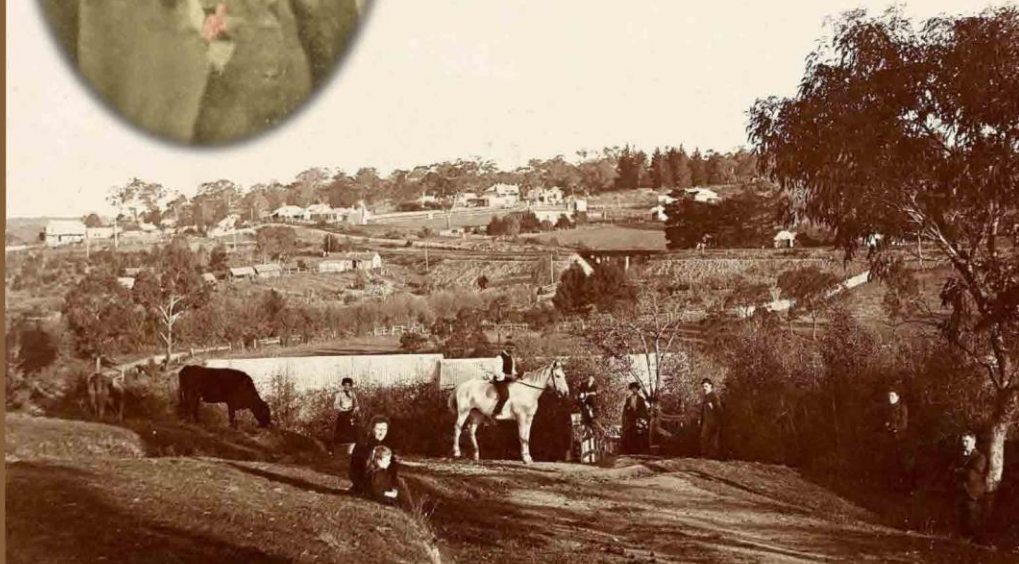


Book Launch
24 June 2017

Robert Whatmough Pioneering Victorian horticulturalist



by Jacinta Crealy

In 1824, nine-year-old Robert Whatmough began work at a local cotton mill in his home town of Rochdale, Lancashire, a product of the widespread poverty of his time. In 1887, Robert died in Greensborough, Victoria, a wealthy and respected pioneer, whose horticultural achievements were awarded many times over.

A combination of biography and social history, Robert's story explores the Chartist movement, migration on the troubled ship *Georgiana*, surviving in the infant town of Melbourne in 1841, working on John Batman's garden and developing his own prosperous gardens in Greensborough. There are riots, bushrangers, horse racing, the Black Thursday bushfires, the Victorian gold rush, fraud and a life-changing murder.

Robert's horticultural passion motivated his life. He developed new fruit varieties and participated in many exhibitions. As a committee member of the Horticultural Society of Victoria from 1859 to 1871, Robert worked with his peers to create the Burnley Gardens of Richmond, run local exhibitions and manage the horticultural sections of the enormous intercolonial and international exhibitions which took place during the mid to late 1800s in Melbourne.

Thank you everyone for coming along today. I love the fact that this man, Robert Whatmough, inspires so many of his descendants to keep his story alive. I hope I have done him justice. The physical book is a tribute to Deborah Squires, a local publisher in Bairnsdale and a valued mentor.

Thanks to Greensborough Historical Society for hosting this book launch today. It's a shame Noel Withers is not here, as he has been such a great supporter of this project from its outset. It was Noel who introduced me to my cousin, Steve Whatmough, who is the holder of so much information about the Whatmough family. Steve and I have had countless emails and a few mad meetings, swapping notes and charts and articles. This book is as much about Steve's research as anyone's.

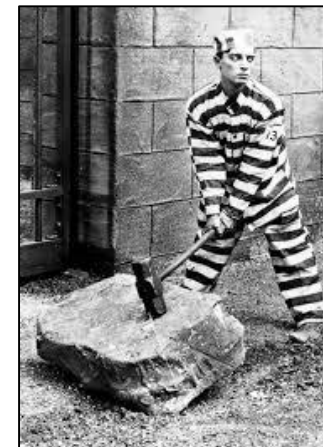
I am also very grateful to other contributors to the book, namely Dieter Retz, Faye Fort, Joan Bardrick, Alexander Romanov-Hughes and Linley Hooper.

My family have been brilliant, my husband Ian and son Dan, who tolerated my obsessive research and writing, and they're still with me. Thanks, Ellen Reeves, my niece, for excellent editing, and to all my family here today, supportive as always.

Here's a little bit of background about Robert Whatmough, my great-great-grandfather and how he filled the pages of this book.



Finding a Passion



Marriage



Dad's side

Mum's side

Most people find things to enjoy in life. Not everyone finds a passion: something that jumps into your mind upon waking; that thing that you look forward to at the end of your working week; that thing that keeps you up late at night because an exciting sense of discovery suspends time. My passion started with a 14-day free trial with Ancestry in 2008. I thought that was all I'd need! But of course I was hooked.

Over the years, I have found not one, not two, but five convicts in the family. For a while there, I thought Dad's side of the family was the only contributor to our criminal genes.

But then I found one on Mum's side called Joseph Rycroft and a colourful character he was...that's another story...

Orphaned



Ruby and Len Mills

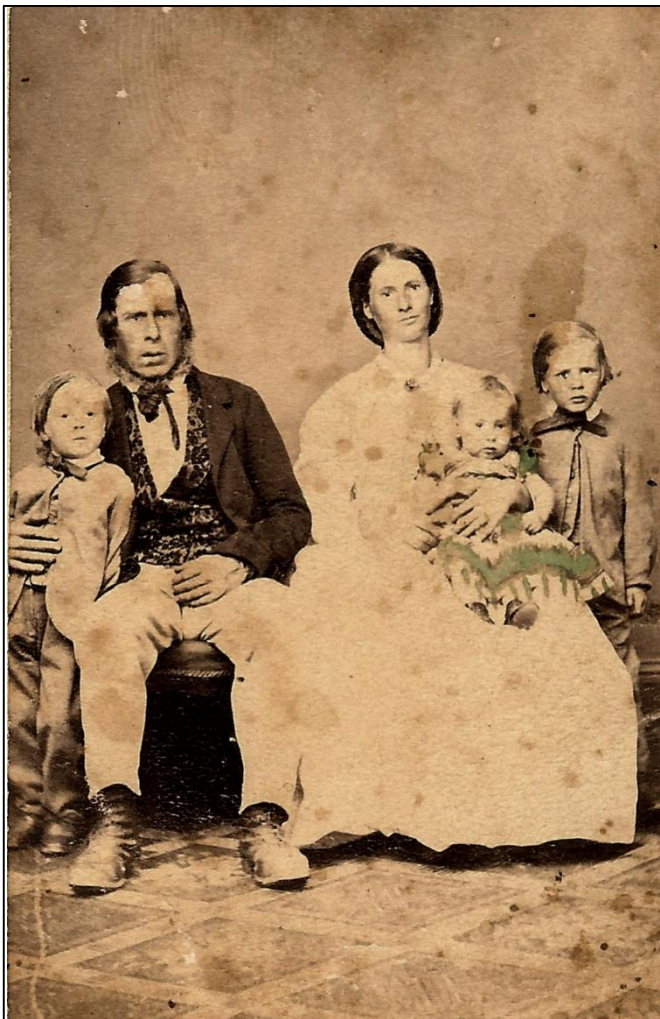
Joseph Rycroft's grand-daughter was my grandmother, Ruby Wilson. She was a much loved grandma, and the story was often told about how she and her two older siblings were orphaned, all under the age of four. Their parents, Robert Wilson and Violet Rycroft, died in 1903 within months of each other, Violet of a bowel hernia and Robert of typhoid fever.

The three little Wilson children, Walter, Dorothy and 1-year-old Ruby were each taken into a family home.



