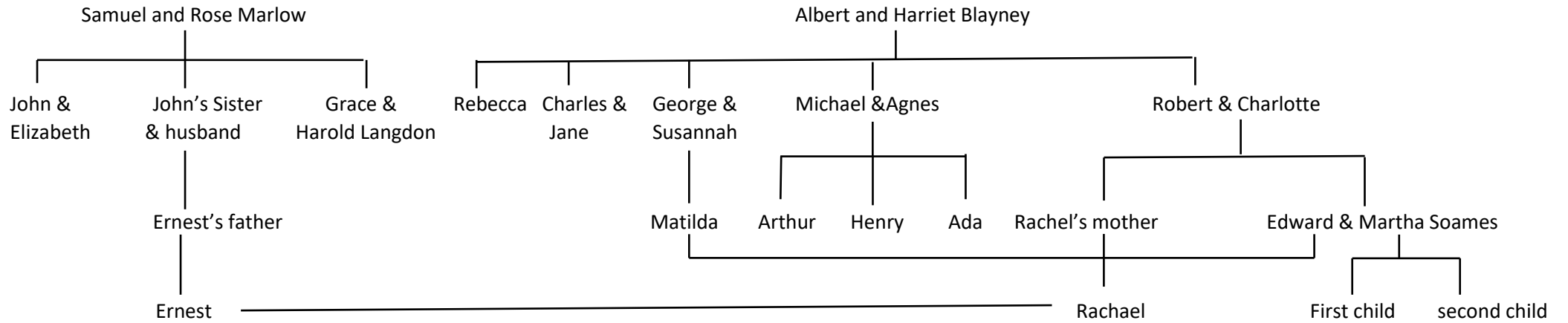
The Hanging Rock itself is a hill of rudely conical form, from 300ft. to 400ft. in height, and crowded in its upper part with an enormous mass of rugged trap rocks, broken and riven and weathered into the most fantastic forms. The shape most affected is the pinnacle, but in places the rock solidifies into a wall of perpendicular precipice, rising to 50ft. or 60ft. In other parts it resembles the rough cyclopean masonry of an earlier world. The path generally followed up the hill passes under the foot of the frowning, lofty, overhanging cliff, on the broken face of which rock-ferns and musk bushes struggle for life. It then ascends between the wall of an enormous portal formed by an immense boulder of some scores of tons in weight, lying jammed between the side walls of the rock. Beyond this the path climbs up a grassy ascent, out of which stand up strangely-shaped crags, some scooped and hollowed out by the weather into mere shells, others crowned with great toppling boulders, only held in place by vast wedges of rock. And amidst all grow graceful white gum trees, with their clean white stems and greed drooping foliage, casting delicate, gently waving shadows on the grey surfaces of the lichen-grown rocks. Above this rises the second done or citadel of what seems a grey defaced ruin, of such antiquity that all trace of form is lost. The strange shapes of the

rocks and the curious alliances of stone and tree everywhere arrest attention. Here there is a singular hollow in the vast crag, out of which something like a wild petrified head of the early ages of the world seems to look. Then another rock is split in two, the split suspending and being kept open by great stones, which have fallen into it, and showing large orifices, through which the eye ranges out and gets charming views of the surrounding county enclosed in the rough rock frame. The most difficult and perpendicular part of the outer rampart is riven with deep crevices, which extend down low into the heart of the hill. To go down one of these is one of the correct things to be done by all visitors to the rock, and the journey is worth the squeeze and the difficulty it involves for the sake of the queer sensation given to the passer, by finding himself in a mere crack between immense flat walls formed by an enormous rock which had once divided and might - horrible thought - again close.

The Hanging Rock is on holidays frequented by large crowds of people, some of whom come from the surrounding neighbourhood, and some from remote parts of the colony. On last Christmas Day, for instance, there was a large picnic party of nearly 100 persons from Melbourne, and two large parties from Sandhurst. But these were nothing in number compared with the numberless parties congregated from the well-peopled districts of Newham, Rochford, and Lancefield, who had driven in buggies and light carts, or ridden or walked to the spot. These were scattered on all the slopes and on every shady spot. Vehicles dotted the hillsides, and horses were tethered to every convenient tree. A fine clear cold spring rises at the foot of the rock and affords an abundant supply of water.

It is humiliating to add that a place so well suited to serve as a holiday resort to thousands of people, and thus to be a great public benefit to the community was sold by the stupid, short-sighted policy of the Government some years ago. The department found the allotment on its plans, and in strict accordance with the genius of routine offered it for sale. It was sold, we believe, at or near the upset price of £1 an acre, and the effect is, that a place at which very large numbers of people crowd in the course of a year, and which is a natural object of great picturesque interest, unique in the colony, can only be visited by the permission, which, it is only right to say, is freely accorded – of its proprietor. Of late years he has made a small charge for admission to his paddock, which is, of course, perfectly legitimate. But few can visit the spot without a feeling of indignation at the imbecility of the Government, which, for something less than £100 permitted the alienation of what ought to have been reserved as public property for public recreation and amusement.

Hanging Rock Family Tree



NOTE: Some of the ancestors of Ernest and Rachel are not mentioned by name in this family tree as they were either not given names in the book or were not part of the story.