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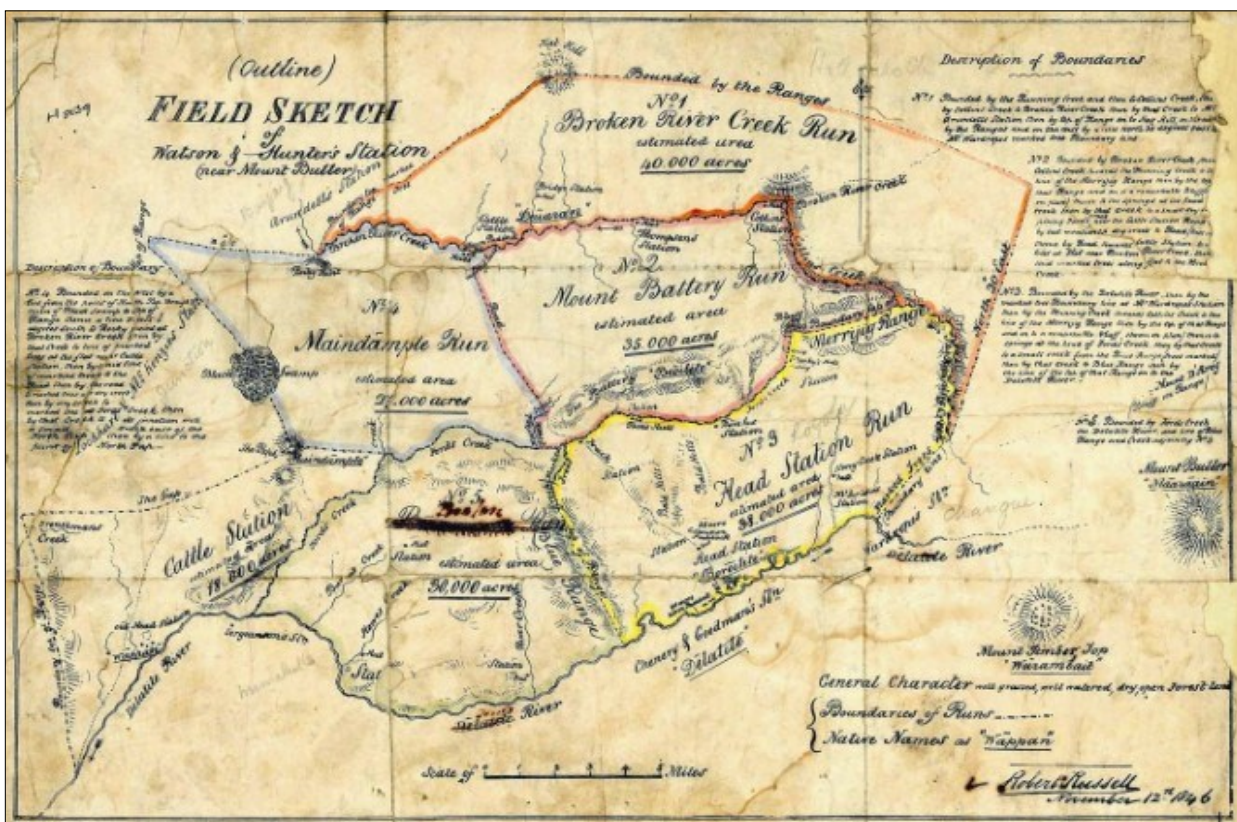
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THE WATSON & HUNTER STORY



Field sketch of the Watson and Hunter Station near Mt Buller by Robert Russell, 12 November, 1846. Source: SLV

Watson and Hunter were a powerful Scottish pastoral company formed in Edinburgh in 1838. It had wealthy and aristocratic backers including the Marquis of Ailsa the chief of Clan Kennedy. The Watsons were famous cattle breeders and perfected the breed Aberdeen Angas a fine beef producer renowned throughout the world. The Watsons had close family connections to the Hunter family.