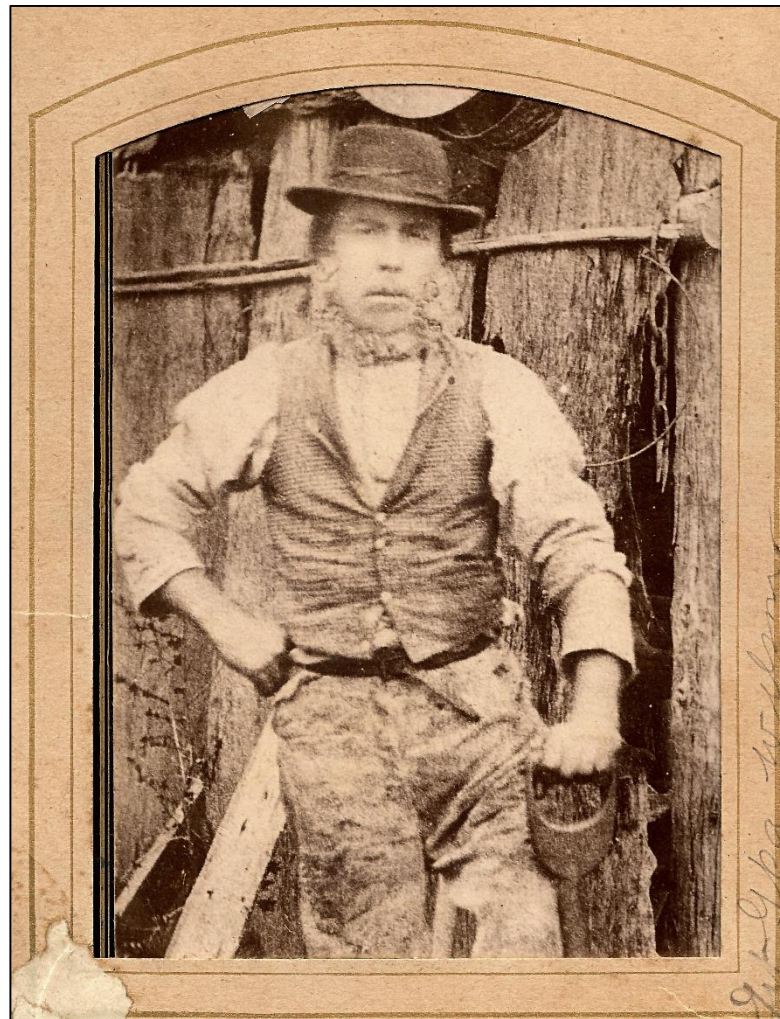
Ruby's parents: Robert Wilson and Violet Rycroft

Joseph and Sarah



Ruby was taken in by Grandma Wilson, who we know in this story as Sarah Whatmough, wife of Joseph Wilson. Sarah and Joseph had eight children, but tragically Joseph died suddenly in 1887 of a heart condition. Sarah was pregnant with Charles at the time: he was born 6 months later, and Sarah began the hard task of raising eight children, ranging in age from newborn to 20 years old.

Joseph Wilson and Sarah Whatmough



Joseph Wilson just before he died

Grandma Wilson

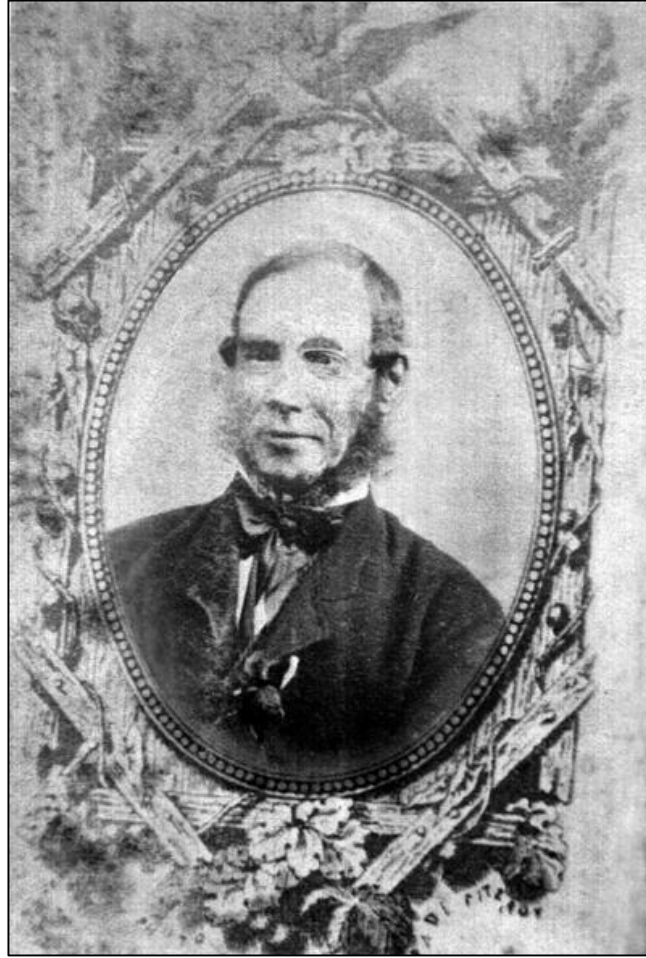


“She was an incredibly hard worker, chopping wood and carrying water from the creek to the house in buckets using a shoulder yoke. By night, she created beautiful items of fine beadwork, such as ladies collars, boxes and picture frames, which were the fashion of the day. Her greatest joy was her acclaimed garden, full of all sorts of flowers and noted for her sensational snapdragons. The knowledge Sarah learned from her father allowed her to earn a modest income as she kept a small orchard and vineyard, and sold fruit to the Alphington Jam Factory. She and her sons also chopped wood to sell in Heidelberg.” *Robert Whatmough, p. 102*

Sarah was an expert in the school of hard knocks. When she took in baby Ruby in 1903, she was 57 years old and had already been a widow for sixteen years. Survival was her forte. That's where my curiosity began, with an elder called Grandma Wilson whose story was passed down by oral family history. How amazing that her story was still so strong many decades after her death.

Well and truly bitten by the family history bug, I wanted to know where Sarah Whatmough came from.

Robert and Mary



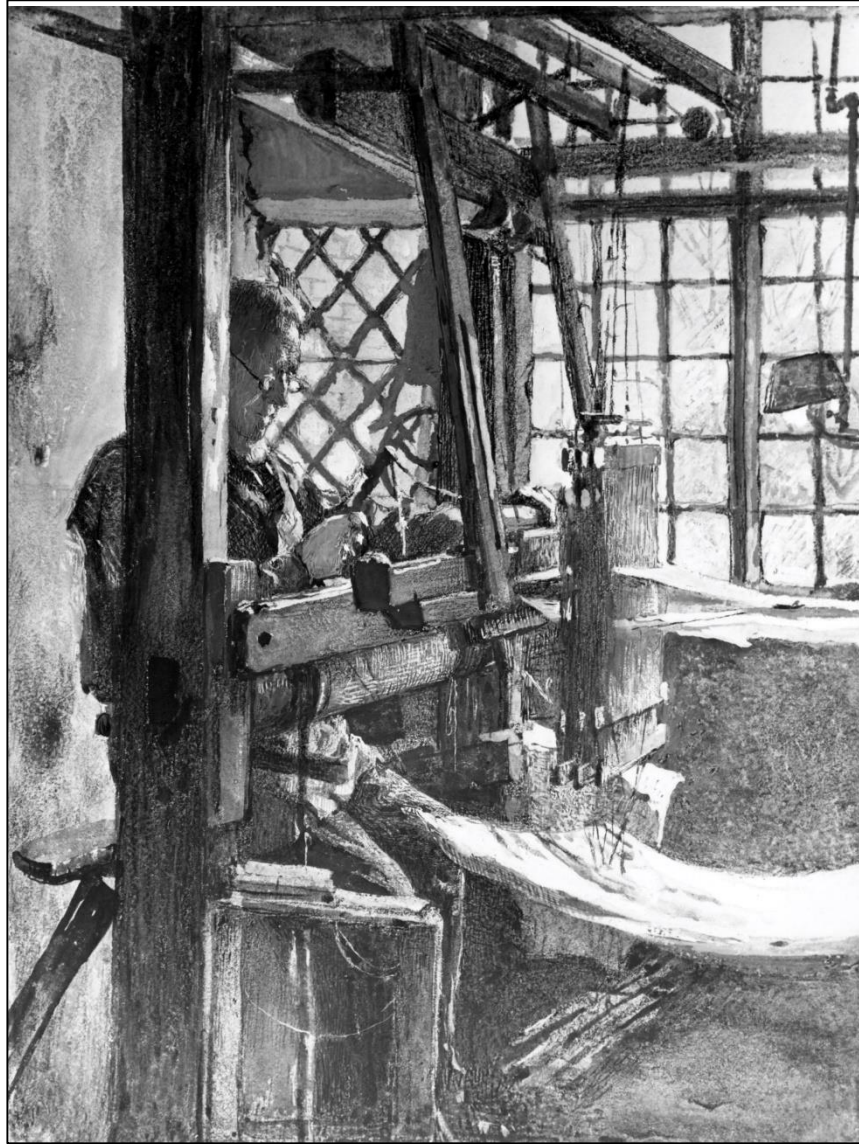
Robert Whatmough



Mary Hill

Thanks to the Ancestry website, it wasn't hard to find Sarah's parents: Robert Whatmough and Mary Hill, and even some great pictures of them. It wasn't enough. I had to know more. And so began a journey back through time...And here is what I found.

The weavers



Robert Whatmough was born in 1815 in Rochdale, Lancashire, in northern England. Lancashire had been traditionally famous for its textiles, and Robert's family had a lengthy pedigree of weavers over many generations. However, Robert was born into an angry world, where industrialisation had pushed weavers into textile factories with dreadful conditions and wages well below the poverty line. Robert would have been one of many children to enter the factory at age 9, the legal age for children to begin work.

