



Pioneer Echo

A Publication of the Port Phillip Pioneers Group Inc.

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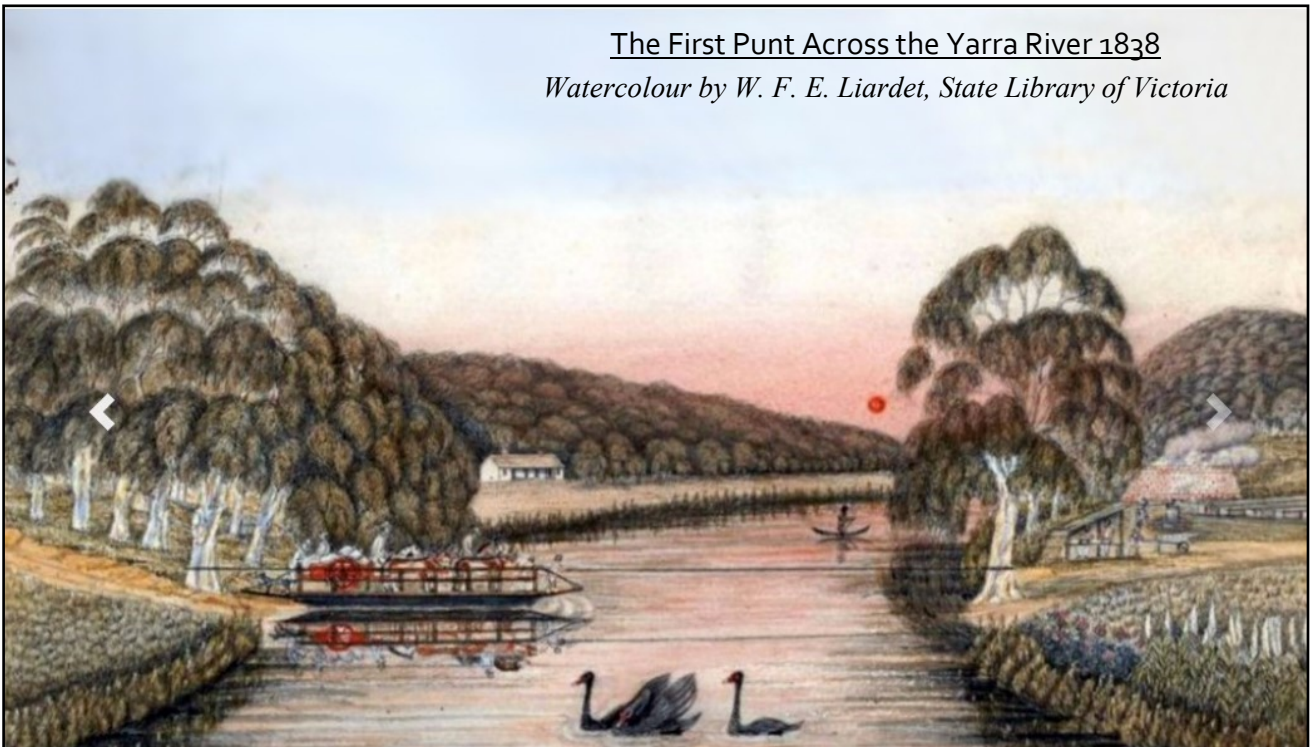
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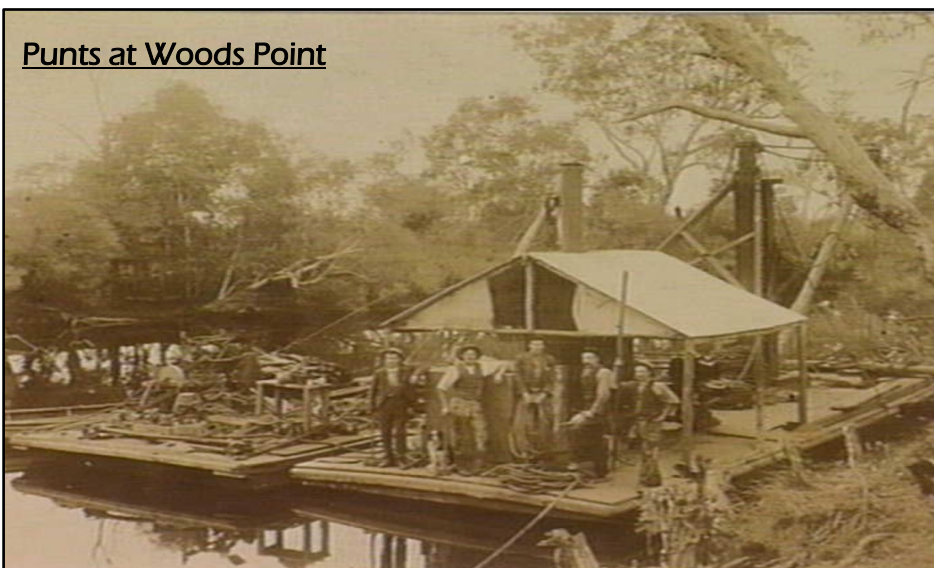
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The First Punt Across the Yarra River 1838