Looking to expand their enterprise and hearing of the glowing reports from the Port Phillip District of NSW they sent two representatives to Sydney to prepare for future expansion. Brothers **Campbell and John (nicknamed "Howqua") HUNTER** were the first to arrive in 1839 and were busy acquiring land at Lake George near present day Canberra and at Yass which was the last outpost of habitation south of Sydney town and the starting off point for the overlanders bringing their flocks south into the Port Phillip District ... continued on page 4

CONTENTS

Speaker: Graeme McIntosh	p.1
Presidents Report	p.2
New Members & News	p.3
Serendipity article	p.6
Calendar of Events	p.8

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PEN

As we approach the final meeting for the year, I want to thank everyone who has made the year successful. The speakers have been great, the website is informative, our Facebook page is up and running, and we have an information booth at a Brisbane History event in early 2025. All of that could not have been achieved without the work of the committee members and volunteers. I want to particularly mention Anne Bevis who for years has been our Examiner of Proofs. Anne is retiring from that role, and I am hoping to soon be able to make an announcement of her replacement. As usual, if anyone is interested in making any contribution, please let me know. Our next meeting is 2pm Saturday 9 November 2024 and will be followed by some Christmas fare. The meeting's speaker is Professor Fred Cahir and his topic is 'They Rescued Us: Aboriginal heroes on Country'.

I wish you the compliments of the season and what better way to express that than an old verse from an early Australian Christmas Card (Catalogue of Australian Christmas and New Year Cards 1881-82):

Australia's New Year comes amid the summer's glow
That wraps the hills and gilds with gold the plains below-
Imports translucent colour to the rippling waters of the sea
And wakes in woods the hum of joyous revelry.

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

How Christmas was celebrated between 1830 and 1851 in the Port Phillip District seems to have depended on one's status in the new colony. If you were a convict, you probably came across from Van Dieman's Land and might have had Irish or English roots. If you were Irish and a free settler, you had come from a land where there was simplicity of lifestyle but also the constant and recent spectre of hunger. Either way, there were few signs of affluence. Many Irish females were in this group, escaping the Irish famine, looking for work and a husband. Christmas was not something to be excited about with the absence of Catholic pastoral care adding to their woes along with a longing for home. For some, rum might have provided comfort.

If you were a free settler from England, Christmas Day was about religious observances as for many, the celebration of the season was usually on New Years' Day. For some English people from rural areas where the village centre at Christmas was a place of games or where tradition required trapesing up to the local manor house where the Lord of the Manor provided food and drink, the colony had little to encourage Christmas celebration. The English climate was cold and often wet, all of which lent itself to warm food, minced pies and mulled wine. Far away in the Port Phillip District, there was no manor house, no lord to provide for the village and there were no geese, ducks or green peas available for a hot Christmas dinner. There were some provisions locally grown and others "imported" from Van Dieman's Land. Contrary to the dark and snowy landscape of the Northern Hemisphere, the weather here was hot and dry. From the start of the colony, the average colonist's staple diet had been saltbeef or mutton along with flour. Rural people found that cockatoos and kangaroos were fine to add to meat pies and not just for Christmas. Tea was the main drink but on occasions such as Christmas, it was flavoured with rum. For many in the District, Christmas went on as if the day was not different.

But there were enterprising groups. By the middle of the 1840's settlers of German background had moved to Doncaster and were growing fruit and crops such as wheat and barley to sustain themselves. The German migrants brought their traditions from Europe and replicated them with religious observances on the Eve of Christmas and the end of Christmas Day and the church provided a place for a large community tree adorned with presents and candles. For most of the colony, Christmas in those early decades was a day of rest and not much more. As a contrast, by December 1850, Sydneysiders were more advanced with the *Sydney Morning Herald* advertising that "Mrs Gill" was able to supply her customers with "Christmas pies and cakes" and "very superior mince meats in one or two pound jars".