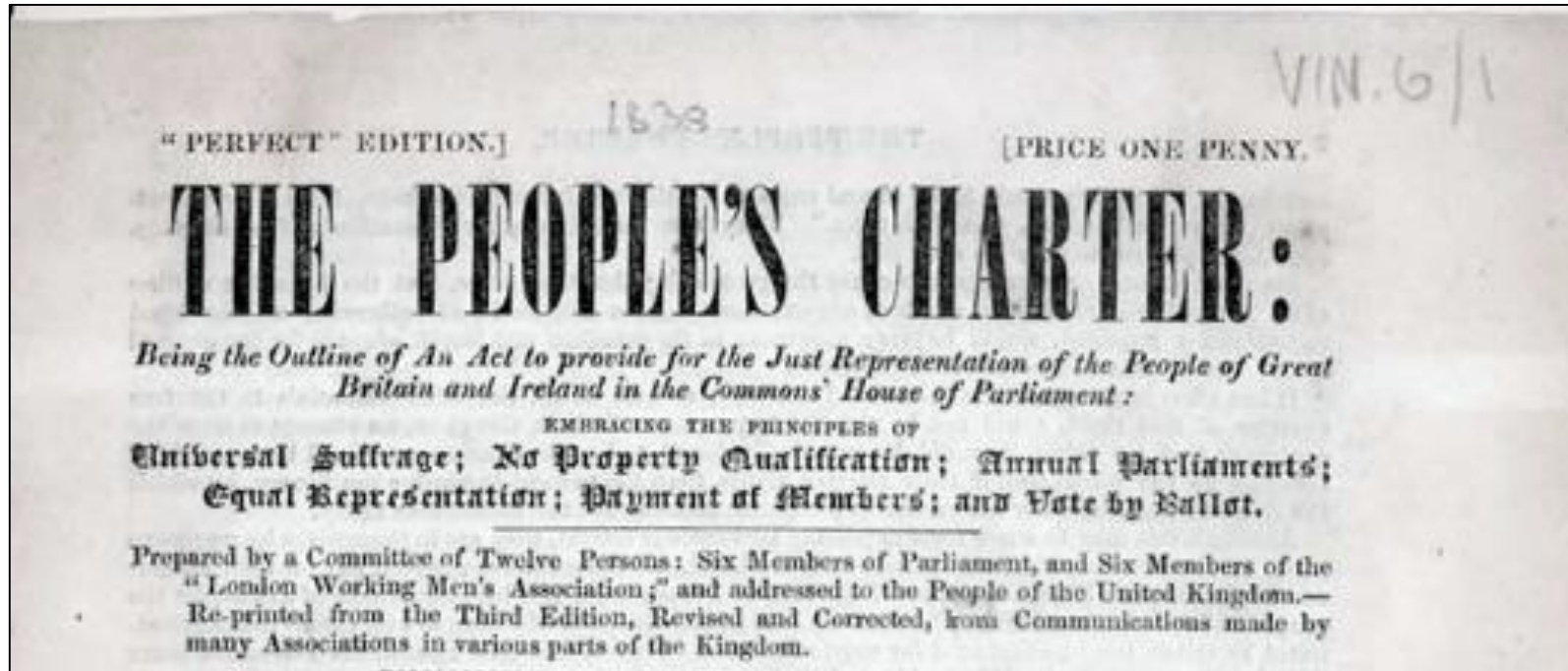
The riots



Peterloo Massacre, Manchester, 1819

People demonstrated and rioted, demanding enough money to put food on the table. It was during Robert's earliest years that the term Luddite became a household word, an expression used for those who opposed technological progress, and popularly believed to have been inspired by Ned Ludd, a youth who destroyed some stocking frames in 1779. Mills were burnt, equipment was damaged, and the government response was to send in the militia. It was not unusual for demonstrators to be killed by the militia, or killed in the frightened crush of people trying to escape the soldiers.

Chartism



Rioting, now a nationwide practice, was having no impact on factory owners or the government. So a canny group of radicals prepared a political charter in 1836 to present to Parliament, which became known as the People's Charter. The requests seem reasonable by today's standards, but in fact this was the beginning of a long, bitter campaign between the government and Chartist radicals. The Charter was used to empower and unite people across the country. When soldiers shot into crowds to disperse them, this merely ignited the demonstrators into larger, more vocal meetings. In 1839, the government resorted to convicting radicals of treason and sentencing them to death or transportation.

http://www.bl.uk/learning/images/Campaign_MAI/chartism/large92864.html

1. Suffrage for all men 21 and over
2. Equal sized electoral districts
3. Voting by secret ballot
4. Abolition of property qualification for members of parliament
5. Payment of members of parliament
6. Annual parliamentary elections

Interested in chartism?

Go to

www.chartistancestors.co.uk

A New Identity

A

Apple Trees - A Bohemian Gardner, who possesses a fine plantation of Apple-trees of a superior quality propagates them neither by seeds nor grafts, but by cutting off small - branches, of the lower ends of which he inserts into - Potatoes, and plants them with an inch or two of the cut above the surface of the Earth. The Potatoe nourishes the wood, which speedily - spreads its roots, and becomes a flourishing Tree,

*Ex. Literary Gazette
Saturday 10 Nov. 1832
page 717*

*Auriculas - how to manage
Vide page 65 post
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α

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*Ex. Literary Gazette
Saturday 10 Nov 1832
page 717.*

*Auriculas - how to manage
Vide page 65 post
..... was originally brought from Cairo*

The Liverpool Mail.

Saturday, 15 August 1840

NEW SOUTH WALES.

...on the 15th September,

For PORT PHILIP, NEW SOUTH WALES,

The fine Teak-built Ship GEORGIANA,
Captain STEPHENSON;

500 tons per register. Both these vessels have poops, are coppered and copper-fastened, have superior accommodation for cabin, intermediate cabin, and steerage passengers, and will carry experienced surgeons. Only a limited quantity of freight will be taken, and shippers may depend upon the days of sailing being punctually adhered to. - For terms of freight or passage, apply to Messrs. WILLIAM SMITH and SONS; to COTESWORTH and WYNNE; or to BRODIE AND HAMILTON.

N.B. - By these conveyances a few respectable married Mechanics, Gardeners, Shepherds, and Farm Servants, with their Families, may obtain a FREE PASSAGE. Conditions to be learned on application to Messrs. WILLIAM SMITH AND SONS.

- All letters must be post paid.

Oral family history tells us that Robert was a Chartist. At the height of the arrests in 1839, Robert married local neighbour, Mary Hill, and in 1840, baby Jemima was born. Robert was at a turning point: to stay and fight, or to find another way for his new family.

What we know about Robert in 1840 is that he was a closet horticulturalist. He had been collecting all sorts of botanical and horticultural articles, carefully transcribing information into a kind of journal, which has been called The Botany Book, with articles dating as early as 1832. When an opportunity arose for farmers to get free berths to Australia on the ship Georgiana, Robert signed up. Did he have farming experience? We still don't know. We can only surmise that Robert's dream involved horticulture and here was the opportunity he'd been waiting for. The day after Robert's 25th birthday on 27th September 1840, Robert, Mary and Jemima set sail for Australia.

