



Pioneer Echo

We look forward to your past

A PUBLICATION OF THE PORT PHILLIP PIONEERS GROUP INC.

ABN: 79 213 729 409

A Member Society of the G.S.V. Inc.

Inc. No. A0022862G

Volume 47 No. 3

Newsletter No: 234

Jun–Jul 2024

Elizabeth Sarah Pennefather



Elizabeth Sarah Pennefather (nee Curr) was the fourth daughter and tenth child of Edward Curr and his wife Elizabeth Micklethwait.

Elizabeth Sarah Curr aged 8 arrived in Port Phillip from Van Diemen's Land in 1842 with her parents and some of her 13 surviving siblings.

In a recently published book about Elizabeth Sarah's brother, Edward Micklethwaite Curr, [*Edward M. Curr and the Tide of History*, ANU E. Press Canberra] the author, Samuel Furphy, referred to a memoir entitled '*In the Early Days*' written by Elizabeth Sarah in 1910-11 when in her 70's.

This memoir is among the Murrombogie Papers in the possession of Mr. Ian Curr of Fifield in central NSW.

I thank him for agreeing to my transcribing my great grandmother's memoir, which I think throws light on the early days of Victoria as seen through the eyes of a young girl from a family of squatters. Thank you also to my cousin David Pennefather for the photograph of Elizabeth Sarah.

In this memoir she describes her childhood living at St Heliers and her visits to Colbinabbin. She describes swimming in the Yarra, the gardens and orchards planted at St Heliers, the extensions to the property, the crossing of the Yarra to Studley Park to gather wildflowers, the opening of Swanston St. Bridge, flooding in Elizabeth St, her love of horses, the social life in Melbourne, early race days, and much about her days in Colbinabbin in central Victoria.

Elizabeth Sarah married Lt Daniel Pennefather in January, 1854. There were two ceremonies, one at St Andrew's Anglican Church Brighton and the second a Catholic ceremony in her home.

My father, Clarence Arthur Pennefather, was the second son of their second son, Gerald Augustus Daniel (Jed) Pennefather.

Contributed by Dr. Jocelyn N. O'Neil (nee Pennefather)

PPPG Member No 1376

Read
Elizabeth Sarah Pennefather's
Memoir on pp 3-7



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PEN

I was sitting in the Airport Lounge awaiting my flight to London armed with a copy of *Hell Ship* (Michael Veitch- Allen & Unwin 2018) and reflected about the time (and comfort) difference between my journey and that of emigrants to the colonies only 170 years ago.

The conditions endured upon the *Ticonderoga* (for example) which sailed into Victorian waters with its yellow flag hoisted, indicating typhoid, showed how much our pioneers were at the mercy of not only the elements.

The conditions for men and women in Victorian times on board the cramped vessels were different and challenging. At our next meeting on Saturday 13 July, Elaine Race will talk on *Crossing the Seas—Shipwrecks, lighthouses and heroes*. As Elaine observed, this talk highlights the perilous journey for these economic migrants but also the things that finally got them here. It is a talk not to be missed.

Paul Cronin

President

WELCOME TO THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS



PPPG No	Member Name	Descended From	Details	Date	Ship or other means
1573	Louise HOWE	a) Frances QUIN b) Joseph GRIFFIN c) Clement GRIFFIN	In P.P.D. Arr. P.P.D. Bapt. P.P.D.	21 Jun 1838 19 Dec 1839	1838 Census Blonde St James

PIONEER PROFILES VOL. 8

Don't forget to submit your Pioneer Profile to Beverley Jacobson at:

info@portphillipioneersgroup.org.au

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

POINT of
INTEREST

DEATH OF A KING.- Mudgen, the king or chief of the Barrabool tribe of Aborigines, died on Sunday morning last, the disease which carried him off being a severe attack of influenza. Mudgen was well known about Geelong and the neighbouring districts as a very intelligent, inoffensive man. He was identified as much by a brass plate (the gift of a private individual) in the shape of a crescent, which he always wore suspended round his neck by a chain, as by his venerable appearance, erect bearing and well proportioned figure. Dr Baylie attended Mudgen throughout his illness, and was with him a little before he expired. - *Geelong Advertiser* Tues 9 October 1849, page 2

In The Early Days

by Elizabeth Sarah Pennefather 1910 (Abridged version)

[Please note: This article has been transcribed from the original version using the original spelling, capitalisation of words and language for historical accuracy and no offence is intended.]

