

ANNE CURRIE - A COLONIAL WIFE.

In **Robert Marmion's** interesting talk at the **Amy Huxtable** Luncheon in January this year, he spoke of his research into an area just out of Axedale where he was able to trace the homes and families of those who settled there in the late 19th century. In this talk today I would like to concentrate on one pioneer, Anne Currie, who with her husband, John, helped open up the area we know now as Lardner on the Drouin area. Anne Currie kept a diary, more like a day book, of her family's activities throughout their lives. The Diaries were commenced by John on 8th March 1873, but on 28 September of that year there is an entry '*John Currie has tired of keeping a Diary and has handed it over to me C. Currie*'

The Diary was continued with a few breaks right up to 1916. From them we get a picture of the daily life of the family, their joys, entertainments, visitors and even their animals, (all of which had names).

Maybe I should speak about the importance of Diaries and their value in this modern age. In the middle of the 19th century were kept by both men and women, as they are today, but for the men it contained a wealth of information about their farming activities in opening up new tracts of land remote from civilisation, their crops, and in some cases their contact with the aborigines. For the women more or less confined to the house and home paddock, with children to look after and if lucky to have servants, it was a way of helping them over the long periods of isolation they had to endure so their Diaries contained their hopes, thoughts and the small things that made up their daily life. We must remember that for many years mail to and from 'Home' was very slow and in many cases could take up to 6 months just to get a letter back to family overseas, and of course get a reply. Hence the needs of women's Diaries to remind them of happenings to write about to their relatives overseas. We are lucky today that there are many Diaries written by women over the last

century have come into collections and have become a source of research and have been published so we are able at this late stage share part of their lives.

But back to the Curries and a little about their background. John Currie was born in Midlothian, Scotland on 11 June 1834 and arrived in Australia on *The Champion of the Seas* in the 1850's. For those interested, this sailing ship, built in Boston especially for the Black Ball Line and the Australian run leaving from Liverpool. It was said that the ship was able to maintain speeds of 22 knots and make 40 nautical miles in 24 hours due to the 12000 square yards of sail it carried. John's wife to be was born Sarah Anne Catherine Wells in Ipswich Suffolk on 25 February 1845, and they were married in Ballarat on 8th September 1864. He was 30 whereas Sarah Anne (to be known as Anne or as John called her when writing in the Diaries about her Kate) was 19 and farmed at Ballan. They had 7 children, 4 born at Ballan of which 3 survived, and 3 at Brandy Creek of which 2 survived. The surviving children born at Ballan were:-

Catherine (known as Kate)	7th April 1866.
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Tom	5th June 1869.
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Albert (known as Bert)	3rd July 1875.
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and at Brandy Creek:-

Caroline Calphurnia (known as Fern)	30th September 1882.
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Rose	25th May 1884.
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The farm at Ballan was a small one, only 114 acres, they were enterprising people and with John, both as a farmer and a carrier, was successful in both areas. But what made them give up a comfortable life in Ballan and move to an unknown area in Gippsland. As Robert Marmion pointed out the Land Acts of 1869 made more land available by opening up new tracts of land in the Colony. The settlers in the new parts were able to take up 320 acres of land and with John's small holding in Ballan and a growing family, together with

many of his neighbours taking up land in the new region the idea looked good and promising. In John's case he was only able to take up approx 220 acres, as he already had the 114 acres at Ballan, but with his brother taking up an adjoining holding of 320 acres made it well worth the effort.

No doubt you are wondering why all this background but I feel it is essential to know about it. What fears and trepidation's Anne must have felt about this move were not shown in the Diaries, and even with 2 young children to look after as well as a baby in arms, she was in full support with John. Having gained the land in the Brandy Creek area, October 1875 was a busy month for them organising the move, selling up and arranging to send on stock on ahead. Weather delayed them and were delayed further as the 8th November was Election Day and the following day Melbourne Cup. They finally left on 11th November and on their way through Melbourne stayed with Anne's sister where they had their photo taken. Progress was made and in Dandenong and Anne was perturbed by a notice about a scarlet fever epidemic in Melbourne. Finally they arrived in the Brandy Creek area, after been bogged a few times between Dandenong and their destination, to be greeted by their Ballan friends who had gone before them.