Really bad food

The Voyage

Quarantine



Romances

Threats of mutiny

Frightening storms

A crazy Reverend and a volatile Captain

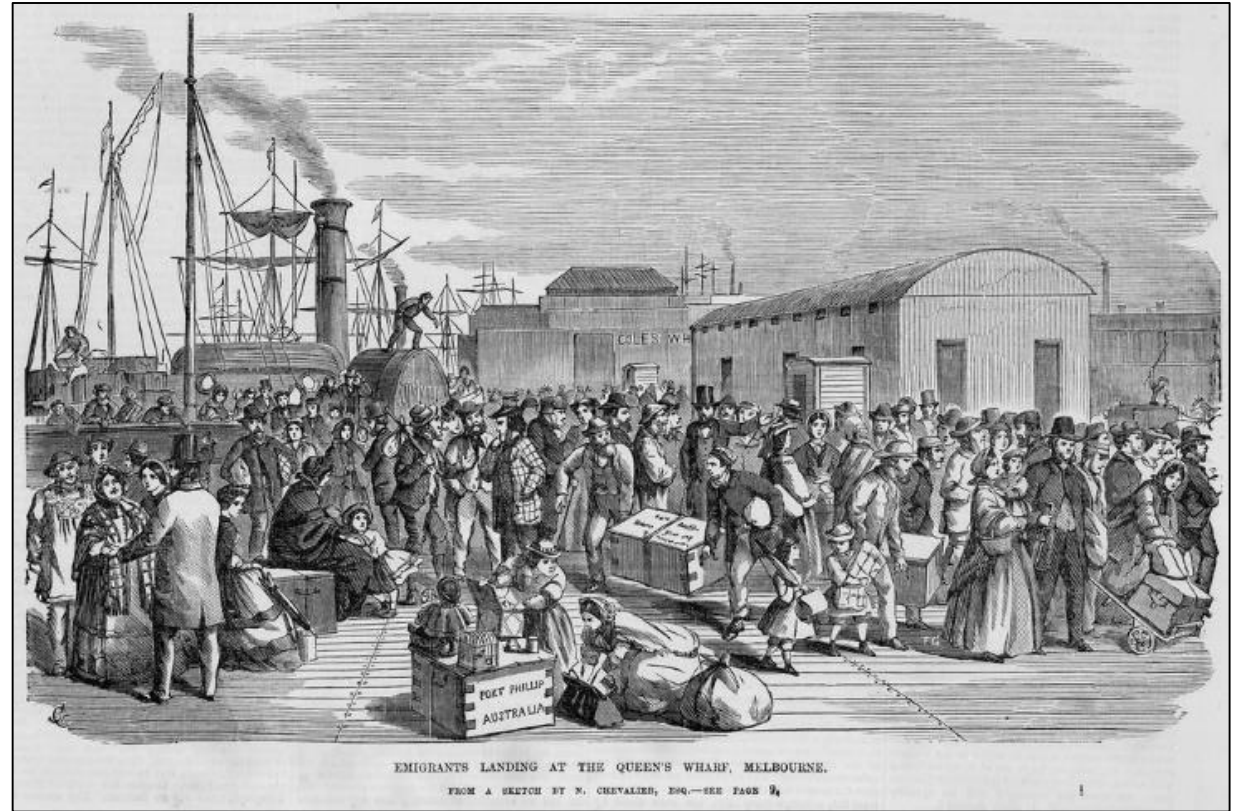
Lots of infant deaths

Anyone studying ship's voyages will tell you that getting hold of the exact ship's diary for the voyage of your ancestor is a rare and fantastic thing. If they are available, it is usually because someone has spent a lot of money to get a diary copy, and usually painstakingly transcribed it. How lucky we are that Linley Hooper, a descendant of the Georgiana's ship's surgeon, did just that, and then generously sent me a copy of the diary. The ship's surgeon was Richard Ryther Steer Bowker, and his journal is rich, emotional and detailed.

Arrival

“[Saturday 20 February 1841] We sailed along with just the proper quantity of wind, up a spacious bay, 30 or 40 miles long, when we nearly reached within a few miles of our destination, we were hailed by Mr. Stafford, the tidemaster, who asked about our health. On telling him that we had had Scarlatina, he ordered us to heave to until he brought someone else. He sent out the boat containing Mr. Lewis, the harbour master, who after more questions ornamented us with a yellow silk pocket handkerchief [a flag signifying disease] and sent us to anchor in the quarantine ground. This was pleasant after our many days spent in longing for the land. Arrived in port, we were fixed just far enough off to see the wished for shore. I have often when a boy and hungry smelt a good dinner going for someone else. This reminded me in some measure of the sensation.”

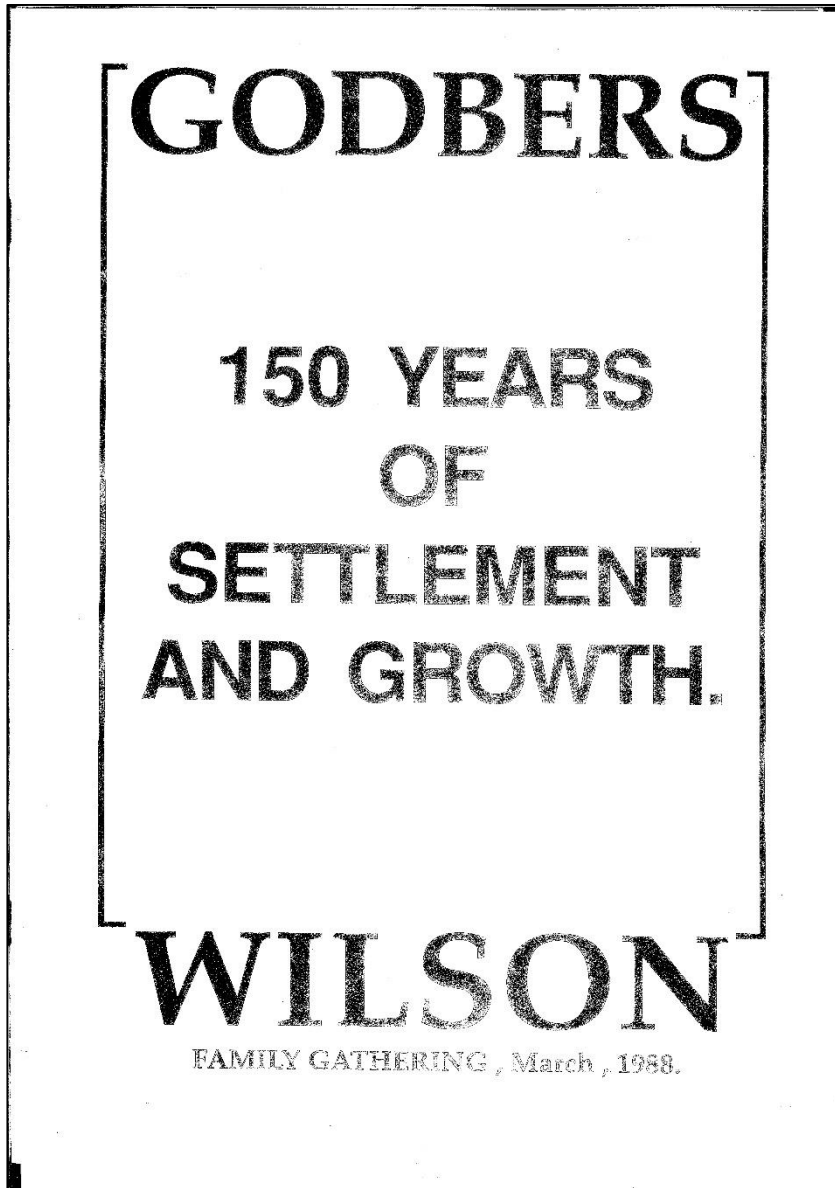
Robert Whatmough, p. 25



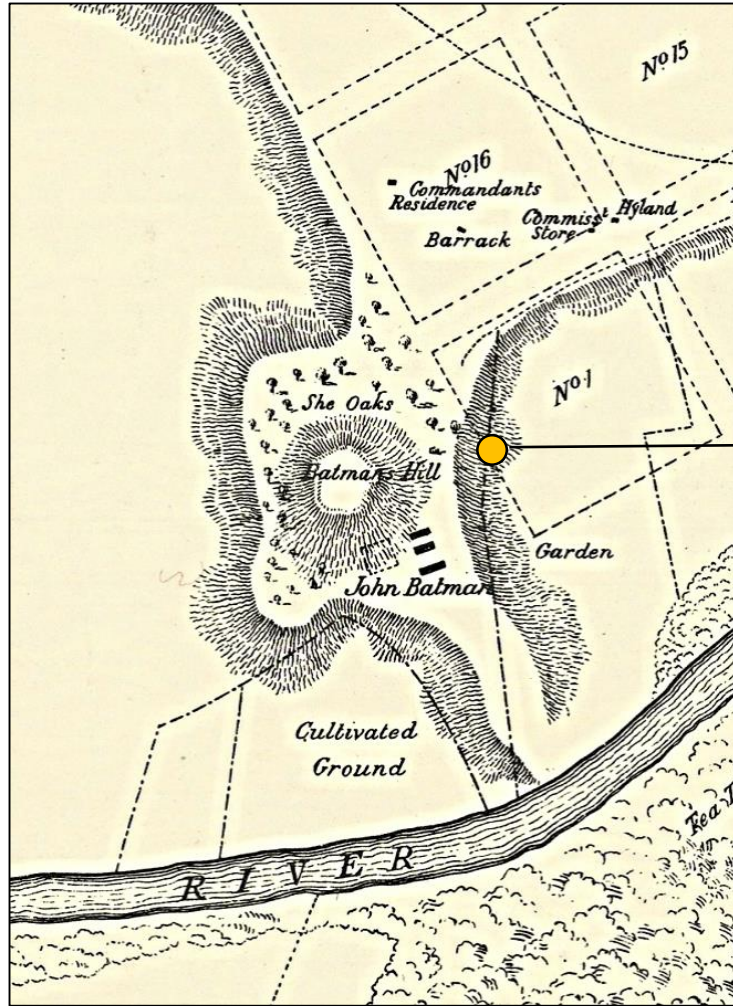
Dr. Bowker's diary was so expressive and interesting, it was easy to imagine the trials and tribulations that would have been experienced by Robert and Mary. Crew and passengers alike could hardly wait to leave the troubled ship. At last Robert, Mary and little Jemima arrived in Melbourne, a town only 6 years old.

Melbourne in 1841

The next part of Robert Whatmough's story was inspired by Alan Partington's story, contained in this booklet. Thanks to Alan's efforts to capture history, we know that Robert got two jobs when he arrived in Melbourne. He was a lamplighter...



