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PIONEER ECHO

WE LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR PAST

Newsletter No: 242

A NOT SO MERRY CHRISTMAS

Did you know that Christmas Hills in the Port Phillip District, now Victoria, owes its name to an emancipated convict and shepherd, called David **CHRISTMAS**?

The exact date and whereabouts of his death are unknown but in 1992 a roadside plaque to the shepherd who gave his name to the district was placed over his presumed gravesite commemorating 150 years of his arrival in the Port Phillip District.

Read more about this ‘not so jolly’ man on page 6.



PLAQUE INSCRIPTION:
IN MEMORY OF
DAVID CHRISTMAS
BORN IN CARDIGANSHIRE 1797
TRANSPORTED TO VAN DIEMAN'S LAND
FOR THE TERM OF HIS NATURAL LIFE
1822
GRANTED A FREE PARDON 1826
FROM THE HUMBLE SHEPHERD
THESE HILLS HAVE GAINED THEIR NAME

PORT PHILLIP PIONEERS GROUP INC.

Inc. No. A0022862G / ABN: 79 213 729 409

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

Port Phillip Pioneers Group



Above: Fawcner's *Enterprize* by Woodhouse and Schell, 1925: SLV

Left Plaque for David Christmas

Source: from the Collection of the Eltham District Historical Society Inc
<https://victoriancollections.net.au>



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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PEN

Welcome to 2026, I hope that you have all survived the Summer. We might be reminded of how fragile our land is with the disastrous bushfires that devastated our various communities throughout January.

In keeping with our theme of how our ancestors lived, this year we have focused on things which we often take for granted. One example is music. The piano was one of the few entertainment refinements of the more affluent pioneers and a pioneer named George Russell bought one for his "bride" whilst visiting London at a cost of fifty pounds. It is impossible to calculate what that cost means in today's money, but it is worth remembering that in 1907, the basic wage was set at 2 pounds per week. Then of course, there was the cost of shipping from England to Port Phillip and the dray to the rural area. Importantly, the piano was the central entertainment device for those lucky enough to socialise in affluent circumstances and it was "the bride" who was not only expected to play it but also tune it. I tried to find reference to a song that historian Geoffrey Dutton mentioned in *The Squatters* (1985 Currey O'Neill Ross Pty Ltd p 99) "there's nae luck about the house while the guid man's awa" but I did not have any success.

Our first speaker this year is Dr Andrea Baker who is a Senior Lecturer in Journalism at Monash University. Dr Baker is also an author and her book *The Great Music City: Exploring Music, Space and Identity* (Palgrave, 2019) explores Melbourne's journey to becoming a "music city" by examining its development as a musical hub since colonial times through the lens of journalism, urban sociology, and musicology and her topic is Music in Early Melbourne.

For the rest of the year we have (May 2026) Fiona Malcolm, Library Manager speaking about the Melbourne Athenaeum an iconic institution since 1842, (July 2026) Paul Balassone, Manager Heritage Services Melbourne Water whose topic is Water and Sanitation in Early Melbourne, (September 2026) Adam Wakeling on The agitation for self-government in the Port Phillip District in the 1840s and the creation of the Victorian Parliament, and (November 2026) Dr Jonathan Burdon AM a respiratory physician in private practice in East Melbourne who will speak on Medicine and Health in Early Melbourne.

These topics as I mentioned above relate to the quality of life for our ancestors. I hope you can join us for these and don't forget that we also hope to have our author members talk about their experiences in writing their books.

Paul Cronin
President

WELCOME TO THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS

PPPG No	MEMBER NAME	DESCENDED FROM	DETAILS	DATE	SHIP OR OTHER MEANS
1582	Wayne Russell STEVENS	Mary Jane HUGHES	Arr. in P.P.D.	21 July 1849	<i>Hope</i>
		John YOEMAN	Married P.P.D.	24 July 1849	Geelong
1583	Ross Gartly McDONALD	James McDONALD	Arr. in P.P.D.	30 Sept 1841	<i>Middlesex</i>
		Janet McDONALD (nee Jane McAULEY)	"	"	"
1584	Pamela Claire McDONALD	Thomas GOODISSON	Married P.P.D.	27 Aug 1845	
		Elizabeth WALKER	"	"	

Address at the General Meeting on 8 November 2025

MELBOURNE: FOUNDATIONS OF A CITY

By Margaret Anderson

Margaret Anderson, Director Old Treasury Building, provided a very interesting presentation on 'Melbourne: Foundations of a City' at our November meeting. Through a series of slides containing sketches and paintings of Melbourne from 1835 right up until Separation she drew the audience an image of the rapid growth of the city from small tent camp to a city of permanent stone and timber buildings.