From then on the Diaries are full of how they cleared the land and planted potatoes to break the soil up. There is evidence that a garden had been started and Anne wrote of how she had her first visitor on 21 November 1875 and with pride said *the rhubarb came out of our own garden*. After the all the amenities of Ballan life would have been hard and was fairly isolated, but Anne and her neighbours shared whatever they had such things as when a sheep was killed, meat was shared around. Later a store was opened and later burnt down in 1879, the road it was on is now known as Burnt Store Rd, named after the store that stood there and was burnt down in 1879. Anne was able to sell her butter, eggs and milk to them and later to the stores in Drouin (this was originally called Whiskey Creek and

was renamed Drouin when the railways came through on 1878. The derivation of the name came from the French inventor of a chlorination process uses to separate gold from ore. Gold diggings had been going on for sometime north of Drouin on the Torago River.) Anne kept a close eye on costs etc and complained when she felt she was over charged. She was also adept at making clothes as there are many entries in the Diaries where she wrote of buying material and making coats, trousers and underclothes for the family and her neighbours. Also there are plenty of instances in the Diary of Anne helping out neighbours with small loans of money, as well as the occasional loan of farm produce etc. Anne was very determined to get paid for the produce they sold the people around them and made some pithy comments about these people. Hospitality was of course a must in the country and these ranged from having neighbours to meals, as well as those who came about meal times. There was a case when a woman and a child came one evening to inquiry if the Curries know the whereabouts of 'her husband.' The Curries were unable to help the woman but gave them shelter and a meal for the night and no doubt send them on their way next morning refreshed and with a lighter heart. But it is more important to look at Anne as a Colonial wife and mother in relation to her family.

Anne and her family took an active part in what social life there was in the area. A school was started and religious services were held there. It seems from the Diaries that Anne took little part in these services, whereas John took a leading role in organising and taking services. Education was an important part of their lives and that of their children, Anne being very delighted when the children received their Education Certificates. As far back as March 1878 Tom complained of a bad pain in his knee, neighbours were called and asked their opinion. Diagnosis were given, one was given as an attack of the bile for which a 'dose' was given. Leeches were brought and tried and more physic given. Other things tried were 'kerosene oil' which made it very red and took 'the skin from under.' Poultices were tried to make it gather and break, but all this did was to make Tom's leg skin and yellow

blisters appear. Another neighbour, Maggie McPherson, brought linseed meal for a poultice, whilst yet another said all was well and it would break in a couple of days. A neighbour known as Mr Aspinall called as said Tom's leg would soon be all right, and when he called a few days later to see how Tom was, Anne made a wry remark about this man in the Diary that 'he though himself a perfect Adonis.' More treatment was given and tried and on 23rd June Anne wrote that 'a piece of bone came out of Tom's leg making nine in all.' One does wonders how Tom survived all this. Anne was very meticulous in writing up the Diary and it is somehow amazing that she made no mention of happenings at school where the children had broken limbs, including Tom, for the lack of a playground. John had written to the Education Department on 2nd June 1879 that there had been children who had broken limbs and mentioned his own son Tom among them.

Anne was always worried about the safety of her family when they were away too long. Katie, who worked around the house and farm helping her father, was not a worry to Anne. I wonder if sometimes how she felt throughout this period. Tom in 1879, went into Drouin after school and worried Anne by not coming back until near dark. Later in 1888 when he took a job with the Victorian Railways in the Lamp Room, again Anne worried about him. She wrote in the Diary that his going to work in the Railways was a good thing, and I quote '...how can we make anything from farming the grasshoppers and wallabies takes it all...' Tom did not last long and was very welcome by all when he came home. Even this spell did not dampen his spirits and later he was to leave for Kalgoorlie where he didn't stay long and then to New Zealand where he was glad to return home. He appeared to be a 'home boy' in the best possible way.

Bert (Albert) was very helpful and resourceful, he had just turned 12 and was already busy in carting wood to be split for firewood . He also had the mail run and the latter caused Anne much pain and worry when he became lost one day. Anne wrote of the anguish of it

all; and how she has given him up for lost in the surrounding scrub. When he arrived home safely at 11.30pm and told them the pony had wandered off the track into the swamp. When the moon came up he was able to see his way home and in the words of the young he said that he had a good sleep on the horse. One is left to wonder how the horse felt about it all. Later he was to have his own team of bullocks and worked around the area.