Watercolour by W. F. E. Liardet, State Library of Victoria



Punts at Woods Point



Two punts, both have equipment on board, one has five men and a dog standing at front end of punt and a shed constructed of wood, tin and cloth. Image from SLV Picture Collection Online

What is a punt?

A punt is a long narrow flat-bottomed boat with square ends that transported people, livestock and goods across a shallow waterway and was the most popular way of crossing a river before a town could afford to build a permanent bridge. Pleasure punting came about in the beginning of the 19th century with the rise of the middle class and an increase in leisure time.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hello members and friends,

I firstly would like to thank Elaine Race for joining us on the Committee. She has a lot of knowledge from previous and existing interests in family and local history, so thank you Elaine. We look forward to meeting others that might like to join us also, why not give it a go. All you need is an interest in our time line and group, no special experience.

There was much interest in Martin Playne's talk on pilots and shipping. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we knew all about the comings and goings of our family on those boats around our shores in days gone by? Did they go to Dromana with a few hundred others for a Sunday outing on the ferry? I wish I knew.

It is 187 years ago that John Lancey on the *Enterprize* (as Fawkner's Representative) and the Batman group arrived at the spot we now call Melbourne. For many years a group of us would make our way into the Melbourne Day celebrations in the city on August 30. Due to Covid, this event has not taken place for the last two years, so if you are curious about this, have a look at the website and learn more about it.
<https://www.melbourneday.com.au>

Stuart has been working very hard to get the new website up and running for you especially the members area, so I hope you take a moment to have a look at it as it is looking great. We are receiving great feedback on it.

Last meeting was the first for a very long time that we have not welcomed any new members but I am sure there will be more to welcome soon.

I hope some of you are working on your presentations for the February meeting and have some stories about your female ancestors to share with the Group, if not for the meeting, maybe for Pioneer Profiles Volume 8 or our newsletter *PIONEER ECHO*.

We welcome all new ideas for the Group and please feel free to share them with us. Hoping to see you soon at a meeting. Please don't forget to bring two dollars if you are coming as this helps pay for the hall.

Barb Hawkins, President PPPG



VALE

Denis Vere Boundy

PPPG Member [#1165]

1938—17 March 2022

Denis joined the PPPG on 14 February 1999 with his wife
Alison



OTHER NEWS: THE YARRA VALLEY FAMILY HISTORY MONTH
IS ON NOW. HERE'S THE link. Check it out.

<https://www.ypri.vic.gov.au/events/?categories=FH>

PIONEER PROFILES VOL. 8

**DON'T FORGET TO SUBMIT YOUR PIONEER PROFILES FOR
VOLUME 8 TO BEVERLEY JACOBSON AT:**

info@portphillippioneersgroup.org.au

(see www.portphillippioneersgroup.org.au for
formatting and guidelines)

**PLEASE DON'T FORGET TO SHARE YOUR FAMILY STORIES BY SUBMITTING AN ARTICLE TO THE
PIONEER ECHO**

Send your email to the Editor Di Wheeler at
pppgdiw@gmail.com

HARBOURS AND SHIPS OF PORT PHILLIP – 1800 TO 1930

By Martin Playne

As family historians, we have tended to ignore the role that the sea has played in the history of Port Phillip. Yet, we all have ancestors or even ourselves who have arrived by sea. Our history and prosperity are intimately linked to the sea.