In the Port Phillip District, the population by 1850 was about 77,000 of whom 3,000 lived in the affluent

suburb of Fitzroy but down the road in Collingwood, many people lived in crowded dwellings. As the Colony headed towards statehood, people had already started to move out to Richmond, Kew and Heidelberg and the celebration of Christmas varied according to financial status.

Only 10 years before in 1840, the area east of the top of Bourke Street was bushland with emus wandering about Eastern Hill and corroborees still being held by the Indigenous people along the banks of the Yarra River. In that same area east of the town towards 1850, as the summer hit, those of some affluence picnicked along the river to evade the heat, competing with the bushflies. Bottled drink was string-tied by the neck and placed in the river to keep it cool, and children were prevented from swimming until the bottles were removed.

The one tradition that did not change for most in the district was the Christmas Plum Pudding. Despite the heat, it appeared on many dinner tables where traditions of Europe were followed. On the “diggings”, where there were few plates and little cutlery, Robert Shortfried Anderson wrote:

“We had an enormous plum pudding which weighed nearly fifty pounds; as rich as could possibly be made, and each of us had a good sweat in mixing the same. Mr Hood made us a present of six nuggets of different sizes, the whole of us agreed to mix them in the monster pudding- and take our chance as to the gold when dispatching our Xmas dinner”. (certainly beats a sixpence or a threepence?)

(Sources: *Christmas in the Colonies*- Maisy Stapleton and Patricia McDonald 1981; *Petticoats in the Orchard*- Irvine Green 1987; *Australia as once we were*- John Ritchie 1975.)

Contributed by Paul Cronin,

President

FROM THE EDITOR

I received an email recently from our Examiner of Proofs Anne Bevis where she stated that ‘One of our early members has sent me an email to let me know that her ancestors came out on the *Mohamed Shah* and a record of the journey could be found in Michael Cannon’s book *Perilous Voyages to the New Land*. They wanted to make sure this information was passed on to a new member whose Pioneers also travelled on the same ship, so Anne made it happen. Good work Anne.

OTHER NEWS

In celebration of the **HERITAGE COUNCIL OF VICTORIA’S HISTORY MONTH**, Kingston Libraries presents History Fest! Saturday, 26 October 2024

The History Fest brings together local historical societies, objects, valuers and conservers, and explores the history of Kingston and its people.

P.P.P.G. Committee Members Bev Jacobson and Bronwyn Quint have volunteered to man our booth.

GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF QUEENSLAND INC.

Brisbane Conference: Join us for Connections 2025 - Australasia's premier event for local and family historians, ancestry researchers and genealogists to uncover the past, celebrate the present and tap into the future. PPPG will have a booth here too. <https://www.connections2025.org.au/>

Welcome to the following New Members

PPPG No	Member Name	Descended From	Details	Date	Ship or other means
1574	Kathleen TONDORF	a) James HUNTER b) Helen HUNTER	Arr. P.P.D. “	7 Jan 1849 “	<i>The Maitland</i> “
1576	Geoffrey BROWN	a) Thomas ARNOTT	Arr. P.P.D.	Oct 1803	<i>H.M.A.S. Calcutta</i>
1577	Vicki SKIDMORE	a) Thomas SKIDMORE b) Mary McCARTHEY c) Ralph SINGLETON d) Jane SINGLETON e) Jane SINGLETON	Married P.P.D. “ Arr. P.P.D. “ Born P.P.D.	11 Mar 1844 “ 7 June 1841 “ 1 Oct 1849	<i>Frankfield</i> “

THE WATSON & HUNTER STORY

Address at the General Meeting on 12 September 2024

Speaker: Graeme McIntosh

Continued from page 1 ...

Shortly after another **HUNTER** brother **Alec**, arrived along with **James WATSON** a relative of Hugh Watson of Aberdeen Angus fame and was also an experienced cattle breeder. The final member of the group was the Honourable **Gilbert KENNEDY** grandson of the Marquiss of Ailsa. And so it was that the men representing the Watson and Hunter Pastoral Company set out from Yass with large herds and large ambitions to bring success and profit to the company shareholders in Scotland.