All this happened after Anne had given birth to a daughter, Isobel Jean, in November 1879. Her joy of having another daughter was soon to turn to tragedy when on 24th November 1880 Anne was confronted with a happening that all mothers must go through when a young child is drowned. In Anne's case it was to blight her life forever and the Diary is blank from that date until 12th December when Anne starts in the usual way about the weather but breaks off and pours out her feelings. She wrote '...I had no heart to fill my book since we lost our wee pet on the 24th of last month it was oh so sudden...I carried her to the waterhole to dip a bucket of water I stood her down and dipped it and she had a drink out of the bucket I led her by the hand to the door and said to her to come in Selfie Dearie and I feel sure she came in and went back to see where I got the water. I missed her for a few minutes after and ran back to the backyard looking for her and calling on her. I thought she must have followed Katie when she went for the cows then I asked Bertie if the front door was open, he said sorta; meaning half open, I then ran back to the waterhole the first thing I saw was a little foam on the water. My heart told me what that was Oh shall I ever forget it, I looked under the sticks and saw my wee , but oh dear I never thought I was too late as she was such a short time in. I did the best thing I knew for her and Mrs McPherson came but we lost her...' Anne writes on in the similar and desperate mood and finished up writing that '...She seems never out of my mind though I know she is better...but she was so clever there was never one so knowing for her age.'

Although life for Anne was to more or less return to some normality, she suffered a complete breakdown and had to be taken off to the Yarra Bend Mental Asylum and was admitted on 17th September 1881. It was during this period we learn of the close bond of affection and love that existed between Anne and John although there is very little in the earlier Diaries. When Anne was released into the care of John on 29th December 1881, she had another child 'Fern' in 1882 before her final discharge on 27th October 1883. One wonders that by the birth of this daughter John hoped that it would help Anne recover full health and strength. At the beginning I said that yet another daughter Rose was born in 1884. Anne was never to get over the feeling and worry of madness and from family history it would appear that Rose was very vindictive toward her mother.

Anne 'passed away to her rest' in March 1906, the cause of her death was given to be 'obstruction, jaundice, pneumonia, heart failure and exhaustion' Anne's life was full of trials and tribulations that faced many women of her generation in a new and untried land. Even with neighbours nearby life was still lonely and daunting. Anne, like so many others, coped with illness, the horror of snakes, the threat of bushfires and the actual happening. It is from the Anne Currie Diaries we can enter into their lives, their hopes and disappointments as well as hear the authentic voice of one who wrote as she spoke. By this we share all the joys as well as the sufferings and torture she went through over the death of Isobel Jean and the long mental strain and illness that followed her through the rest of her life.

There seemed to be an idea that Anne did not want any of her children to marry because of her mental breakdown. Albert did marry in 1925 and had 2 children, Joan born 1926 and a son, John Bryce Currie, born 1932. Albert died in 1934 and in correspondence with John Bryce Currie who said that after his father's death, they were forced to leave the family farm. This does give credence to the unwritten wish of Anne's that none of the

family marry. Of the remaining family, Tom died in 1943, Kate was found dead in the garden she loved in 1952. Rose died in 1935 and Fern in 1968, and both these girls ran the Lardner Post Office for many years.

The Diaries themselves are in the safe hands of John Bryce Currie and copies have been placed in the State Library in Melbourne.



Catherine and John Currie, photographed in Melbourne by the famous J. P. Lind prior to journeying to Lardner, in November, 1875. Albert Currie is the baby, aged four months. John is 41 years old and Anne Catherine Currie is aged 30.

15. That Sunday like a change, Daa & Bert sprashing
 grass seed - Bert went to the post, got letter from Tom and
 wrote at his journey's end. Yet, not very well either suffers
 effects of Mal de Mer - Poor old chap would rather than home
 the big game here I suppose about sheep his fine over by Harris.
16. Windy Daa took the butter this morning when he went
 to council meeting first time in all the time he has been here
 left the trap to get the trees cut, saw some of Reeworth
 such a contrivance for seeing child not as if the separator
 we ordered on Saturday was at the station I see I have not
 entered that Mr. D. Spear called on Saturday, Daa
 had had a talk with him on the way home from prison
 & Daa left it to Father. I. To secure, we are to have
 a month on trial. Bert came in and asked if I wanted
 to get rid of the nuisance, advise me not to have any thing
 to do with his separator, however the bargain was made by
 that time and I told Bert, as he took no interest in the
 cows, I did not think he was qualified to speak. I do hope
 it will answer. we make nothing this hot weather the old way
 Bert clearing a place for Daa near Haws in Swamp
17. Windy sun now 10 o'clock A.M. Daa just started for the coast
 those James & son started on me for getting him to wear
 his best hat, there is one thing I have thought them to
 think there is no one like their father but I their mother
 am of no more consequence than a log of wood. Me that
 try all I can to make them happier than I was at
 their age - Well I married I did not know what
 happiness was I never could look back to my childhood
 and wish the days back again, & if I had never taken
 me to a mad house I would have been happy in my
 children - but now they seem to wish I was there all
 the time - My heart is breaking I can't pretend
 not to care all the time. I have not a friend I can
 talk to, only my heavenly father - all I can think the mad =



VICTORIA

No. 26812

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.