As can be seen from the picture at right, by 1837, just two years after the initial small tent camp was established, several houses had been constructed.

Both the British and NSW governments expressly banned colonial expansion beyond existing limits in NSW and Tasmania hoping to avoid further catastrophe for indigenous Australians, but squatters decided to ignore the law including John **BATMAN** and John **FAWKNER**, who established syndicates and organised groups of settlers to establish settlements and farming properties in the Port Phillip District in 1835.

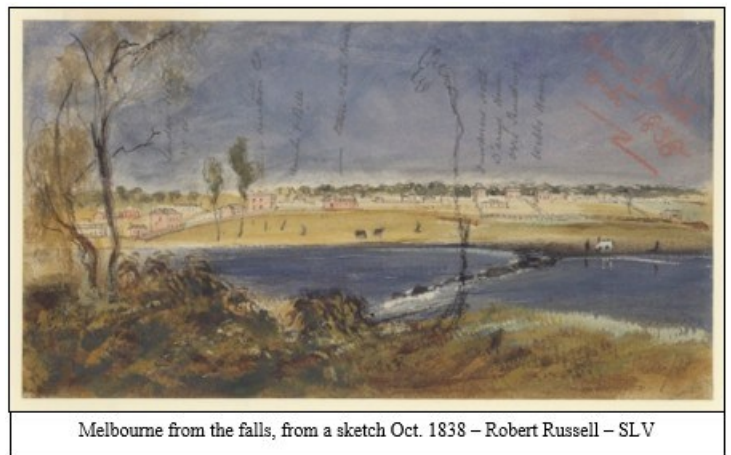


Melbourne from the falls 1837 by Robert Russell – source: State Library Victoria

Prior to the above, two attempts had been made by the government to settle the Port Phillip District to counter fears that the French might colonise the area. These were in 1803 at Sorrento and 1826 at Westernport. Both failed, in part because they were rather half-hearted attempts. These early attempts did leave some relicts, one an incredible survey map of Port Phillip completed by Charles **GRIMES** in 1803 which is held by the PROV. Another was the convict William **BUCKLEY**, who escaped from Sorrento and went on to live with First Peoples' groups for 32 years. He literally emerged out of the bush to meet Fawkner's party in 1835.

Meanwhile the settlement of Melbourne began to grow rapidly with more settlers and more live-stock arriving. At right is another picture which demonstrates the growth by October 1838.

It is easy to pass over the fact that Melbourne grew at an extraordinary rate, when looking at the rapid growth after gold was discovered, but in fact the expansion of Melbourne was incredible right from the start.



Melbourne from the falls, from a sketch Oct. 1838 – Robert Russell – SLV

The growth was so rapid that Governor **BOURKE** wrote to the Secretary of State, Lord Glenelg, to seek approval to assume administration of the settlement, and before he had received a reply sent Goulburn Police Magistrate, George **STEWART** to Port Phillip to report in May 1836. Stewart formally warned the settlers that they were trespassing but also conducted a quick census which revealed that by August that year, there were already 13 buildings, 100 cattle, 26,500 sheep and 60 acres of land under cultivation and the European population consisted of 142 men and 35 women.

Approval came from Britain to extend the settlement boundaries of NSW to incorporate Port Phillip and almost immediately posted Captain William **LONSDALE** to be the first Police Magistrate in the southern

settlement. **LONSDALE** was accompanied by his wife and two servants, as well as 30 troops, 30 convicts and various administrators, including three Assistant Surveyors led by Robert **RUSSELL** who almost immediately began sketching the landscape.