First gardening job

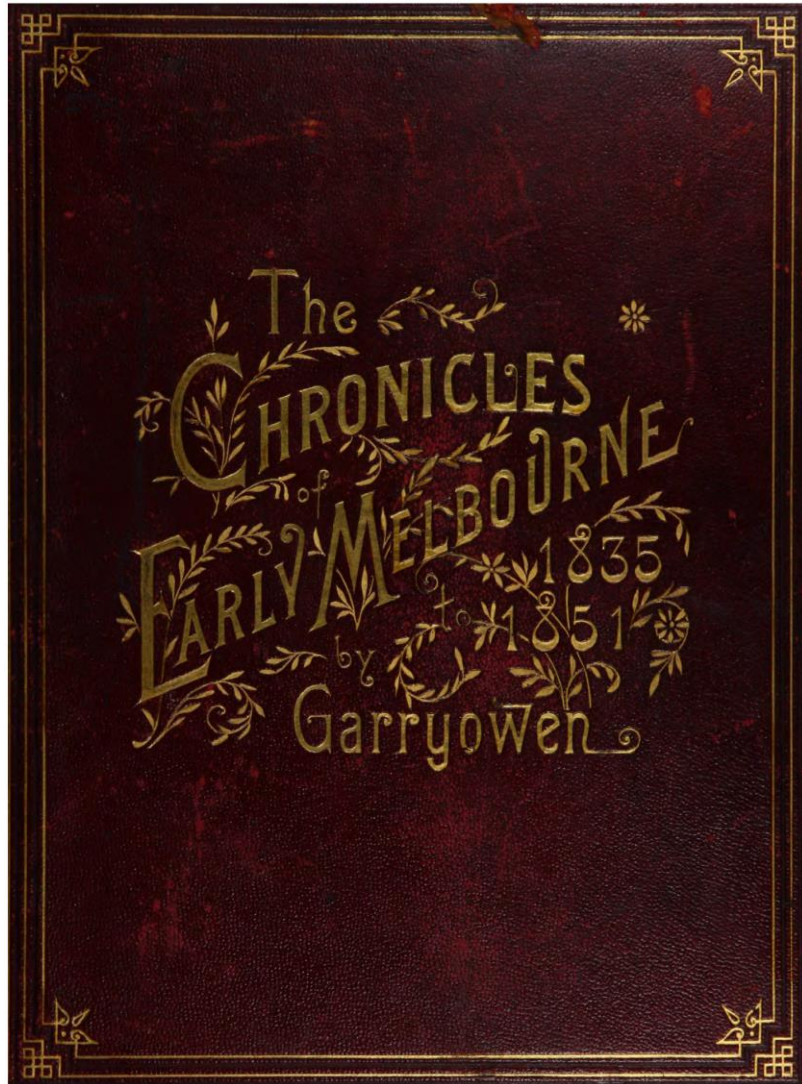


Site of Robert and Mary's hut



...and most importantly, Robert got his first gardening job. He worked on the garden of John Batman, who had died in 1839. The garden was on the site of today's Southern Cross station. Robert built a bark hut on the edge of Batman's garden, and it was here that Robert and Mary's second child, Robert Emmett, was born in the summer of 1842. No hospitals, no nurses, hardly any doctors available, and water collected in buckets. Women acted as midwives for each other and babies were usually born at home.

A town of character



fluttering and flapping
of the white drapery

flickering, sputtering glare

nocturnal outrages

brave as a lion

Finn, Edmund aka Garryowen (1888) *The Chronicles of Early Melbourne: 1835 to 1852, Volumes 1 and 2*, Fergusson and Mitchell, Collins St, Melbourne, accessed via [Latrobe University Library website](#)

River Plenty

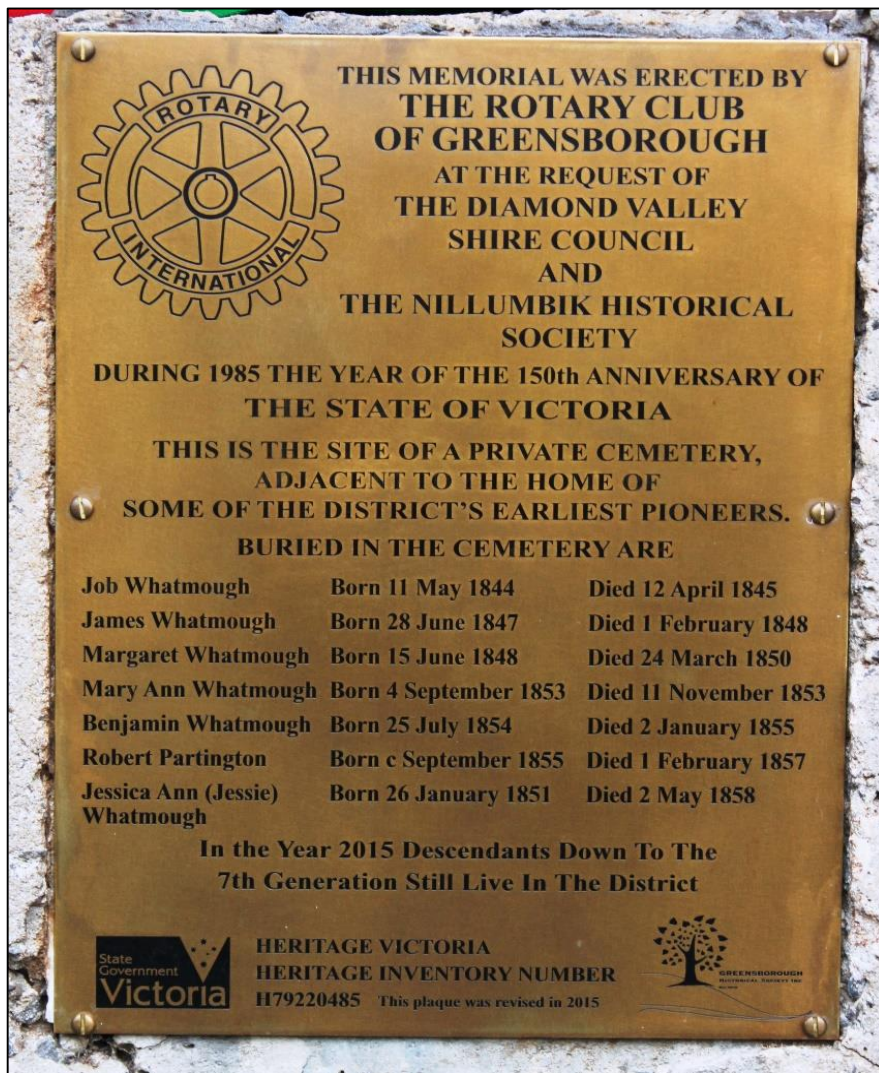
When John Batman's estate was disbanded, the Flintoff brothers purchased some of Batman's trees and transplanted them in Greensborough at Brancepeth Park at Point Lookout. The Flintoffs offered Robert the job of tending the orchard, and in 1842, the family moved from the wildness of Melbourne to the wilderness of the Plenty River, where only a few families were settled. This place would be the making of Robert, but in those early days it was very tough.



State Library of Victoria

<http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/pictoria/gid/slv-pic-aab34165>

