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PAPERS RELATING TO EMIGRATION
THE ABORIGINAL POPULATION
AND OTHER AFFAIRS IN AUSTRALIA

1844

*Colonies
Australia*

8



SHANNON · IRELAND

supposed to be fired by the natives, who were known to be in possession of fire-arms, and there were no huts nor any station near the barracks; and they also distinctly heard the voices of the natives after they had quitted the barracks.

NEW SOUTH WALES.

(signed) ^{his} John ~~W.~~ Keefe,
mark.

Encl. in No. 60.

Sworn before us, this 15th day of November 1842.

(signed) *G. A. Robinson, J. P.*
W. Le. Souef, J. P.

—No. 61.—

(No. 243.)

COPY of a DESPATCH from Governor Sir *George Gipps* to Lord *Stanley*.

My Lord, Government House, Sydney, 28 December 1842.

CONTINUING the practice which I have for some time adopted of furnishing to your Lordship selections from the numerous and voluminous reports which are now made to this Government by the different persons employed in the protection or civilization of the aborigines, I have the honour to forward herewith the following papers:—

No. 61.
Sir George Gipps
to Lord Stanley,
28 December 1842.

1. Extracts from a report made to the superintendent of Port Phillip, by the Chief Protector of Aborigines, Mr. Robinson, detailing his proceedings during a visit to the aborigines in the western part of the Port Phillip district.

Extracts, No. 1.

Mr. Robinson was engaged in this expedition very nearly five months, having left Melbourne on the 20th March and returned to it on the 17th August 1842.

He appears to have visited all the country to the north of Portland Bay, on the confines of South Australia, and to have opened a friendly communication with numerous tribes of natives.

He mentions various instances of collisions between these tribes and the settlers, or, more correctly speaking, the squatters, and gives the names of 22 of the aborigines who are supposed in these collisions to have lost their lives.

He also mentions some customs of the natives in this part of the country, which seem to show them, in some respects, superior in knowledge to the tribes which are better known, whilst in others (especially in regard to their cannibalism) they are more savage in their nature.

The extracts show, that for the purpose of catching fish, the natives of some parts of the country passed over by Mr. Robinson, have erected weirs of considerable extent, and which would seem to afford evidence at once of forethought and combined labour, such as have not, I believe, been observed amongst the aborigines of any other part of Australia.

Though written upon 302 pages of foolscap paper, Mr. Robinson's report contains no other passage which it seems to me necessary to extract for your Lordship's perusal.

2. The second extract which I forward is from the appendix to Mr. Robinson's report (not included in the 302 pages). It is taken from a report made to Mr. Robinson by Mr. Assistant Protector Sievwright, and describes the manner in which a young woman of the Bolagher tribe, who had been killed by a hostile tribe, was (after they had indulged in the most violent grief for her loss) devoured by her own friends and relations. It exhibits, perhaps, one of the most ferocious acts of cannibalism on record.

Extract, No. 2.

I have, &c.

(signed) *Geo. Gipps.*

Enclosure 1, in No. 61.

EXTRACTS from a Report made by the Chief Protector of Aborigines (*G. A. Robinson, Esq.*), of his proceedings on a visit to the country lying to the north of *Portland Bay*, in the months from March to August 1842.

ON the following day reached Lake Boloke; my native companions had a dread of the Boloke people, and it was with much difficulty I persuaded them to accompany me.

During the night of our encampment on the margin of the lake, they apprehended we should be slain; they said the Boloke natives were extremely insidious in their attack, and that before we could offer resistance we should be killed. I endeavoured to dispel their fears, but it was to no purpose; the day dawned, and finding themselves uninjured, they took courage.

Encl. 1, in No. 61.

NEW SOUTH
WALES.

Encl. 1, in No. 1.