Governor **BOURKE** did not visit the settlement until March 1837, but upon his arrival he gave it the name Melbourne, after the British Prime Minister. **BOURKE** also instructed the Surveyor General Robert **HODDLE** to draw up a plan for the town and prepare the first town allotments for sale. This he did, creating the now famous Hoddle Grid plan for Melbourne, although almost certainly **HODDLE** simply adopted and amended an earlier plan of streets already prepared by Robert **RUSSELL**.

Land sales began, people continued to arrive and more buildings were constructed. In 1841 the European population was about 4,500.

Right: panoramic sketch of part of Melbourne in 1841 showing many buildings.

Melbourne continued to grow and as more people arrived and more land was used for housing and farming, the prime land around the Yarra, that was naturally favoured by the local Woiwurrung and

Boonwurrung of the Kulin

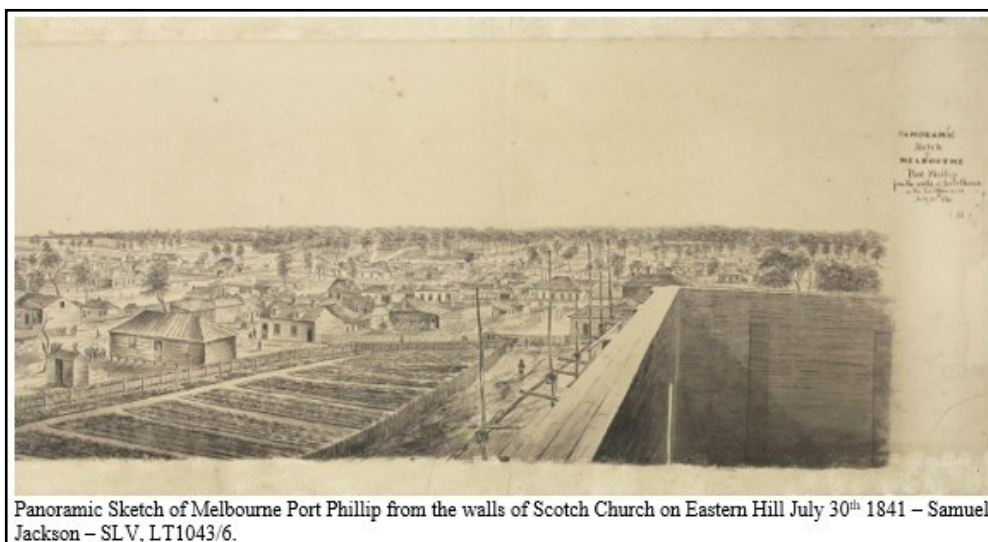
was no longer accessible. They were driven off the lands they and their ancestors had lived on for millennia. An Aboriginal 'Protectorate' was created in 1839, theoretically to protect the Kulin, but protectors could do little to stem the tide. On 1 April 1840 Assistant Protector **PARKER** wrote: 'the entire country of the Waworong [Woi wurrung] ... is now sold or occupied'. Elders like Billibellary, leader of the Wurundjeri people, observed sadly: 'Blackfellows all about say that no good have them Pickaninnies [children] now, no country for blackfellows like long time ago.'

Worse was to come as whites complained about the presence of natives and in September 1840 **LA TROBE** finally gave in to pressure and instructed Chief Protector **ROBINSON** to ensure their removal. Thus, within five years of **BATMAN**'s arrival the Kulin were effectively exiled from their ancestral country. Derrimut, an elder of the Bunurong, was reported as saying in 1840: 'You see ... all this mine, all along here Derrimut's once; no matter now, me soon tumble down ... Why me have lubra? Why me have piccaninny? You have all this place, no good me have children, no good lubra, me tumble down and die very soon.'

Aside from the impact on First Nations people, the rapid growth in European settlement was to change the environment substantially through tree felling, crop planting and livestock grazing as well as early industry.