As the team headed south, they were keenly looking out for suitable land to settle their stock and begin their breeding and land speculation activities. On reaching the area we know today as Euroa they sent their head stockman **Andrew EWAN** east to look for stock that had strayed from the herd. As he crossed over the Strathbogie Ranges, he discovered the rolling hills and grassland with ample rivers and creeks around what we know today as the Eildon and Mansfield district.

They quickly claimed the area and established 6 stations totalling over 200,000 acres, *Wappan, Preston, Loyola, Dueran, Mt. Battery and Maindample* and when combined they would be known as the *Devils River Run*. The name came from an incident when the team were camped by a river we now know as the Delatite River when a native corroboree took place in the evening making sounds like the devil, they called it the Devils River.

While they were establishing themselves on the *Devils River Run* attention turned to acquiring land in Melbourne town where breeding stock shipped from overseas could be contained before being driven to the northern pastures of the *Devils River Run*.

They took up land on the Saltwater Flats. In those early days the two main rivers in Melbourne were known as the Saltwater River or as we know it today the Maribyrnong and the Freshwater River, we now call the Yarra. The Saltwater Flats is the area we know today as the Flemington Racecourse.

They established their main holding area at Keilor a natural amphitheatre in the place where market gardens exist today with ample river water and good grazing land. They had a home on the slopes overlooking the Keilor flats that when sold would become the first inn at Keilor now long gone. They took up land at Watsonia and Rosanna as well as at Mount Macedon all set up as staging posts on the way to *Devils River*. Money was no problem at this stage and buying or selling land or leases was part of the business strategy. During their years in Melbourne the Hunter brothers gained notoriety for hard riding and were christened “the wild colonial boys.” They organised the first race meeting on their land at Saltwater flats which would eventually become the Flemington Racecourse home of the Melbourne Cup.

Not only were they competitive horsemen they were intrepid explorers as well always looking for better land over the next hill and so it was that Alec Hunter leading a party of four set off in early 1841 to cross over the Great Dividing Range from Howqua into Gippsland. The going was tough and realising that while they could herd stock over the ranges it would be impossible to bring wagons and supplies needed to establish a head station, so they turned back before completing the trip in the hope of returning to finish the trek at a later date. However, in the rush to establish and chart grazing land in Gippsland, The NSW Government in 1843 sent its Crown land Commissioner, Mr. **CHARLES TYERS** up to Devils River to find a route over the ranges into Gippsland, then to survey a coastal track into Gippsland from Port Phillip. Tyers was an accomplished bushman and hardy explorer but crossing the ranges proved too difficult and he had to return.

This spurred the competitive Alec Hunter on to complete his second attempt accompanied by brother Campbell and a squatter named **JORDAN** they set off from the Howqua River travelling light and sleeping rough. This time they were successful charting a course through the high country skirting the Jamieson River, picking up the Macallister River at Licola then through Glen Maggie to Lake Wellington. The party then trekked to Port Albert and returned to Melbourne via Westernport. This 2-month journey accomplished what the experienced Tyers could not. At the time when the Watson and Hunter team were a very influential voice in

the district of Port Phillip a group of 27 concerned squatters perhaps the most powerful men in Melbourne gathered at the Lamb Inn in Collins Street on the 21st of April 1840 to discuss a serious problem that confronted them all. With their growing herds and flocks there was a distinct shortage of trusted reliable shepherds and those available were being paid very high labour costs eating into profitability and future expansion plans.

At this meeting a resolution was passed that a company be formed under the name of The Australia Felix Immigration Society “having for its object the procuring from The United Kingdom a constant supply of moral and industrious labourers under the present bounty system”.

Another motion passed stated that “Mr Watson, who from his interest and experience in the colony as well as knowledge of these matters at home has in the handsomest manner volunteered to proceed to that country to procure a present supply of suitable emigrants and to make the necessary arrangements to keeping up a constant supply, that this society do thankfully accept his offer and appoint him their commissioner”.