Having spent the greater part of a long life in Victoria and few of the old colonists having left memoirs ... I in my leisure hours will try to put down the most unforgettable events of many years.

My Father & Mother arrived here in the early forties with several of their children, the remainder being at College & school in England & afterwards in France.

My Father bought a picturesque property on the Yarra known as St Heliers the 20 acres of which he soon turned into shrubberies, lawns, flowers and fruit gardens ... which became an oasis to which people from the township of Melbourne seemed to look longingly & would sit on the river bank with their children ... and many a basketful of fruit was sent to them by one of the gardeners and school children were constantly taken round the orchard to pick up windfalls.

Presently building was commenced the house being added to by several large lofty brick rooms, suitable to the climate ... when the heat continued steadily day after day, the only relief being frequent Thunder Storms which cooled and cleared the air for several days ...

In winter, the absence of roads of any kind made it almost impossible for friends to meet after dark. My Father hit upon a plan ... It consisted of having the stumps of trees on either side of the track white-washed, in order that the visitors should be certain of at least reaching the hospitable doors of St Heliers ... I from my room aloft watched the arrivals & at long past normal hours fell asleep to the Music of a Strauss Waltz or a Polka ... How surprised people would be now to see the manner of arrival. In many cases a spring cart brought some of the Elite of the day and the Government-House party depended on their only vehicle an outside jaunting Car. At first our Phaeton was the one and only carriage in the country, my Father having bought it from the Sheriff who was leaving for Sydney. A pair of Roan Carriage

Horses were imported from N.S.W.

At the same time my Father sent to London for a handsome carriage, also for fittings for the new rooms, handsome doors & windows & items of all kinds, grates, marble mantelpieces etc, and so by degrees a very comfortable home was built up.

We delighted in a fine bathing place & soon became expert swimmers much helped to learn the art by a young Newfoundland Dog, who taught us all, and lived to a great age. The Yarra, in the early days was a sweet clear stream, of a darkish colour, it was fringed with wattles which hung over the river as though to watch their reflections, & which were the home of numberless Kingfishers ... now alas never seen.

Wild flowers grew in abundance on the Studleigh Park Hills which surrounded our new home and many were the excursions we made to gather them, crossing the river by a Punt established by Mr John Hodgson, afterwards a member of the House.

But I have not described the way in which girls came and went to the various amusements waiting them a little out of town. Of course every girl owned a horse & could ride it. Finery was simply packed in a Hat Box and tied onto the offside of the side saddle & arrived in fair condition for Evening wear. Melbourne did not then or for some years contain a shop worthy of the name but many people received their clothing by Sailing Ship from England, my Mother being fortunate enough to have regular supplies twice a year for herself and family. Great was the borrowing before entertainments, races etc came off, Lace, Artificial Flowers being much in request. One notable example comes to my mind. A Bridge was to be opened across the Yarra at the end of Swanston Street, the Punt having become unable to cope with the traffic. The Wife of the Governor was laid up when the day arrived for the function & a delightful literary lady was summoned to help. "Would she represent the wife of the Governor?". I have no suitable clothing was the answer. "Oh that is easily arranged, Mrs Curr has just received her boxes from London & I can lend you a Mantle" so in that and my Mother's Bonnet and Parasol Mrs Mc.....

arose in the Jaunting Car and represent Mrs LaTrobe! What kindly feelings what friendliness then existed amongst us. We were indeed a happy family.

My father had already bought a large sheep Station, managed by my three Eldest Brothers, who took very kindly to life in the Bush. The Head Station "Tongola" (meaning "The Waters Meet") was situated at the junction of the Goulburn and the Murray and comprised large flats called "The Moira" a splendid summer country for stock.