Memorial

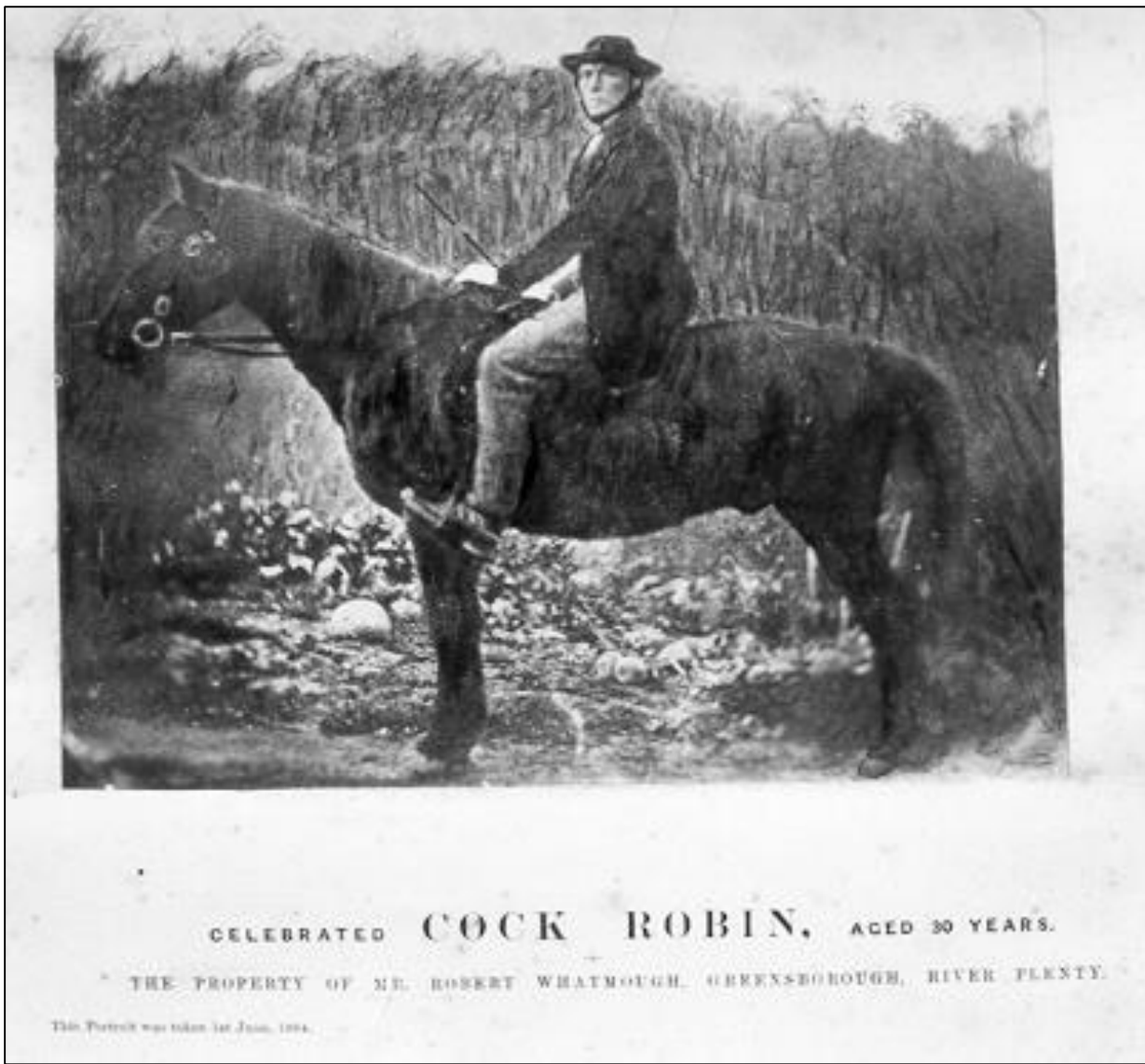


“In 1985, the children were commemorated in a plaque unveiled at the site of the Pioneer Children’s Cemetery. In 2016, Steve Whatmough, Faye Fort, Barbara Warden and Denise Anderson, descendants of Robert Whatmough, placed a new plaque at the site with updated detail about the children.”
Robert Whatmough, p. 46

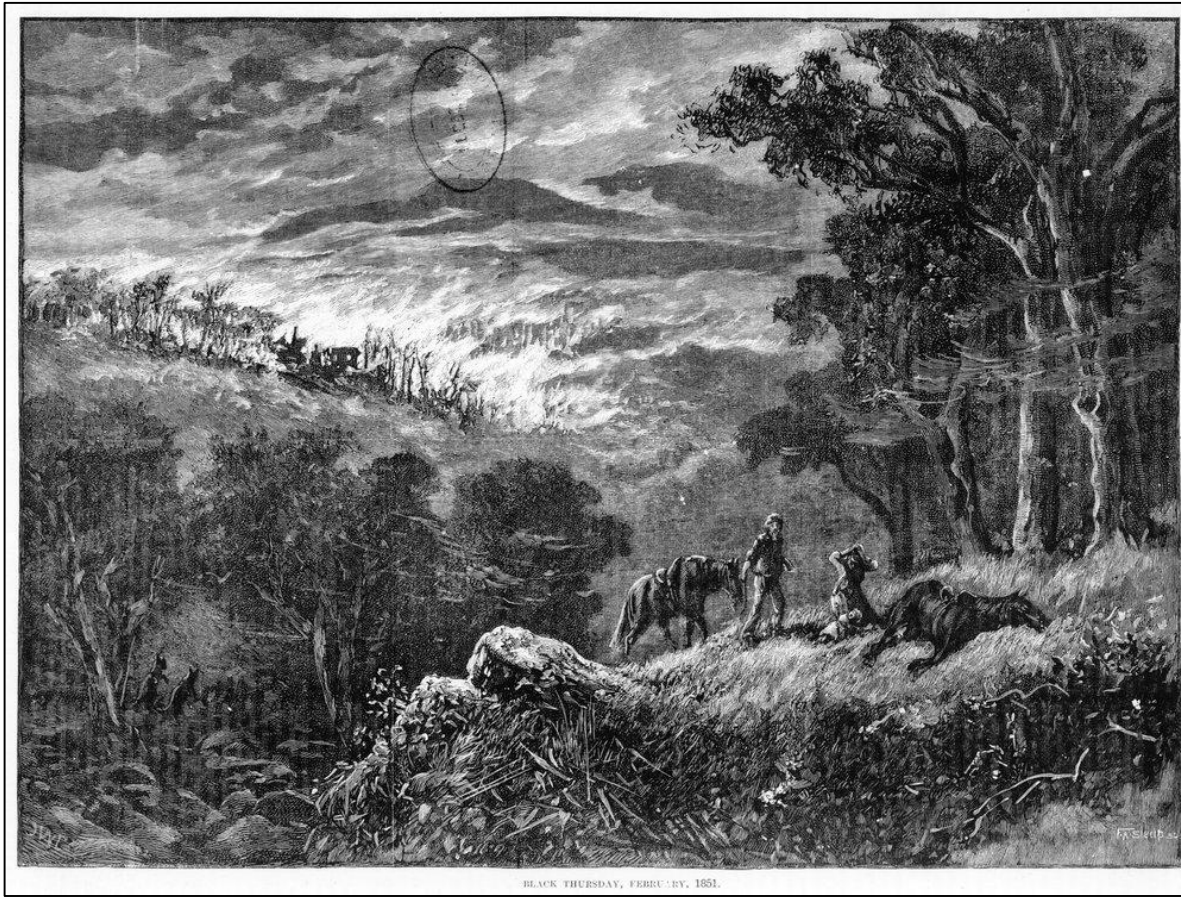


Robert and Mary had another eight children here between 1844 and 1856, but only two of those eight children survived: daughters Sarah (Grandma Wilson) and Rosalie. All but one child died in infancy, causes unknown as death certificates were not required in those early days. There was no cemetery, so Robert buried his children on the property, and planted jonquils to mark their place. Amazingly, those jonquils still bloom today.