And so it was that the ship *William Abrams* of 706 tons under the command of James Hamlin chartered by Watson and Hunter for the Australia Felix Immigration Society left Greenock, Scotland on March 28th, 1841, with 207 people on board which docked at Liardets’ wharf Sandridge (Port Melbourne) on July 26th that year after a journey of 120 days and almost a year after the squatters meeting at the Lamb inn.

On board was family number 27, my ancestors **Daniel McINTOSH**, his wife Margaret (**MCGREGOR**), son **Daniel** 13 years, daughter **Catherine** 8 years, **Hugh** 5 years, **James** 3 years, and **Margaret** 11 months. After a gruelling 4 months at sea, they could finally put their feet on the sand of The Port Phillip District half a world away from Scotland. The sparse settlement that was Melbourne must have been a shock to them, what would the future hold, would they ever go back?

During the time that arrangements were being made to bring the extra supply of shepherds to the colony shipping traffic had already increased. According to the *Port Phillip Patriot* the local newspaper writing on 2nd August 1841 ships were now docking at the rate of one a week and in June and July a total of 1,500 persons had arrived. By the end of the year the population of Port Phillip had doubled. The effect was immediate the cost of wages dropped by half and the squatters’ overheads reduced while they had an abundance of willing workers. Watson and Hunter advertised they could supply female servants who had travelled on their ship under indentures for 15 pounds a year.

While we hear terrible stories of hardship and privation on some immigrant ships the *William Abrams* was an exception so much so that steerage passengers being grateful for their safe arrival paid for an advertisement in the newspaper thanking Commander James Hamlin for the kindness, he had shown them since leaving their native shores.

“For the superiority of the provisions and the frequent fresh messes (to which we had no claim) with which you furnished us. For the bright example of moral conduct, you set before us, beside many other privileges and advantages of which (however inadequately we may here express them) we will ever entertain a lively feeling of gratitude. In a word sir we hail you as a bright ornament of the honourable and respectable profession of which you have made choice.” Like many speculators in a foreign environment when money is flowing into the enterprise things appear to be going fine however, there were early warning signs that strong financial management was needed.

A severe drought over the three years they were increasing the size of their herds and land acquisition affected the quality and world price of wool, lack of water caused the speculative value of the land to drop and an outbreak of catarrh on the *Devils River Run* saw a significant loss of sheep. Meanwhile spending on sporting events and personal acquisitions seemed to continue unabated. There were worrying signs coming from the head office in Edinburgh where several acrimonious meetings had resulted in instructions to rein in spending and introduce better financial management of the enterprise.

However, nothing could be done to avoid the depression of 1842, world wool prices dropped to the point where it was uneconomical to even shear the sheep, and many were boiled down for tallow of much lesser value. The depression also affected land values as the low price of the flocks took away the speculative benefits of the land.

Like many squatters who were bankrupted because of speculative borrowing so it was that Watson and Hunter were not alone when the company was declared insolvent, and all the land was sold off and herds dispersed. The complications involving the many creditors and the size of the holdings took many years to finalise. The case opened in April 1843 and was finally free of the courts in April 1847.

And so it is that the name Watson and Hunter a once powerful, influential player in the early colonial history whose flame burnt strongly for about five years, who carved a trail through some of the most difficult and uncharted country in the Port Phillip District is all but forgotten today.

But they have left a legacy in the names of places and streets we know of today that were named by them or after them.

KEILOR: Named after the Watson cattle breeding property in Forfar Scotland.

STRATHMORE: Named after the Vale of Strathmore where the property was situated.

WATSONIA: Named by Watson after himself, where they had a head station.

ROSANNA: Named after Watsons' wife Rose Anne.

MAINDAMPLE: A town located on one of the Devils River Runs of that name.

HOWQUA: From the nickname of John "Howqua" Hunter.

JAMIESON: Named after a member of the exploratory party on the first crossing of the alps.

WAPPAN, PRESTON, LOYOLA, DUERAN, MT BATTERY. Names of five sheep stations part of the Devils River Run.