Life in early Melbourne was that of a hard living frontier town. When Charles **LA TROBE** arrived in September 1839 there was roughly seven men to every woman, 20 hotels and three breweries. By all accounts a prodigious amount of alcohol was consumed at all social levels and accidents while under the influence were fairly common. But tea drinking also became popular and was encouraged by those trying to counter the social ills of excessive alcohol consumption.

In 1843 Melbourne's first election for the NSW Legislative Council was held with candidates divided



Panoramic Sketch of Melbourne Port Phillip from the walls of Scotch Church on Eastern Hill July 30th 1841 – Samuel Jackson – SLV, LT1043/6.

along sectarian lines and the results saw wild scenes in the streets that led to the reading of the Riot Act! The Protestant-Catholic divide was very real and would remain so for another century.

In 1850 Port Phillip's citizens finally achieved Separation from NSW and the right to govern themselves. As a result of climate and economic progress, eminent historian AGL Shaw concluded that 'all things considered, life in Melbourne was probably better than in London or in other cities of the United Kingdom'. Sadly, the same could not be said for the much-reduced Kulin population, who lost an entire way of life within a generation, and were treated as outcasts in their own land.

Summary contributed by Dean Wheeler PPPG Member No. 1444

WILLIAM LOCKHART MORTON

According to the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, William Lockhart **MORTON** commonly known as W. Lockhart **MORTON** (1820-98), pastoralist, explorer and inventor, was born in Lanarkshire, Scotland, immigrated to Port Phillip in August 1841 and died at Belair, South Australia on 10 March 1898 whilst living with his surviving son, Rev. William Lockhart **MORTON**.

He married Mary Ann **STONE** in 1849 in Victoria and they had four sons.

Children of William and Mary Ann **MORTON** were:

- John Dendy Lockhart **MORTON** - b.1850 (VIC BDM #25764/1850) d.1892 (VIC BDM #82491892) aged 42 m. Charlotte Hammond in 1878 (VIC BDM #4750/1878) / 'MORTON. - *On the 7th inst., suddenly, at 59 Caroline street, South Yarra, John, eldest son of W. Lockhart Morton, aged 42 years.*' (source: *The Argus* Wed 8 Jun 1892 p1) Issue: Louisa **MORTON** (b.1880 d.1968), Alice **MORTON** (b. 1883), Charlotte **MORTON** (b&d 1885) and Ethel **MORTON** (b&d 1887)
- Rev. William Lockhart **MORTON** (social worker, preacher, teacher)- b.c.1852 d.1928 (VIC BDM #12112/1928) m. Elizabeth Aitchison **ELDER** in 1875 (VIC BDM #4581/1875)
- Herbert Lockhart **MORTON** b.c.1854 d.1885

aged 31 (VIC BDM #6906/1885) /MORTON. - *'On the 15th inst., at his parents' residence, Caroline-street, South Yarra, Herbert Lockhart, third and youngest surviving son of W. Lockhart Morton, aged 31 years.'* (*The Argus*, 16 May 1885 p1)

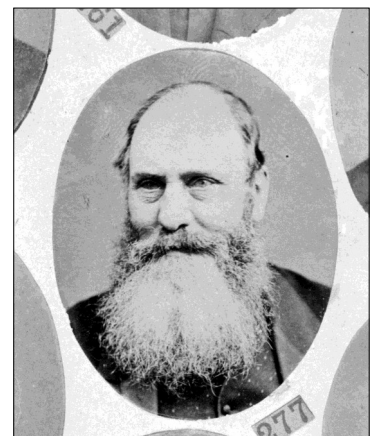
- Algernon Wilson Mueller **MORTON** - b.1861 (VIC BDM #19485/1861) d.1883 /MORTON. - *'Suddenly on the 15th inst., at Salisbury Downs, Albert District, N.S. Wales, Algernon Wilson Mueller, youngest and dearly beloved son of W. Lockhart Morton, of South Yarra, aged 21 years.'* (*The Argus*, 26 Feb 1883 p1)

W. Lockhart **MORTON** is recognised as the inventor of the sheep drafting race and gate which he designed and built in 1848 whilst he was overseer of the *Sutton Grange Sheep Run*.