No natives were to be seen; the lake, an unusual circumstance, was nearly dry. The fishing season had terminated; putrid eels, some of them three feet in length, lay in mounds, and tainted the air; and I might observe, that on our approach the position of the lake was indicated to our olfactory nerves by the tainted breeze, when at the distance of at least a couple of miles. Our camp had been reconnoitred by a small party of blacks during the night; this, the acute vision of my native friends soon discovered, and in pointing out to me their foot-marks, did not fail to hint that their fears were not altogether groundless. A large body of natives had evidently been at the lake anterior to my arrival; this was plainly indicated by the innumerable foot-marks on the beach, and the camping places on the sand-hills. I made the circuit of the lake, but could not discover any aborigines, although I felt assured they were in the neighbourhood. My native friends were timid, and would not venture alone. Among the many temporary contrivances for shelter done by the natives, the covering with turf the projecting branches of dwarf trees, appeared to me the most ingenious. In addition to eels, muscle and tortoise are also obtained; the natives are extremely partial to the latter. At two salt lakes, a mile and a half north-west from Boloke, we encamped for the night; water was procured from a small hole in the margin of Colan, the largest of the two lakes, and although turbid, was found acceptable, as it was the only water in the neighbourhood. Like Boloke, these lakes were dry; their entire beds were covered with a compact layer of pure white salt, sufficiently firm to walk over, and from two and a half to three inches in thickness; when seen from a distance it resembled ice; the salt was pungent to the taste, and the settlers, of whom there were several gathering salt, assured me it answered better for curing meat than that imported; the salt on the verge of the lake was of fine quality. The Jarcoort natives observing my anxiety to communicate with the Boloke tribe, did all in their power to gratify my wish, and their power of vision was strikingly evinced in their observing, when at a great distance from Boloke, natives in the mud groping for eels; suffice to say, a communication was effected, and a small party, consisting of two men and a woman, agreed to accompany me to Kil-ambete.

Being anxious personally to confer with the other tribes of the interior in their own locality, I resolved to proceed by a devious route to Colorer and the Grange, ere I visited Portland. In pursuance therewith, sent forward my party, consisting of one white and seven blacks; other natives returning to their district, went at the same time.

At the request of the natives, visited Patwoordect, a favourite fishing resort at the rapids, several stages and weirs for taking fish had been erected.

Travelled northerly for 20 miles; at evening encamped at Tarcone, adjacent to the station (then being formed) of Drs. Bernard and Kilgour. The greater part of the servants at this establishment had been convicts, they were in a state of great insubordination. My native attendants pointed out an extensive weir, 200 feet long and five feet high; they said it was the property of a family, and emphatically remarked, "that white men had stolen it and their country;" the Yow-ew-nil-lurns were the original inhabitants.

"Tapoe," the Mount Napier of Mitchell, is an isolated hill of volcanic formation; the crater is broken down on the west side to its base. The great swamp is skirted by low hills and well grassed open forest land; the natives are still the undisputed occupants, no white man having been there to dispossess them. The people who occupy the country have fixed residences; at one village were 13 large huts, they are warm and well constructed, in shape of a cupola or "kraal;" a strong frame of wood is first made, and the whole covered with thick turf, with the grass inwards; there are several varieties; those like a kraal are sometimes double, having two entrances, others are demicircular; some are made with boughs and grass, and last are the temporary screens; one hut measured 10 feet diameter by five feet high, and sufficiently strong for a man on horseback to ride over.

Left early, attended by Pevay, to reconnoitre the country. In the marshes numerous trenches were again met with; these resembled more the works of civilized than of savage men; they were of considerable extent; one continuous treble line measured 500 yards in length, two feet in width, and from 18 inches to two feet in depth; these treble dikes led to extensive ramified watercourses; the whole covered an area of at least 10 acres, and must have been done at great cost of labour to the aborigines, a convincing proof of their persevering industry. These are the most interesting specimens of native art I had seen; thousands of yards had been accomplished; the mountain streams were made to pass through them. In fishing, the natives use the arabine or eel-pot of platted grass, from nine to 12 feet in length. On the elevated ground were some of the largest ash-hills I had seen, and must have been the work of generations; one measured 31 yards in length, 29 in width, and two in height, with hollow cavities for the natives' bivouacs and camping places. An extensive range of country had been examined, traces of the aborigines were seen, but none met. Reached, as the sun declined the horizon, on the entrenched ground, and sent Pevay to bring up the party; it was long after dark, and he did not return. I went in quest of them, and for some time wandered among trees, but finding it useless, I tied up my horse, and supperless lay down to sleep, with my saddle for a pillow, under a gum tree; cold and wet during the night.