STREET NAMES:

IN KEILOR: Hunter Street, Watson Rise. Ailsa Street and Kennedy Street after the Marquis of Ailsa Chief of clan Kennedy.

IN MANSFIELD: Hunter Street, Ailsa Street.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: *Collins Encyclopaedia of Scotland*. John Keay and Julia Keay; *Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip*. RV. Billis and AS Kenyon; *Tracks of the Morning*; IC. Dillon.

Summary provided by Graeme McIntosh PPPG Member No. 1544

SERENDIPITY

Some members of the Port Phillip Pioneers Group have embarked on a Magical Mystery Tour and are trying to track those people who arrived on the ship *Andromache* on 26 June 1840 and to give some substance to their memory.

The majority of the Bounty passengers are listed as farm labourers, shepherds, dairy maids or servants and with surnames such as Fitzpatrick and Fitzgerald there is a tangle of histories because so many have a similar profile to cousins or more distant relatives born in the same Irish county about the same time. These people had little money and were mostly itinerant workers and illiterate and almost invisible unless they committed a crime.

Their families may have died in the Irish famine of the 1840s and 1850s or they may have taken the shorter passage to America. I am not confident we will ever be able to track some of these people who were fundamental to the success of European settlement in the state of Victoria. The graziers who employed them often had substantial homes, extravagant cemetery memorials and sometimes a listing in the Australian Dictionary of Biographies but their labourers have been lost to history unless some relative investigates their descendants perhaps using DNA. One hopes that more families learn about the work of the Port Phillip Pioneers and can assist this research.

Optimism is the friend of anyone interested in history and the unusual name of one passenger stood out like a beacon of hope amongst those Irish labourers in the cohort assigned to me to research. It was with a sense of excitement the search began. However, **Kinune HALIS**, female aged 29 of Cambridge was not found on several runs through Family Tree, death and cemetery records or Trove but gradually a picture emerged of Kerenhappuch **HAILES**, aged 35 of Essex, by seeing a post on Family Tree and making a *serendipitous* contact.

The Old Testament name chosen by a Baptist family in Essex named Hailes created some hurdles. Officials recording her name found it difficult even after she married a widower, **John LUSH**. It is worth listing the variations here as a warning to other researchers: **Karen LAPPUCK** (England & Wales Birth Index), **Karenhappu HAILES** (Australia Birth Index), **Carrie LUSH** (passenger on a later voyage on the *True Briton*), **Kerwe Happuck HIDES** (Australia Marriage Index), **Keren Happuch LUSH** (Australian Death Index) and **Kerenhappuel LUSH** (Probate Record). Time to add luck and perseverance to optimism. Through a variety of sources her story was uncovered and noted. Kerenhappuch and John Lush had three

children. **Mary** (1843-1903) married John Montgomery Templeton who started as a teacher, became an actuary and founded the National Mutual Life Association of Australia; **Caroline** (1844-1934) married a merchant, Samuel Luke, in 1867 and **George** (1845-1932) married Mary Elizabeth Nicoll Fullarton in 1877 and Martha Dalgliesh Finlay in 1886.

A few people who arrived on this voyage of the *Andromache* were not listed on the ship's manifest and while checking facts for Kerenhappuch, it transpired her brother **George Button HAILES** arrived with her and his was a most interesting life. A great great grandson stated in a note on *My Heritage* that George was number 28 on the passenger list so it is likely there is more than one passenger list in circulation.

In anticipation of emigrating to the Port Phillip District, in 1839 George had sold his tenanted houses and land in Essex, his stock of building materials and household goods. He would be a wealthy man and a competent builder on arrival in his adopted land. While his sister appears to have been a Bounty passenger and listed as a dressmaker, we cannot know yet if George paid for his own fare and was perhaps an unassisted cabin passenger. It is possible.