A plaque that commemorates this event was erected by the citizens of Sutton Grange 11th March, 1988 (source: monumentaustalia.org)

W. Lockhart **MORTON**'s portrait (right) can be found on Thomas Foster Chuck's Mosaic, a collage of photographs gathered in the early 1870's of settlers who had arrived in the Port Phillip District by 1842.



Contributed by Dianne Wheeler PPPG Member No. 1505

Not all is well for CHRISTMAS

David **CHRISTMAS** (horse groom/servant) married Jane Wall at Llanbadarn, Wales on 21 December 1818. Their son William Lloyd Christmas was baptised at Ludlow in 1819 and their daughter Jane Christmas was baptised in 1821. On the 17 September 1821 David was convicted of burglary (house breaking) and sentenced to death. According to the *UK Prison Hulk Registers and Letter Books, 1808 – 1849*, by the 15 November 1821 David was on board the ship *Justica* which was moored at Woolwich.

On 23 July 1822, David **CHRISTMAS** arrived in Van Dieman's Land aboard the convict ship *Prince of Orange*, one of 136 passengers. **CHRISTMAS** was a 25 year old groom, 5'4" and a native of Cardiganshire, Wales. David had a tough time of it in Van Dieman's Land according to his convict record. On 1 October 1822 he was found guilty of being insolent to his master and received 50 lashes and on 4 November that year he was found to be absent from muster and church.

According to the *Hobart Gazette* 6 May 1826 p3, David **CHRISTMAS** received a Free Pardon on 13 March 1826. *The Hobart Gazette*, 19 August 1826 p3 reported that 'David **CHRISTMAS** absconded from employment of H. Oakes – Edward Brown, Henry Rogers, and David **CHRISTMAS** entered into a written engagement to clear a parcel of land at the River Plenty, the Public are hereby cautioned against employing them ... until they have completed their said Engagement.' In March 1827 David was still in breach of his contract with Henry Oakes.

On 24 August David was fined 5/- for drunkenness and on the same day for assault of John Bryant the Sexton of St David's church during Divine Service. In 1829 David **CHRISTMAS** (*Prince of Orange*) was again granted a Free Pardon according to the *Hobart Town Gazette*, 7 Nov 1829, p3 and according to the *Colonial Times* (Hobart Tasmania:1828-1857) 10 Sept 1830, p3 he was arrested and found guilty three times in 1830 for drunkenness. On 3 January 1835 he received 50 lashes for repeated insubordination and insolence to his overseer and was still being arrested for drunk and disorderly.

David **CHRISTMAS** made a life-changing decision when he sailed from Launceston, Van Dieman's Land to Port Phillip on board *The Champion* on 7 June 1836.

The only evidence of the whereabouts of David **CHRISTMAS** after his arrival in Port Phillip can be found in the *Port Phillip Patriot*, 22 June 1846, p2, where it is stated that David **CHRISTMAS** (of Christmas Hills, shepherd) petitioned for a 'charge of extortion.' David had stayed at the Public House of James **WESTWOOD** in Melbourne (The Old Scottish Hotel) and placed his money with the licensee (£59 7s), ran up a tab well over this amount and finally admitted that he was intoxicated for the whole period. The case was dismissed.

Further details of his life were given in *The Argus*, Saturday 30 Nov 1912, p24 in an article titled :

"PIONEERS OF CHRISTMAS HILLS.

*A well-organised meeting of the pioneers of Christmas Hills was held at the Mechanics Institute. Mr J. C. Harvie ... introduced ... Mr. R. Stevenson, the first white man born on Christmas Hills ... He said that the name Christmas Hills was derived from a shepherd named David **CHRISTMAS**, employed by his father ... who was lost in the bush on the hills. **CHRISTMAS** ... was saved from starvation by hearing distant bells ... of a team of working bullocks grazing ... he kept near the cattle until their owner arrived on horseback. Mr. Stevenson produced a ledger which had belonged to his father, Joseph **STEVENSON**. This established the fact that in 1840 ... the father built the first Kirk's Bazaar. The ledger shows that **STEVENSON** built the punt that preceded the first Prince's Bridge. The date was 1839."*

Sadly, David **CHRISTMAS** did not secure prosperity, health and happiness that his name congers for most of us. His wife Jane Christmas remarried in 1839 at Stanton Lacy, Shropshire to Benjamin Powell.