The development of harbours, jetties and wharves; the use of dredging, building of rock walls and breakwaters to reshape our waterways; the development of navigational aids, such as lighthouses, marks and light; the fortifications and military settlements arising from perceived threats of war, of invasion and piracy; and quarantine stations and ship's surgeons were discussed.

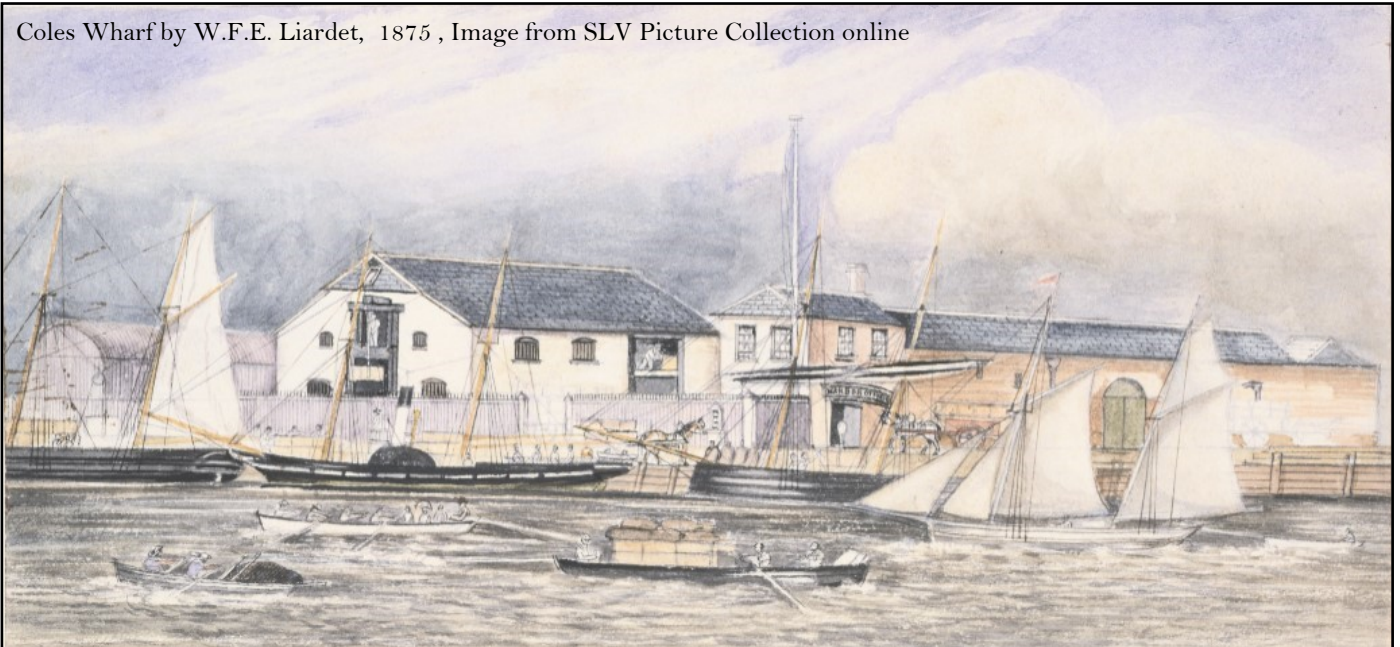
Martin went on to discuss the great variety of shipping: full rig square and barque sailing ships, clipper ships, sail/ paddle steamer ships, and propeller driven steam ships. These types of vessels have been used for international and interstate travel and for the transport of goods, such as wool. Ferries and punts have been widely used to cross rivers since 1835. Excursion steamers have provided passenger and freight services around the Bay for people at outlying settlements from 1845 to 1900, and for tourists until the 1940s. Small coastal mail boats have provided postal services on a weekly basis between Melbourne and Port Fairy for example for many years, calling at places like Port Campbell and Warrnambool en route, as well as larger coastal steamers plying trade along coastal settlements from Portland to Lakes Entrance, as well as to Sydney and Tasmania. Pilot ships have provided guidance to large ships entering Port Phillip Heads for many years.