Enclosure 2, in No. 61.

Lake Tarong, 25 April 1841

Encl. 2, in No. 61.

ABOUT two o'clock in the morning of the 24th instant, I was awake by a shout and general alarm in the huts of the Bolagher tribe, who were encamped about 20 yards in front of my tent.

On

On looking out I saw them armed and rushing in the direction of the Targurt tribe, who were encamped about 50 yards to the right; a severe conflict immediately took place, and some of the Targurt tribe came and burst violently into my tent, begging for assistance and protection.

On going out I found the whole of the men of the different tribes (amounting to upwards of 100) engaged hand to hand in one general *melée*.

On being directed by some of the women, who had likewise sought shelter near my tent, to the huts of the Bolaghers, I there found a young woman, supported in the arms of some of her tribe, quite insensible, and bleeding from two severe wounds upon the right side of the face; she continued in the same state of insensibility till about 11 o'clock, when she expired.

After fighting for nearly an hour, the men of the Bolagher tribe returned to their huts, when finding that every means I had used to restore the young woman was in vain, they gave vent to the most frantic expressions of grief and rage, and were employed till daylight in preparing themselves and weapons to renew the combat.

Shortly before sunrise they again rushed towards the Targurt and Elengermite tribes, who, with about a dozen of Wamambool natives, were encamped together, when a most severe struggle took place between them, and very few escaped on either side without serious fractures or dangerous spear wounds. Although the Targurt tribe were supported by the Elengermite and Wamambool natives, and were consequently much superior in number, they were, after two hours hard fighting, driven off the ground and pursued for about four miles to where their women and children had retired; when one of the former, named Mootinewhannong, was selected, and fell, pierced by about 20 spears of the pursuers.

The body of this female was shortly afterwards burned to ashes by her own people, and the Bolagher natives returned to their encampment, apparently satisfied with the revenge they had taken, and remained silently and sullenly watching the almost inanimate body of the wounded female.

When death took place, they again expressed the most violent and extravagant grief; they threw themselves upon the ground, weeping and screaming at the height of their voices, lacerating their bodies and inflicting upon themselves wounds upon the head, from blows which they gave themselves with the leangville. About an hour after the death of the young woman, the body was removed a few hundred yards into the bush by the father and brother of the deceased; the remainder of the tribe following by one at a time, until they had all joined what I imagined to be the usual funeral party. Having accompanied the body when it was removed, I was then requested to return to my tent, which request I took no notice of. In a few minutes I was again desired, rather sternly, and by impatient signs, to go. I endeavoured to make them understand that I wished to remain, and I sat down upon a tree close to where the body lay. The father of the deceased then came close up to me, and pointed with his finger to his mouth, and then to the dead body. I was at this moment closely and intensely scrutinized by the whole party. I at once guessed their meaning, and signified my intention to remain, and, with as much indifference as I could assume, stretched myself upon the tree, and narrowly watched their proceedings.

With a flint they made a small incision upon the breast, when a simultaneous shriek was given by the party, and the same violent signs of grief were again evinced. After a short time the operation was again commenced, and in a few minutes the body disembowelled.

The scene which now took place was of the most revolting description; horror-stricken and utterly disgusted, while obliged to preserve that equanimity of demeanour upon which I imagined the development of this tragedy to depend, I witnessed the most fearful scene of ferocious cannibalism.

The bowels and entire viscera having been disengaged from the body, were at first portioned out; but from the impatience of some of the women to get at the liver, a general scramble took place for it, and it was snatched in pieces, and, without the slightest process of cooking, was devoured with an eagerness and avidity, a keen, fiendish expression of impatience for more, from which scene, a memory too tenacious upon this subject will not allow me to escape; the kidneys and heart were in like manner immediately consumed, and as a climax to these revolting orgies, when the whole viscera were removed, a quantity of blood and serum which had collected in the cavity of the chest was eagerly collected in handfuls, and drunk by the old man who had dissected the body; the flesh was entirely cut off the ribs and back, the arms and legs were wrenched and twisted from the shoulder and hip joints, and their teeth employed to dis sever the reeking tendons, when they would not immediately yield to their impatience. The limbs were now doubled up and put aside in their baskets; and on putting a portion of the flesh upon a fire which had previously been lit, they seemed to remember that I was of the party; something was said to one of the women, who cut off a foot from the leg she had in her possession, and offered it to me; I thought it prudent to accept of it, and wrapping it in my handkerchief, and pointing to my tent they nodded assent, and I joyfully availed myself of their permission to retire. They shortly afterwards returned to their huts with the debris of the feast, and during the day, to the horror and annoyance of my two boys, and those belonging to the establishment, they brought another part, and some half-picked bones, and offered them to us. The head was struck off with a tomahawk and placed between hot stones in the hollow of a tree, where it has undergone a process of baking, and it is still left there otherwise untouched.