Contributed by Dianne Wheeler PPPG Member No. 1505

TO THE EDITOR

I received the following email from Jo O'Neil PPPG Member No. 1376 regarding a book written by Charles Dixon a descendant of John Curr, the father of Edward **CURR**, (1798-1850) Father of Separation who established *St Heliers* on the banks of the Yarra River. The book about John Curr (1756-1823) called *The Man who Revolutionised Mining* is based on a great deal of original research and may be of interest to anyone interested in the Curr family and/or the Industrial revolution in England.

Jo also states that the Memoirs she transcribed and annotated, written by Florence Mary **CURR** (1841-1919) and Elizabeth Sarah Pennefather (nee **CURR**) (1834 – 1920) are now available in the State Library of Victoria.



From Gail White, PPPG member No. 1357

I read this recent news from TROVE and decided that I would help with the transcribing. It's been fascinating reading what John Pascoe Fawcner wrote in his newspaper. I thought the attached article from one edition of his paper may be of interest to PPPG members. Who says Melbourne was unsophisticated in its early days!

This is the announcement in Trove: *Melbourne Advertiser* (Vic:1838), Monday 22 January 1838, p3
'First established Hotel in Melbourne Fawcners Hotel supplies to the Traveller and [?] all the usual requisites of a Boarding House and Hotel of the very best being mostly laid in from the first Mercantile House in Cornwall VD Land in addition to which there will be found mental recreation of a High order There are provided English & 5 Colonial Weekly News papers 7 British monthly Magazines Three quarterly British Reviews up to July and August 1837. A very Choice selection of Books including Novels — Poetry — Theology — History Philosophy — Chemistry & N.B. A late Encyclopedia the use of any of these Works will be free to the Lodgers at the above Hotel.'

On New Year's Day, 1838, John Pascoe Fawcner published the first edition of *The Melbourne Advertiser*. Starting with handwriting the first ten issues and selling them from his pub, *Fawcner's Hotel*,

the newspaper was 'published' weekly. At the time, people could buy one of 30 copies for 1 shilling or read it while enjoying a meal. The paper included details on life in the colony, prices of food, accommodation, land sales, shipping movements, some news and poetry.

To help these fascinating moments of Melbourne's history become easier to find, TROVE are asking for help to transcribe some newly added pages of this paper. If you would like to contribute to adding and improving the transcriptions on these articles through text correcting but are not sure how, check out our text correction help page. Select 'Explore' or 'Search' to start browsing this collection.



WEBSITE NEWS

We have added back issues of *Pioneer Echo* (starting from issue No. 200 August - September 2017) to our website to give members better access to what we consider a useful resource for your research, as well as being of continuing interest.

You can access them by going to our website at www.pppg.org.au logging in and going to either the Publications page directly or via the Member News page. Choose the link under the Pioneer Echo section on the Publications page.

These are PDF copies and are not indexed beyond the list of contents where shown, but individual articles on various topics from back issues continue to be available through the Member Resources page.

LIBRARY NEWS

New Books

From Far Away.

Searching for our Port Phillip Pioneers

A new book by Tom Davison, PPPG Member 1168 that follows his pioneers and their ancestors from c1700 to c1900, from early times in England and Ireland to life in the Port Phillip District.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Saturday: 14 March 2026
Speaker: Dr. Andrea Baker
Topic: Music in Early Melbourne

Saturday: 9 May 2026
Speaker: Fiona Malcolm
Topic: The Melbourne Athenaeum (originally known as the Melbourne Mechanics' Institution)

Saturday: 11 July 2026
Speaker: Paul Balassone
Topic: Water and Sanitation in Early Melbourne

MEETING VENUE

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.

Venue: Wesley Hall, St. Andrew's Uniting Church, cnr Burke and Malvern Roads, Gardiner.

Melways Reference: Map 59 H7.

Or Online via Zoom digital platform

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