Finally, the role of early settlers like George Ward Cole and Abraham Liardet, and the English engineer, John Coode in the development of the waterways of Port Phillip were discussed.

Many of our ancestors must have been involved in such maritime activities, yet we read little of this with most of history telling of squatters, settlers, grazing and gold-rushes, and the development of towns and cities.

Thanks to Martin Playne for providing the above summary.

Coles Wharf by W.F.E. Liardet, 1875 , Image from SLV Picture Collection online



PUNTS

Within about three years of the founding of Melbourne in 1835, the Yarra River's first punts emerged and were not unlike a couple of huge bullock-drays fastened together "*... a dray without wheels, made water-tight by tarpaulin, which was launched through the agency of a small rope looped round the main rope across the river. The first man to experimentalise with a punt over the Yarra at Melbourne was a Mr. William Watts, and the crossing place was about half-way between Swanston and Russell Streets. He did so under license, by which he was authorized to charge puntage rates. Watts launched his punt on the 15th April, 1838, and it was christened "The Melbourne" by his daughter breaking a bottle of champagne against one of its sides, after which there was a plentiful distribution of grog on the spot. In honour of so important an event, however, there was a stiff jollification at the town taverns in the evening, when no such nonsensical stuff as "Sham-pain," but stiff fiery rum, and not the best of half-and-half, formed the bibations.*

The first punt "spec." seems to have succeeded with Watts, for in 1839 he established another over the Saltwater River near Footscray, where he also purposed opening a public-house ; but as a license would not be granted, he disbanded the punt, and the Saltwater remained unpunted for some time. The Melbourne punt continued at its work, and a second one was added; but on the formation of the Melbourne Bridge Company, the punts passed by purchase to that co-partnery, and remained in operation until superseded by a wooden bridge. Dr. J. Palmer, who had early established himself at the now St. James' Park, on the Yarra, was the first to place a punt over the river at Richmond."

Source: Excerpt – *'The Chronicles of Early Melbourne – 1835 to 1851 – Vol II'* – by Garryowen – published 1888

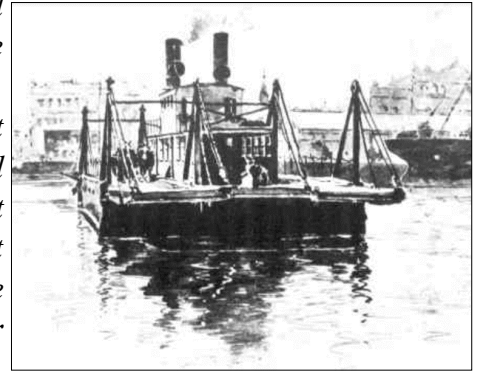
According to Colin Jones' article in *eMelbourne*, the city past & present on punts and ferries, the first rope hauled punt across the Yarra River... was operated by William Watts from 1838 and was taken over in 1840 by Benjamin Levien. The original punt could only take 2 horses or a light cart, but when Levien took over, he enlarged the

new punt to increase its capacity and added lanterns for night runs. James Palmer's punt at Hawthorn operated from 1842.

But it was not all smooth sailing for the punt operators as recorded in the following articles.

To the Editor of the Port Phillip Gazette.

SIR, — Seeing that you are at all times ready to assist those who are suffering under the oppression of either public or private acts of tyranny, I trust a case of unmerited hardship as exemplified in myself, may be worthy of your notice. In 18__, the Police Magistrate for no possible reason that I can learn, refused me a license for a punt, determined not to be thwarted in my just demand, I sent His late Excellency Sir Richard