Finding the country afforded little or no sport except Kangaroo & Emu Hunting, they turned to a special breed of Pigs, and very soon had any amount of Pig sticking, trading with the Blacks for spears suitable for the sport ... Then there was the breeding of Hounds fitted for the work getting the Pigs into the open and finally some thing of the Deer Hound strain was found the best for their purpose. Messages used to be sent to neighbouring squatters along the river, who joined heartily in the sport which became very popular in spite of injuries to horse & hound from their Tusks. This was all on the Northern part of the Station, but the more central part containing Namarong, Coragorag, Corop, down to Cooper's Lake which was already occupied and then beautiful Colbinabbin with its background of Ranges crowned by Purumburt, fringed & broken by belts of timber watered by a creek some miles in length which diversified the scenery. Here dwelt wild Dogs which we hunted ... & in pursuit of them in scrub & over plain I learnt to be a fearless rider at an age when most children are contented with a rocking horse.

At Colbinabbin occasionally we children spent the winters, accompanied by Governess & Tutors devoting the morning hours to lessons & the afternoons to hunting, racing and tackling half broken colts, without the knowledge of my dear Mother who was very nervous of horses & their ways, but entirely brave in other ways indeed. I have on several occasions seen her kill snakes, that groom, gardener & the maids declined to go near. Her favorite weapon was a pair of tongs in which she would seize the snake & speedily convey the reptile to the kitchen fire, & hold him writhing in the flames until life was extinct.

In those early days the Blacks were very trouble-

some. At St Heliers the fruit-garden was a great temptation, and Melons, Pumpkins etc. disappeared by the score, always about dawn. At long last the gardeners were provided with guns, which, I believe, they loaded with coarse salt, & very soon the Blacks thought the game not worth the candle, Melons were grown in great quantities, as the fruit trees were too young to give a great supply of Fruit. Musk, Melons, Rock and Water melons were in great demand. We bathed several times a day & visited the Melon patches on our way to the river & had a fruit repast after our swim.

In those days Piccaninnies were numerous and the fond Mothers and Fathers craved a "White Fella's" name which they seemed to think would bring luck to their little ones ... Very soon the tribe dwindled - but we were told not to ask after the Babies as most of them died, & it gave mortal offence to ask after the dead.

Some of the lads were used as a sort of Mounted Troopers under Captain Dana, wore red shirts as uniform, and despised the wearers of possum skin rugs, & let them know it. A number of the corps were present at the opening of the first Princes Bridge, & did their best to ride off their less fortunate relatives, using language I am told more forcible than polite.

Horse breakers used to come to Tongola in the winter to attend to the young horses. One of them proved to have a vicious temper & the Breaker did not fancy mounting him. He strolled down to the Blacks Camp & asked a rather fair rider "Billy you tid down along a that new fella Yarraman" meaning "You get on that young horse". "Merrijig" answered Billy, & going up to the colt took the hough between his toes black fashion, placed the other foot in the same manner at the root of the horse's tail, & in a moment was on the horse's back, the animal for a moment seemed completely stunned, but only for a moment when with one frenzied buck, Billy was hurled into space, & I believe it was some time before he understood what had happened. Days afterwards I asked how it was he got shifted "Mittil" he responded "I believe that fella Debble debble!!" The blacks were allowed to ride the old stock horses for station work, but never a good mount, as they would utterly ruin a good horse, pace & mouth, in a very short time.

Some of my brothers & sisters had Valpa ... Ponies, very enduring & docile but I was the proud possessor of a half Arab Mare that my Father bought with a number of others on the Sydney side by which term the northern country was always spoken of. I owned two dogs, a sort of deerhound & a spaniel.

I am a great lover of animals, horses, Dogs and of birds. I used to get a brother who was a good climber ... to get me various unfledged Parrots from the nests & they became so familiar that after a time they were in enclosed cages at night, always during the day would they come at my call. A tribe of blacks who spent some months every year at Colbinabbin heard marvellous tales of my bird control & one day came in great strength to ask for proofs of what I could do with them. So I told them in jargon they could understand that my Birds would not come to me if they saw blackfellows near - but that if they would go into the carriage house they could peep through the slabs & see the whole affair. After fastening them in I began to call the different Birds & in a few minutes 14(?) responded to my call, and began to partake of their favorite food. The poor prisoners could be silent no longer, but greeted their arrival with yells of delight. I released them & asked them what they thought of it all. Their response was "Mittit mine think him you Merrijig debble debble" thus I earned the highest compliment they could pay.