Robert and Cock Robin



1851

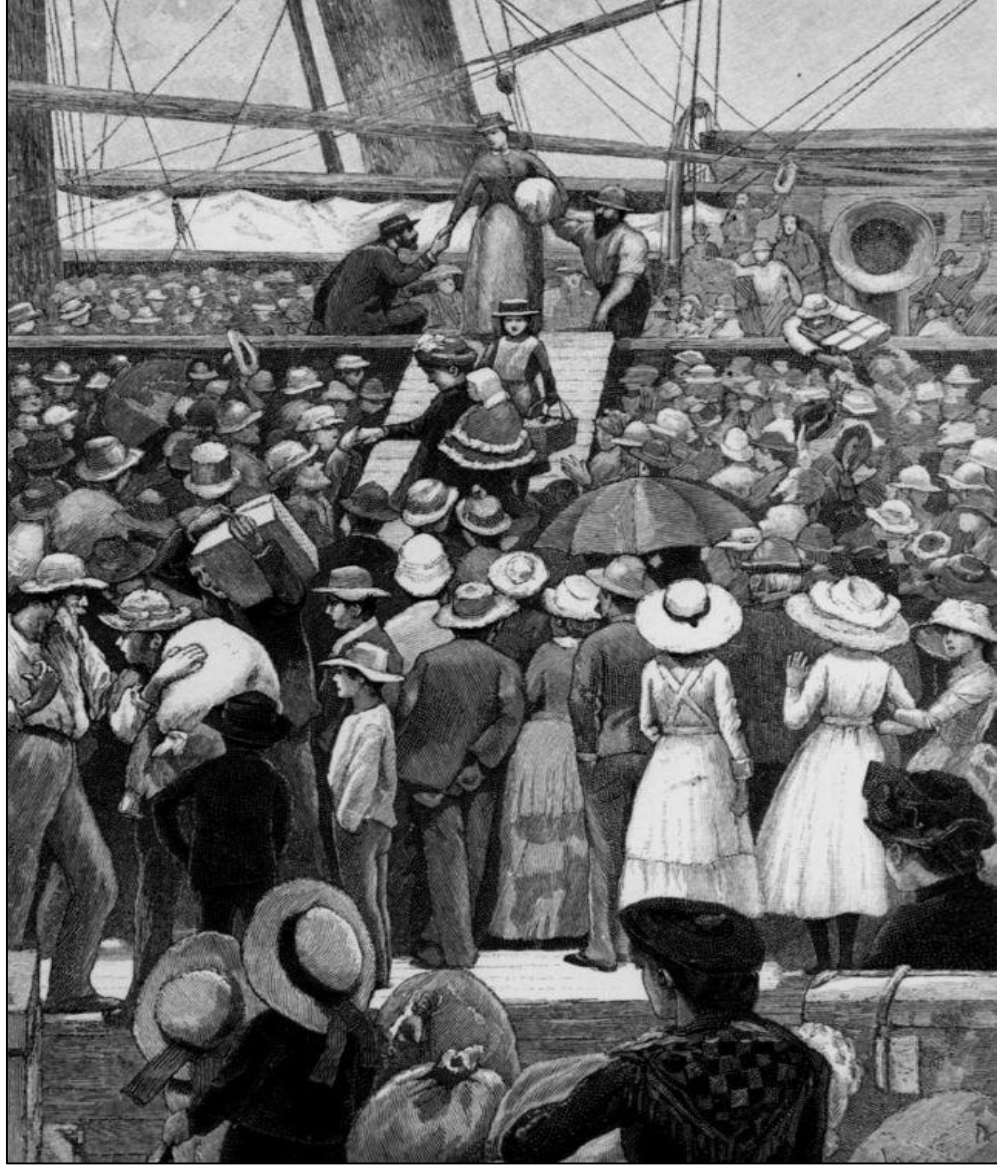


Black Thursday



The Gold Rush

Arrival of the Partingtons

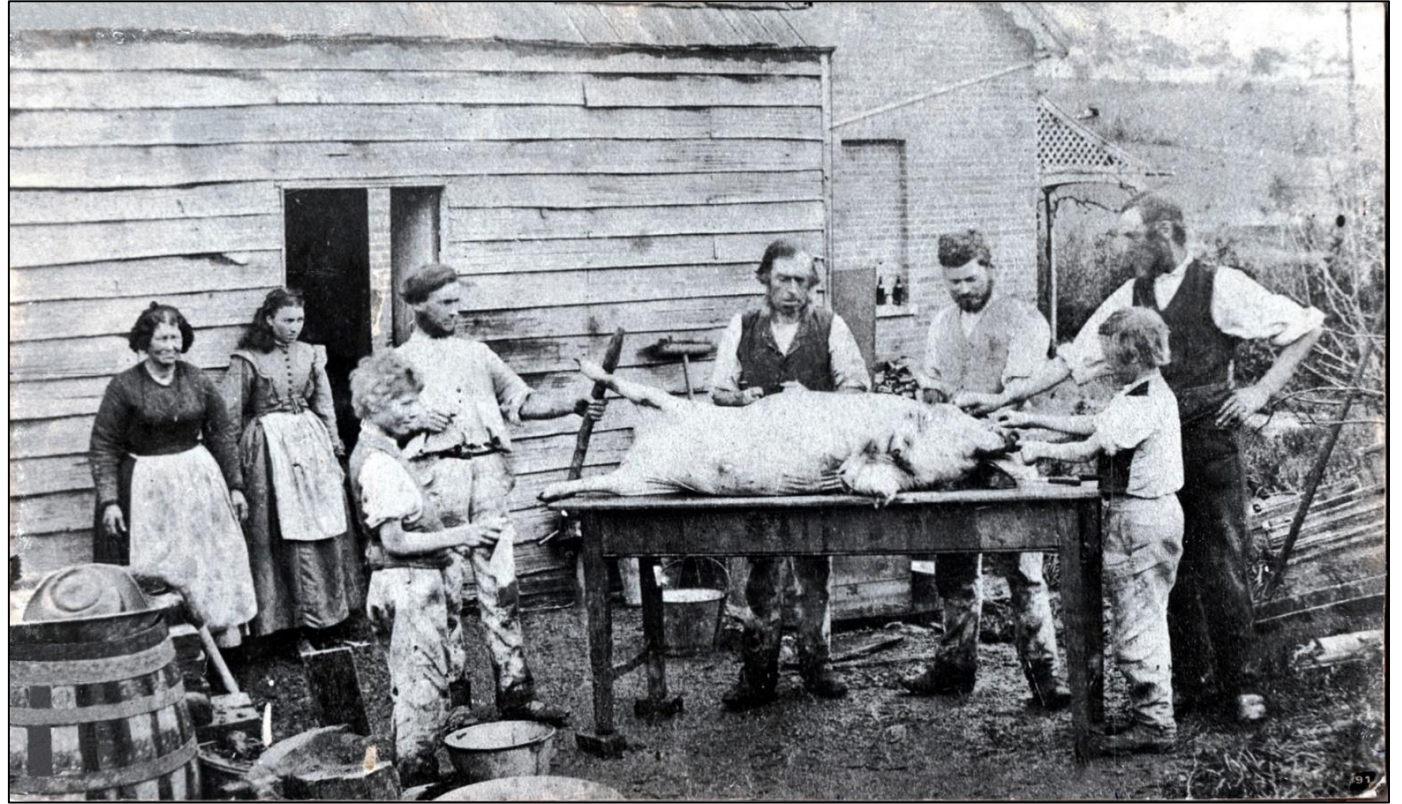


**Fraud in the
Greensborough Road Board**



**Farmers Arms Hotel, meeting place
of the Greensborough Road Board**

Willis Vale



The 2 young boys are unidentified to date.
L to R: Mary Whatmough, Rosalie Whatmough, Robert Emmett Whatmough, John Wilson, unknown man, Robert Whatmough

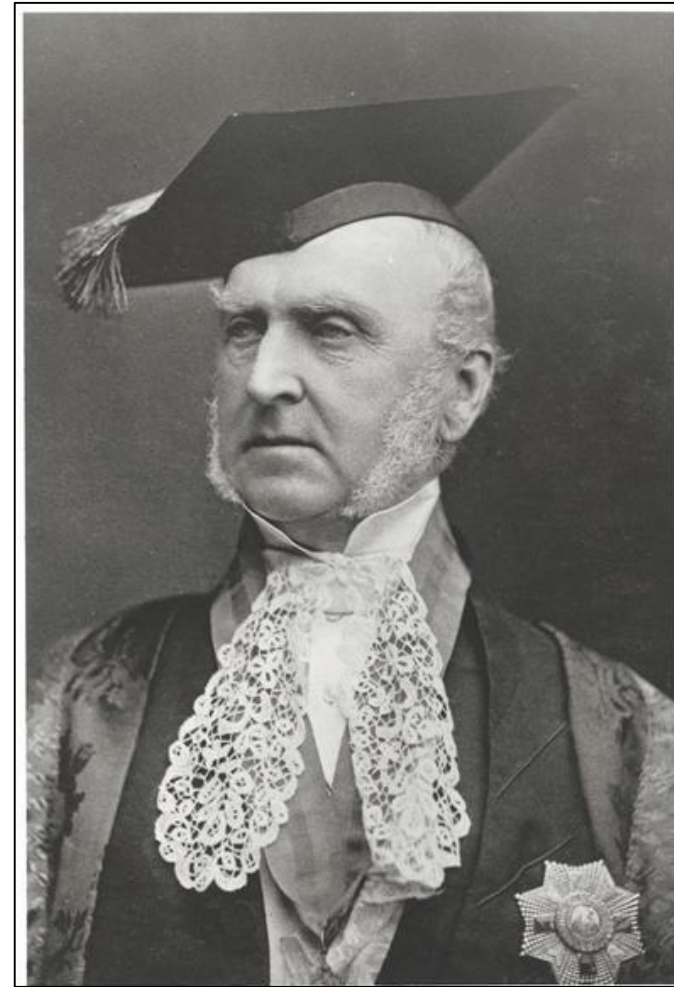
Horticultural Society of Victoria

Baron Ferdinand von Mueller



<https://www.rbg.vic.gov.au/science/herbarium-and-resources/library/mueller-correspondence-project>

Sir Redmond Barry



Robert was a member of this Society from 1850 and became a committee member in 1859, a role he maintained until 1870. Robert became a very successful and respected horticulturalist, and earned his place on this committee of passionate horticulturalists and gardeners

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redmond_Barry#/media/File:Redmond_Barry.jpg