Bourke, a petition signed by all the inhabitants of the settlement, praying that a license might be granted me for a punt, the request was acceded to in a letter to Mr. Lonsdale, containing as I have been given to understand upon very respectable authority, a perpetual permission without the payment of any fee. I have kept that punt open, Mr. Editor, for public use upwards of twelve months, and I feel confident to the satisfaction of the public. On the day that the new punt built by Mr. [Joseph Stevenson] was started, with a spirit of pardonable rivalry, I ordered a man with a cask of beer to regale everyone crossing in my punt, that chose to accept of the proffered beverage. Without my knowledge and late at night, the brickmakers on the other side of the river found their way down and taking the utmost advantage of my liberality, crossed and re-crossed until they got drunk, I was reported to the Police Magistrate as the origin of the outbreak against the quiet of the town, and deprived me of my license. Upon my representing the injury this deprivation indicted upon me the magistrate most generously offered me a license if I would ply upon the Saltwater river, but not otherwise I do not know, Sir, whether you see any

subserviency to individual interest in this act of unmistakeable partiality, but perceiving it so clearly as I do, you will not wonder at my expressing what I am afraid is likely to prove useless indignation. So anxious was I to recover any portion of my former earnings that I offered to render a slavish obedience, (which I now regret,) to his arbitrary power provided I could obtain a license to keep a house of refreshment at the place of calling, but even this was refused, and obliged to let my punt out at the rent of £1 per week, to the Chief Constable. I am left to gnaw over the disgrace and loss of income his conduct entails upon me.

Yours, &c.

W. WATT.

Port Phillip Gazette (Vic. : 1838 - 1845) Wed 24 Apr 1839 Page 3 Original Correspondence.

The ‘brickmakers’ that lead to the loss of Watt’s punt licence were an unruly bunch that would a few years later commit murder, but continue to walk free:

“ . . . At the time when the Melbourne punt flourished there was a small settlement known as the Brickfields, south of the river on the flat, running from the Government House Reserve round by Emerald Hill, and this place was the resort of a drunken, bloodthirsty, thieving crew, by whom several nocturnal depredations were committed. One night in 1842, a policeman named Rody Monahan, whilst on duty near the place was set upon by some of the brickfielders, and pitched into the river, where his body was found after several days’ search. It was thought that he had interposed to quell a drunken row, and lost his life in consequence. Three men were apprehended on suspicion of the crime, but were released through want of evidence ; and though the Bridge Company offered a reward for information towards bringing the offenders to justice, nothing ever came of it.”

Source: Excerpt – ‘*The Chronicles of Early Melbourne – 1835 to 1851 – Vol II*’ – by Garryowen – published 1888

Captain Lonsdale cancelled Thomas Watt’s licence to run a punt some twelve months later due to:

“ . . . great deal of irregularity in the assembling a number of disorderly characters about his punt and making them drunk . . . ”

Source: Excerpt – ‘*Argus*’ (Melbourne, Vic) – Article “Much Topping on the Punt” – published 9th September 1950



Picture by Charles Norton/Ham Bros. Litho

Shows punt carrying a cart driven by team of 6 oxen and laden with wood and other passengers standing by the railing and another cart laden with hay is waiting on the further bank.

<http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/295598>

The Punt.— On Saturday last the Punt at the Salt Water River, from being over-burdened with cattle, became water logged and sank, but was fortunately recovered the following day, and is now undergoing repairs, as will be seen by advertisement.

Port Phillip Gazette (Vic.: 1838 - 1845) Wed 9 Sep 1840 Page 3 Domestic Intelligence.

The competition that had lead to the incentive of free beer was due to another service running just upstream from ‘The Falls’:

“ . . . Trans-riverine locomotion by boat was established contemporaneously with the punting. The first Charon that plied close to the “Falls,” was an ancient Irish Celt, known as Paddy Byrne, who lived close by the Southern terminus, with an only daughter named Polly ... and when the father was indisposed ... Polly officiated as “skipper” with skill and liveliness. This ferry continued until the erection of the recent Falls Bridge, after “Paddy” had gone to stretch his bones in the old cemetery, and “Polly” somewhere else to the chronicler unknown. The keeper of the second ferry was, in 1839, one John Matthews, by no means so much an identity as either Paddy or Polly Byrne, and during the great Christmas Eve flood of that year, he had a miraculous escape from drowning. His boat and himself were swept from their moorings, and he would certainly have come to grief, but for his gallant rescue by a couple of sailors . . . ”

Source: Excerpt – ‘*The Chronicles of Early Melbourne – 1835 to 1851 – Vol II*’ – by Garryowen – published 1888

1840- An advertisement appeared calling for tenders for putting the two punts into order, so that they may form a floating bridge.

Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser (Vic.: 1839 - 1845) Mon 23 Nov 1840 Page 2

1842—THE RIVER — During the past week, in consequence of the violent rains, the river has presented a very unusual appearance. The punt has been unable to ply across the river since Friday morning, the rope having been broken by the strain on the punt from the force of the stream, and the landing place on each side having been rendered impassable both to men and horses.

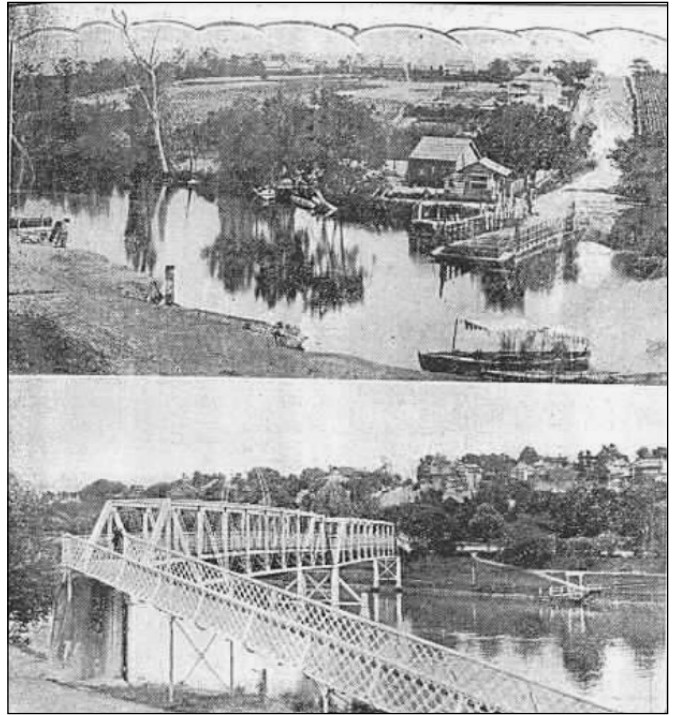
Geelong Advertiser (Vic.: 1840 - 1845) Mon 8 Aug 1842 Page 3

1844 - THE PUNTS— The settlers on the other side of the Yarra, are complaining loudly about the high rates charged by the Punt keepers on cattle and horses. Councillor Fawknor presented a petition upon this subject at the last ordinary meeting of the Town Council, and we think it high time for something to be done, as the settlers cannot afford to pay. We would suggest also that the Government should require the keepers of Punts to have stockyards on each side, so as to allow the cattle to be mustered ... to drive them on to the punts. This would be a great convenience, in fact it is indispensably requisite.

Port Phillip Gazette (Vic: 1838 - 1845) Wed 13 Nov 1844 Page 2

However, the reign of punts was short-lived, not only because of growing competition but

primarily due to the construction of bridges.



The Herald, 11 Dec 1933; Article: DO YOU REMEMBER?
74 YEARS AGO — AND TODAY

The pictures above show Anderson Street punt in 1859 and the bridge that replaced the punt.

So next time you venture along Punt Road in Melbourne, spare a thought for the men and women who established the punts over the mighty Yarra River some 180 years ago and the trials and tribulations they dealt with as early pioneers of the Port Phillip District.

Contributed by Dianne Wheeler PPPG Member # 1505



1856—WHERE PUNT ROAD MEETS THE YARRA RIVER

(Source: Royal Historical Society of Victoria—S-118 detail)

BATMAN LOSES GROUND IN ROW OVER CITY FOUNDERS

By Gabrielle Costa, August 2, 2022

Melbourne's longest running debate — the argument over who founded the city — has been reignited after the controversial decision to change the name of a prominent stretch of parkland.