From the general testimony, given by about 100 aborigines, it appears that the native "Warawél" crept to the hut of the deceased Worangrew, and inflicted with a spear the

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two wounds from which she died. From a *post mortem* examination of the skull, I found the spear had penetrated the brain through a wound in the right temple.

(signed) C. W. Siewright, A. P.

— No. 62.—

(No. 4.)

COPY of a DESPATCH from Governor Sir *George Gipps* to Lord *Stanley*.

No. 62.
Sir George Gipps
to Lord Stanley,
4 January 1843.

29 November 1842.

My Lord,

Government House, Sydney, 4 January 1843.

I HAVE the honour herewith to forward to your Lordship a copy of a letter from Mr. La Trobe, as also of the annual report enclosed in it, of the Wesleyan Mission to the aborigines, which was established towards the end of 1838, at a place called "Bunting Dale," about 40 miles west of Geelong, in the Port Phillip district.

Your Lordship will perceive with regret, that the object for which this mission was established has entirely failed, notwithstanding all the assistance has been afforded to it which was asked for from the Government.

The cause of its failure is ascribed by the Rev. Mr. Hurst, who signs the report, to three principal causes :

1st. To the fact of the mission having been established in the neighbourhood of four different tribes, which though at first considered advantageous, as bringing a greater number of the natives within the sphere of its action, was afterwards found injurious, in consequence of the hostilities constantly existing between these different tribes.

2d. To the difficulty of communicating with the tribes in their own languages.

3d. And principally, to what Mr. Hurst not inappropriately designates "the deadly influence of ungodly Europeans."

It is to escape as far as possible from this influence, that the heads of the mission are now desirous of removing their establishment to the river Murray, lately visited by the Rev. Mr. Tuckfield, one of the missionaries, whose report of his journey was transmitted to your Lordship with my despatch of the 30th July 1842, No. 136.

But were the mission removed to this locality, there can be little doubt that it would, in the course of a very few years, be even there surrounded by the establishments of white men ; and I can, moreover, scarcely think that any projects for the amelioration of the native race can be successful, which are founded on the principle of separating them entirely from intercourse with white men.

If, however, such a plan be ever to be tried, a much more favourable spot for trying it presents itself, I think, at the other (that is to say, the northern) extremity of the colony.

A plan is actually under consideration for removing the German mission in the district of Moreton Bay to a spot where it might reasonably expect to remain undisturbed by white men for many years ; on this project, however, it would be premature now to enter.

I have, &c.

(signed) *Geo. Gipps*.

Enclosure in No. 62.

Enclosure in No. 62.

£. 602. 4 s. 10 d.
£. 301. 2 s 5 d.

Sir,

Melbourne, 29 November 1842.

I HAVE the honour to enclose to you for his Excellency's satisfaction, the annual report which I have received from superintendent of the Aboriginal Missionary establishment on the Barwen; and also a memorandum of the expense incurred in the maintenance of the same, during the year commencing the 1st of October 1841, and ending the 30th September 1842, the moiety of which they trust will be met by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Hurst further observes, that as I at the time intimated that the Government would bear the expense of Mr. Tuckfield's visit to the Murray, he had entered the whole of that sum in the amount requested from the Government; and I trust that his Excellency will not object to this claim being admitted. It is my duty to state, that previous to sanctioning the issue of the sum in question, I have, in conformity to my instructions, taken an opportunity of visiting the station. His Excellency will perceive, that in consequence of the evident want of success, and of other difficulties attending the labours of the missionaries, the establishment has been already very considerably reduced; and that the claim on Government

Government