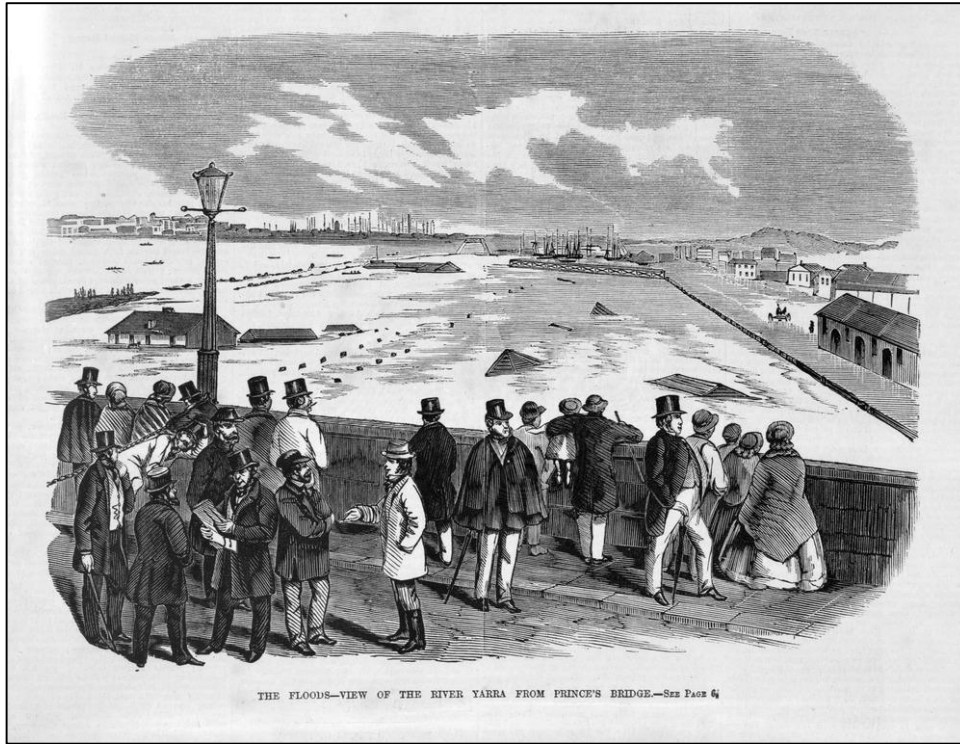
Experimental Garden



The Horticultural Society relied on government funding and the small profits made from exhibitions. It had its ups and downs, but never faltered in its directions. One of its most difficult challenges and greatest achievements was the building of the Experimental Garden in Richmond, today known as the Burnley Gardens. The Society was granted land in 1860, but it would take until 1866 for the development of the gardens to take an uphill turn.

<http://www.fobg.org.au/blog/about-the-gardens/burnleys-significant-trees/>

Experimental Garden



Mr Waterhouse donated 2,000 vine cuttings and, as promised, “a valuable collection of standard trees and vines had been received from Mr. Whatmough...and the thanks of the society were then forwarded to the donors.”
Robert Whatmough, p. 80



<https://www.farmcafe.com.au/wedding-melbourne/2015/4/27/burnley-gardens-wedding-venue-melbourne>

Burnley Gardens today

Horticultural Shows

Argus, 4 Dec 1858, p. 5 (HSV)

- Loquats. – First prize, Mr. Robert Whatmough.
- Cherries, Collection of. – Second prize, Mr. Robert Whatmough
- Rhubarb. – First prize, to Mr. Robert Whatmough
- Broad beans. – First prize, to Mr. Robert Whatmough
- Round Potatoes. – second prize, to Mr. Robt. Whatmough

Argus, 3 Nov 1862, p. 6 (VHIS)

- CLASS 6.
- Fruit, Miscellaneous Collection. – First prize, Mr. Robert Whatmough, gardener, Greensborough.
 - Dessert apples, Collection. – First prize, Mr. Robert Whatmough.
 - Dessert apples, best variety. – First prize, Mr. Whatmough.
 - Dessert pears. – First prize, Mr. Whatmough.



The activity most closely associated with the Horticultural Society were the exhibitions, commonly called the "flower shows". These shows would run over a weekend and attract a couple of thousand people. Robert was a regular exhibitor and prize winner.

Argus, 2 Nov 1863, p. 6 (HSV & VHIS combined exhibition)

- FRUIT.
- Dessert apples, six or more varieties. – First prize, Mr. R. Whatmough, Greensborough.
 - Dessert apples, six of best variety. – First prize, Mr. R. Whatmough.
 - Baking apples, six of best variety. – First prize, Mr. R. Whatmough.
 - Dessert pears, three of best variety. – First prize, Mr. R. Whatmough.
 - Baking pears, three of best variety. – First prize, Mr. R. Whatmough.

Argus, 11 Nov 1865, p. 6 (HSV)

- FRUIT.
- Apples, best dish – First prize, R. Whatmough, Greensborough.
 - Pears, best dish – First prize, R. Whatmough.
- EXTRA PRIZES.
- Seedling pear – First prize, R. Whatmough.

The great exhibitions



**First Exhibition Building,
1854**

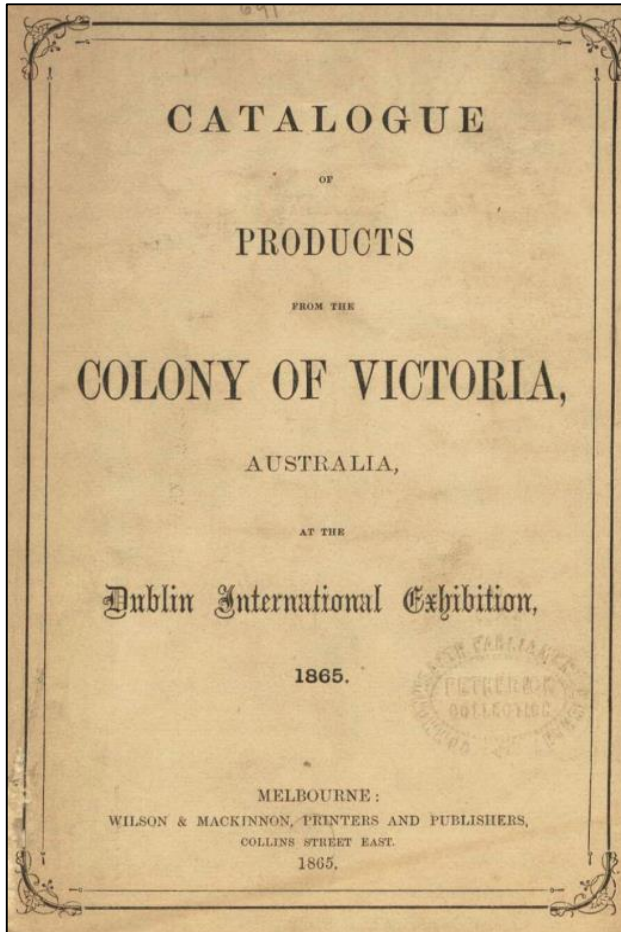


**London Exhibition,
1862**

As early as 1854, the Horticultural Society became involved in the great exhibitions that were popular in many parts of the world at that time. The first exhibition building in Victoria was built on the corner of William and Little Lonsdale Streets. The exhibition ran for 30 days and attracted 40,000 people. The best exhibits were then shipped to the Paris Exhibition in 1855.

In 1861, the next exhibition in Melbourne had an attendance of over 67,000 people, and the best exhibits were shipped to the London Exhibition in 1862.

The great exhibitions



Dublin Exhibition,

Robert's first contribution to these exhibitions was in 1861, when the horticulturalists contracted a clever artisan to produce wax models of their fruits. The fruit model displays were impressive, earning prizes and travelling to the Dublin Exhibition in 1865. In 1866, Melbourne hosted the Intercolonial Exhibition, and the Public Library on Swanston Street was extended for the cause. This was a mammoth event, with an attendance of over 260,000 people. The Horticultural Society held their "fruit and flower shows" as part of the exhibition, with Robert and his colleagues listed as the Managing Committee. The wax fruit models were then shipped to Paris for exhibition in 1867.

Extending the Public Library,

Robert's wax models



Robert Whatmough with a bowl of his fruit

When the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition of 1875 rolled around, Thomas McMillan sculpted over 300 new wax fruit models. Forty of those models were of Robert's fruits. They were so well made that they still exist today, displayed by Museums Victoria. Steve Whatmough tells me they are currently at Scienceworks at Spotswood.

Batman Tree



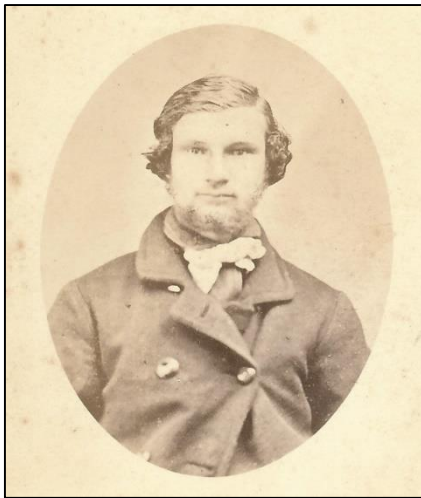
We can't talk about Robert Whatmough without talking about the Batman tree. This tree has become a thing of legend, and thankfully protected today by its National Heritage status. This tree is believed to be the last of the trees purchased by the Flintoffs in 1841 and transplanted in Greensborough. Robert tended this tree for many years, and grafted several apple varieties on this tree. Over time in the 20th century, the orchards were removed to make way for other industry, but miraculously this single tree was retained. I hope you enjoy the story of the Batman Tree in the book.

The Whatmough family

I now come to my final slide with some great photos of the Whatmough family, an amazing pioneering family.



Jemima Fielding
(1840 – 1926)



Robert Emmett
(1842 – 1924)



Rosalie, Robert (1815 – 1887)
and Mary (1813 – 1881)



Sarah Wilson
(1845 – 1934)



Rosalie Leach
(1856 – 1925)