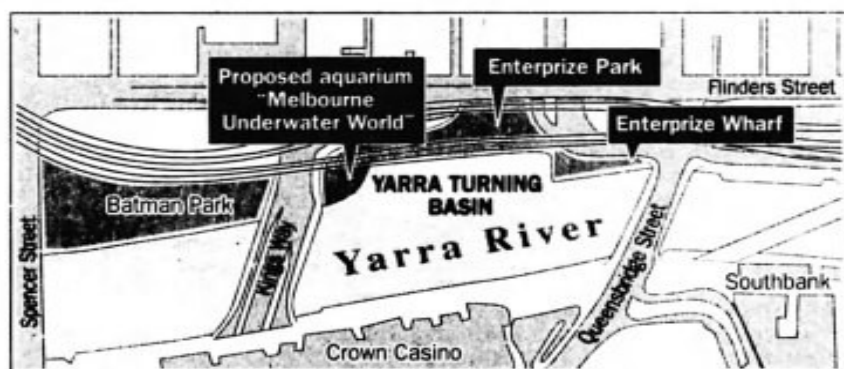
A section of Batman Park has been formally hived off and renamed in honour of John Batman's main rival for the title of Melbourne's founder.

The new area, known as *Enterprize Park*, was named after the ship commissioned by John Pascoe Fawcner that sailed up the Yarra and dropped anchor in August 1835.



Shows John Pascoe Fawcner's ship the *Enterprize* unloading at the Yarra Basin in August, 1835. Credit: State Library of Victoria

Previously, Batman Park stretched along the north bank of the Yarra from Spencer Street to Queens Bridge. Now it only goes to Kings Way, with the remainder bearing the new name.



The decision to rename the area *Enterprize Park* was made by the Place Names Committee, part of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

The Foundation Day Committee, which recognises 30 August 1835 as the date John Lancey and George Evans of the *Enterprize* set up camp

around what is now Flinders Street, had mounted a long campaign for the move. Historian Dr Andrew Brown-May, of Monash University, said Melbourne was caught in a foundation mythology. "Every city in the world seems to have a psychological desire to have a founding father, and Melbourne's got this really murky contest between Fawcner and Batman. I think to perpetuate that is pretty ... antiquated." He said a generic title, reflecting the riverside location and historical themes, should be considered.

Melbourne University's Dr Man Mayne said there was a historical cause for naming that section of the park "*Enterprize*", as it was where the ship anchored. But Batman's name and documented historical exploits "have been so deeply embedded into the public consciousness nobody could really debunk that."

Mr Hadley Elliott, a member of the Foundation Day Committee, said the group would have preferred to rename the entire park. But Mrs Edna Batman-Richards, a descendant of Batman, said the change was insulting and the *Enterprize* and its crew had done nothing of which Melburnians should be proud. The move was "corrupting history" and the Place Names Committee had been underhanded.

Mr Elliott said the public and council had been notified, and the latter had not objected.

Credit: First published in *The Age*, 5 August 1997; and *From the Archives*, by Gabrielle Costa, *The Age*, 3 August, 2022.

MEETINGS

Next Meeting:	Saturday 10 Sept 2022
Speaker:	Speaker: Cheryl Griffiths, FRHSV Topic: The three Rs: Education before Separation.
Hall Entry:	\$2.00
Doors Open:	1.30 pm. Sign in. Time to browse notice board, borrow library books, and chat.
Meeting Starts:	2.00 pm.
Guest Speaker:	2.30 pm.
Afternoon Tea:	3.30 pm. Refreshments.
Venue:	Wesley Hall, St. Andrew's Uniting Church, cnr Burke and Malvern Rds, Gardiner. <u>Victorian Government Covid-19 Regulations permitting</u> Public Transport: Right on the route of the No 72 tram and only a short walk from the Gardiner Railway Station. Melways Reference: Map 59 H7. or Online via Zoom digital platform Please register your email with the Secretary at info@portphillippioneersgroup.org.au by 6pm Thursday 8 September if you wish to participate.
Upcoming Meetings:	12 Nov 2022: Moira McAlister - Dr Barry Cotter, the First Doctor in Melbourne 11 February 2023: Your Stories about Female Pioneers

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NEWSLETTER DEADLINES : At least 1 month prior to meeting date

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