In the 1841 census of New South Wales for the County of Bourke, George is listed as single and free along with (presumably) his sister also single and free. As a Bounty passenger Kerenhappuch would have been assigned to a future employer but the story behind her 'Bounty' classification remains a mystery. It appears that she moved in with her brother who is listed as a builder living in Bourke Lane. Kerenhappuch married John Lush in 1841 and would move out of Bourke Lane and in 1847 George married **Ann ILES** and they have eleven or twelve children.

It is a good time for a builder to arrive in the Port Phillip District. The building business is expanding and by 1850 a company is formed with **Thomas HALE**, previously of Guernsey. "Hailes & Hale, Timber Merchants" at 70 Stephen Street (now known as Exhibition Street). The business is located near the corner of Bourke Street where the Southern Cross Hotel once hosted *The Beatles*. In 1850 George is listed as the ratepayer for a property consisting of a counting house, workshop, 2 sheds and a yard and valued at 40 pounds annually but by the following year rates are paid by Hailes and Hale and the property value has increased to 60 pounds and includes a Timber Yard and Sawpits. By 1853 the property is valued at 300 pounds annually and after being only one of two properties on the block initially, new buildings are filling the empty spaces around the timber store. George remains the ratepayer in 1854 but the property is leased to a Coachbuilder.

In an Obituary for George it is noted that by 1852, success in business in the Colony enabled him to retire on a *competency*. A descendant believed George was involved with the building of a row of terrace houses opposite the Exhibition Building. It may have been the Royal Terrace in Nicholson Street as he lived for many years at number 60 Nicholson Street but no proof emerged to verify this fact. Other builders and architects are credited on the internet with its construction and there were other terraces built in the area which may be attributed to George. In about 1852, George took his wife and young family on a visit to England and returned in 1854 on the *Marlborough*, with his sister Susannah and their family who settled in Hawthorn.

George had a busy life in retirement. A magistrate on the Fitzroy bench for 14 years and senior Magistrate for many years until his death; chairman of the Local Board of Advice (education) in Fitzroy; a foundation member of the Melbourne Philharmonic Society and a musician playing in other circles; a committee member of the Benevolent Society and supporter of the Melbourne Hospital and a Justice of the Peace.

And then there is the story of the evolving Collins Street Baptist Church and the role of the Hailes siblings.

George had been baptised at age 13 and his sister Kerenhappuch at age 15 in Essex. Although christened soon after birth in the Church of England they were both baptised later in the Baptist tradition.

The first Baptist Church service in Melbourne was held in a tent on the site of the current Regent Theatre in 1838. It is presumed that George and Kerenhappuch met with like-minded citizens late in 1840 as George became a foundation member of the newly constituted Collins Street Baptist Church in 1843 and was choirmaster there for twenty years. It is not recorded if George had a role in building the chapel built in 1845, later demolished and rebuilt to accommodate the increasing number of Baptists who worshipped there. It is possible that his sister was also one of the original 16 Baptists in 1843 but being female she may not have been counted.

Kerenhappuch's granddaughter married Rev Hedley J Sutton who was an educator and a missionary, Vice Principal of Carey Grammar School and Chairman, Australian Board of Foreign Missions. The *Hedley Sutton Aged Care* facility in Camberwell may welcome some of us in the future.

To offer research assistance in the Andromache Project please contact Nick Wakeling nick.wakeling@gmail.com

Contributed by Elaine Race PPPG Member No. 1460

Calendar of Events

Next Meeting:	Saturday: 9 November 2024
Speaker:	Speaker: Dr Fred Cahir, Professor of Australian History at Federation University of Australia, will illuminate the story of how thousands of colonists were rescued by Aboriginal people from life threatening bush fires, floods, shipwrecks – and from being lost in the bush. Fred's presentation (and latest book) pays tribute to Indigenous Australian's knowledge, mercy and heroic courage – which they freely offered to the invaders occupying their Country.
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:	1 March 2025- Craige Proctor - Topic: Telling the story of pioneer women 10 May 2025 - Dr Rosalie Triolo OAM FRHSV-Topic: Local and international historical sources and resources you might not have used in local/family research

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