A most amusing scene took place on my first visit to Colbinabbin, when I rode there from Melbourne, 110 miles, which my Father & I accomplished in 2½ Days. Very long habits were then worn & the Blacks imagined that I was as long as my skirt. Some of the old men of the Tribe asked one of my brothers if two of the Lubras might come & examine my anatomy. Permission given they approached very gingerly and tremblingly felt the hem & gradually worked up to where my feet were over the pommel of my saddle, & with loud yells they reported the find, to the men of the tribe, & very mystified they seemed when I got off my horse, & walked off with my Father, & for a long time I was an object for speculation.

After a prolonged wet winter they departed for a drier camp, & one day I peeped into their old shanties to find that in several of them, the inside of the sheets of bark, of which the shelters were composed, were ornamented with rude drawings of

me on horseback, walking etc ... They most certainly were very much interested in me & for long they thought my hair was a detachable covering for my head, it being very fair and so long so that I could comfortably sit on it if I started for a ride a la Lady Godiva.

Household goods were a great puzzle to them, the first notes from the Piano, sending them, at a tremendous pace off to camp, not to return for the rest of the day. Some of them had a due appreciation of the music of the voice ... They often asked me to sing for them & would squat on the grass wrapped in possum rugs whilst I stood in the verandah singing. Their favorites were Negro Melodies "Lucy Neal" Mary Bligh (?) etc, and above all "Vedrai Carino" from Don Giovanni.

Occasionally fights between tribes took place, love as usual being the occasion of much trouble. One day a young Lubra of about 16 told my Mother a pitiful tale, how her brother was going to trade her off to an old black, he in return giving his daughter to the youth. She begged to be allowed to spend the night in the coach house, out of the reach of said brother. My mother duly locked the heavy door but the mornings light showed that a slab had been pushed aside by a young lover from another tribe, & long before daylight "She was o'er the borders & away" with him, escaping the old man, only to die within a short time by the hand of her lover who had indulged to deeply in "Fire Water", that curse that quickly destroyed tribe after tribe. But a battle royal had taken place, & spears flew like hail, but so deft were the fighters at warding off spears with their much carved shields, that only one man was wounded named "Peter", a boy always called on for the kitchen, he being quick to learn, clean & good tempered.

The King of the Colbinabbin tribe was named Berun-Berun, a lively genial humbug. We were having a very dry winter & asked the old man how to "make rain" he declared that if he cut off his hair & buried it in the creek, that rain would fall very shortly. After waiting some time we told him child fashion that he had promised what he could not perform. In the early morn following the "Pow Wow" we found that the Tribe had struck camp at dawn, & did not return for some months to demand payment for the long defer rainfall. We were then at St Heliers but a brother told me that Beran Beran

was as delighted as a child when it did come, ignoring the months of waiting & he made heavy demands on the storeroom, a large jar of jam being the crowning delight, but he was made to understand that unless the rain fell within seven days after the hair cutting that no jam would be given!!

In the spring mornings we greatly enjoyed wild Turkey shooting, it meant Picnicing when the shoot was over & a ride home of nine to ten miles on horses more or less excited with the sport ... A turkey of 25 lb or thereabout, well hung and supremely well cooked, was a dish for the Gods. Flocks of them roamed the plains, picking the succulent grass from the lately burned patches. These and innumerable wild duck of sorts Kangaroo and Wallaby, with Murray Cod and other Fish in season, Quail there a well stocked poultry yard gave us a diet hardly to be improved on.

Now Winter is over & we return to Melbourne & St Heliers. When I see the City of today I can hardly believe that such a change could take place in a lifetime. Picture Collins St, a strip of roadway, with a few Wattle & Daub buildings scattered here & there deep water courses crossing it in many places, & stumps that a conspicuous position for some years, one memorable that broke a spring of the carriage one evening when the elders of the family were returning from a Concert held in the old Athaneum, & performers consisting principally of amateurs.

This was in the days of Bushrangers escaped Convicts from Van Dieman's Land, as it was then called. I remember my nurse telling me that a gang of them had crossed the river at Dight's Falls during the night. They usually stuck up the small stations that existed near town, leaving with arms, horses & money. In one of the raids a Mr Harry Fowler was shot right through the face & his hearing destroyed. The government allowed him a small pension later on, when he became quite incapacitated from gaining a living. Until a few years I used occasionally to see him shuffling about the streets, indeed he long outlived most of his companions who lived a strenuous life, amongst others the Hunters, a well known family of daredevils, whose pranks startled the quieter portions of the Town dwellers.

A very fine race were the Pioneers, who took their lives in their hands & sailed for Australia and V.D. Land in small sailing ships of a few hundred tons,

many of which took 6 months to make the passage & arrived here to endure considerable hardships, fights with the natives, and a great dearth of food except mutton, attempting to grow grain, vegetables & fruit, being very haphazard at first.

The formation of Streets went on very slowly at first, whether from scarcity of labour, or of money, I do not know. A heavy thunderstorm would render traffic dangerous for hours, & several people were drowned in the rushing waters of Elizabeth & Queen Street ... On one occasion a well known Clergyman, being urgently needed by a sick parishioner, hurried along Elizabeth Street, towards the Yarra, & at the intersection of Bourke Street was caught in the eddying waters & drawn under the foot-bridge that crossed the stream at this point, his feet being the only visible part of the little man. An Irish shoemaker who rescued him from his perilous plight declared that the boots attracted his attention & that he recognised them as his handiwork & drawing the body of the drowning man from the water he found one of his own best customers in the Revd. Father Geoghan, who insisted on hurrying to the bedside of the sick man.

Natives wandered about the streets in those early days, but were kept well in hand by I imagine the few Police.

Very Early in the forties my father bought a property in Collins St where the Temple Court? now stands called Sawtell's Boarding House, a large wooden building. The hour was too late to insure it, & giving instructions to his lawyer to do so he rode out to St Heliers, receiving a message the next morning to say that the whole building had been destroyed by fire during the night. Shortly after he had built a large brick building was erected on the spot, consisting of offices, which were let at once to Lawyers. I think Mr James Montgomery occupied a suite, also Mr Duerdin & others whose names I do not now remember. My Father also had an office there at which he spent some hours daily, as "all sorts & condition of men" sought his advice on Politics, Sheep farming etc.

A funny thing happened one day a young brother of mine, in town after shearing, was asked by my Father to ride out to St Heliers with some message & to take Jerry as his own nag was being shod some street were in progress where the Stock Exchange now

stands, & some of the workmen recognising that a stranger was in possession of the horse & that sort of thieving being common they gathered round caught the reins & declared that until the rider proved his right, not a yard would Mr Curr's horse be allowed to move. So irate was my brother, that he would not explain until a policeman arriving on the scene he gave his name & was allowed to go on his way a burly Irishman shaking a fist at him as he departed.

My Father was a great lover of horses and we most of us attended the two "meets" of the year which I think took place in November & March, when Flemington was by, I think every able bodied man, woman & child in the settlement. On one occasion a Lady rode up to the carriage & began to talk to my Father, but turning quickly cantered off the wind lifting the habit skirt displayed manly limbs encased in Top Boots. The rider was a young man of good family universally beloved, & very often in scrapes for his mischievous pranks & on this special race day I learnt years after that a writ was out against him but he could not miss the fun, hence the disguise.

Well known squatter was also present Peter P-----g whose hair was worn curling down his back at great length, very bright golden hair it was. Meeting him many years after I was much struck many years after

by his entirely bald head & quiet demeanour, for he had famous for his practical jokes when the Police were occasionally called to enquire into matters, but I think he generally got the benefit of the doubt.

The favorite lunching place in the early days is what is now called "The Hill" & my Father delighted to entertain his many friends to Lunch, a light cart being each day dispatched from St Heliers with provender for 30 or 40 people, & there are few of the names of the early settlers of whom I now hear or read that do not awake memories of those happy old days in my mind. It was for pure love of sport that my Father attended these meetings as he never bet. A famous old horse "Petrel" by name looms large in my memory owned by a friend of the family Colin Campbell ... His pedigree was unknown but he won several big races Town Plate etc (there was no Cup then) & there was a Petrel Ball given at the Prince of Wales Hotel, beloved of squatters & Mr Campbell took me to see the decorations of the room, Petrel's saddle, bridle, whip & jockey's silk being on view. How I envied the sisters being old enough to go to Balls.

Contributed by Dr Jocelyn N. O'Neil (nee Pennefather)

PPPG Member No 1376

ST HELIER'S

John Hodgson (1799-1860), merchant, was the first owner of St Heliers before selling the property (due to insolvency) to Edward Curr in 1842 at a great bargain price at a sheriff's sale. It was then a 4-roomed cottage before Curr built a new house in 1843.

Mrs Childers in her diary describes the Curr's life at St Helier's in 1855 and 1856, describing "the flowers and fruit most luxuriant and delicious." In May and December of 1857 Mrs Curr advertised the house for sale. The agent produced a fulsome description of the family mansion, with two spacious drawing rooms, 5 bedrooms, servants' quarters etc. The verandah, with a picturesque view of the Yarra led on to lawns while the shrubberies and garden were in excellent order. A six-stall stable and dairy were located within the 14 acre grounds.

The produce however, was not the fruit of the Curr's labours. During the 1850's Robert COLE, a nurseryman, seedsman and market gardener, rented a large stretch of Mrs Curr's land. Robert Cole was on the committee of the Victorian Horticultural Society, and was known for extraordinary variety and standard of his fruit and nuts which were regularly exhibited. He also raised fruit trees, vines, and strawberry plants for sale. (Source: collingwoodhs.org.au)

Robert Cole was my 3x grandfather.

Contributed by Dianne Wheeler, PPPG Member No 1505



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Next Meeting:	Saturday: 13 July 2024
Speaker:	Speaker: Elaine Race Topic: <i>Crossing the Seas to the PPD—shipwrecks, lighthouses and heroes</i> All our ancestors courageously came to Australia by boat. Most were economic refugees offered hope for a better life. This talk will highlight the perilous journey of the immigrants coming to the Port Phillip District and the history of the lighthouses guiding their passage.
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 Roads, Gardiner. 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
Upcoming Meetings:	14 September 2024 - Graeme McIntosh— The Watson and Hunter Story 9 November 2024 - Fred Cahir—They rescued us

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS & COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

PRESIDENT	PAUL CRONIN		croninpj@outlook.com
VICE PRESIDENT	BEVERLEY JACOBSON		jacobsonbeverley@gmail.com
HONORARY SECRETARY	STUART HAMILTON	0414300505	stuarth138@gmail.com
HONORARY TREASURER	DEAN WHEELER	0411526002	dwheelerpppg@gmail.com
COMMITTEE MEMBER	ANNE BEVIS	0423028639	bevishome11@gmail.com
COMMITTEE MEMBER	BRONWYN QUINT		bquint1@bigpond.com
COMMITTEE MEMBER	NICK WAKELING		nick.wakeling@gmail.com
COMMITTEE MEMBER	SUSANNE WHEELAHAN		seagull@bigpond.net.au
COMMITTEE MEMBER	VACANT		
EXAMINER OF PROOFS	ANNE BEVIS	0423028639	bevishome11@gmail.com
WEBMASTER	STUART HAMILTON	0414300505	stuarth138@gmail.com

Representatives from other States/Countries:

USA Mr. Ken McNaughton, 3778 College Ave, Ellicott City, MD 21043 kjmcn@comcast.net

PORT PHILLIP PIONEERS GROUP INC.

A Member Society of the G.S.V. Inc.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.portphillippioneersgroup.org.au

CONTACT DETAILS: 21 Apex Ave, Hampton East, 3188

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Dianne Wheeler

pppgdiw@gmail.com

**NEWSLETTER DEADLINE : At least one month prior
to the next meeting**

All articles and information contained in this Newsletter are accepted in good faith and the Port Phillip Pioneers Group Inc. takes no responsibility for the content and accuracy contained therein.