CERTIFICATE OF A CHILD BEING SUFFICIENTLY EDUCATED.

I hereby certify that Catherine Currie has been educated up to the standard of education required by "The Education Act 1872."

Dated at Howell this 28th day

of July A.D. 1879.

Thos. Hepburn
Inspector.

By Authority, JOHN FRANKS, Government Printer, Melbourne.



VICTORIA

No. 89201

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.

CERTIFICATE OF A CHILD BEING SUFFICIENTLY EDUCATED.

I hereby certify that Albert Currie has been educated up to the standard of education required by "The Education Act 1872."

Dated at Warragul this 29th day

of Sept A.D. 1885.

Wm. Robertson
Inspector.

By Authority, JOHN FRANKS, Government Printer, Melbourne.



VICTORIA

No. 26813

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.

CERTIFICATE OF A CHILD BEING SUFFICIENTLY EDUCATED.

I hereby certify that Thomas Currie has been educated up to the standard of education required by "The Education Act 1872."

Dated at Howell this 28th day

of July A.D. 1879.

Thos. Hepburn
Inspector.

By Authority, JOHN FRANKS, Government Printer, Melbourne.

Name *Callamine Currier*

Admitted *17th September 1881*

Name and address of nearest relative or friend *John Currier, Currier's Alley Lane*

If without brought *No*

Previous residence *25 Stone*

Age and sex *Female 30 yrs*

Married, single, or widowed *Married*

If any family *Not stated*

Occupation *Amusements Actress*

If date of life *Not stated*

Native place *No*

Religion *Ch of England*

Form of insanity *Acute Mania*

Duration of present attack *7 or 8 wks*

If disordered before and how long *Not stated*

If hereditary *No*

Specific signs of insanity

If suicidal *No*

If dangerous *Yes*

If destructive *Yes*

of *Spilopeltis*

Facial conformation *Softness lower part of chin & Browing*

Head *Normal*

Chest *No*

Abdomen *No*

Extremities *No*

Mark of violence (if any)

Hands & wrist swollen from tying

This woman is strong & robust in person & appears healthy.

She suffers from acute mania & is very violent & dangerous. She refuses her food & is in all respects difficult to manage.

Oct 14th Since admission this woman has much improved & is now

*No. 29th 1881
Allowed on trial till 1st January 1882
under the care of her husband*

27.10.83 Discharged

Admitted 17/9/11 - 400k per week

LUNACY STATUTE 1867

[No. 207.]

2770
2770

Section 11.

TENTH SCHEDULE.

(a) Name of patient. **I**, the undersigned, hereby request you to receive *Catherine Currie*
 a lunatic into the Asylum [or licensed house] of which you are the Superintendent. Sub-
 (b) Name of patient. joined is a statement respecting the said *Catherine Currie*
John Currie Name of person signing the Order.
Select Occupation (if any) of that person.
Larner, Lippstadt Place of his abode.
Husband Degree of relationship (if any) or other circumstances of connection of the person signing the Order with the patient.
 (c) Give dates. Dated this *17th* day of *September* One thousand eight hundred and *eighty one*
 (d) Superintendent's name. To *Doctor Paley*, Superintendent of the Asylum [or licensed house] of *Yarrabend*
 (e) Name of licensee. *House of*
 (f) Place where Asylum or house is situated.

STATEMENT.

[If any of the particulars of this Statement be not known, the fact is to be so stated.]

Name of patient with Christian name at length	...	...	...	<i>Catherine Currie</i>
Sex and age	...	...	...	<i>female aged 36</i>
Married, single, or widowed	...	...	...	<i>married</i>
Condition of life and previous occupation (if any)	...	...	...	<i>household duties</i>
The religious persuasion as far as known	...	...	...	<i>Church of England</i>
Previous place of abode	...	...	...	<i>Larner, Lippstadt</i>
Whether first attack	...	...	...	<i>it is -</i>
Age (if known) on first attack	...	...	...	<i>" "</i>
When and where previously under care and treatment	...	...	...	<i>never previously treated</i>
Duration of existing attack	...	...	...	<i>about 7 or 8 months</i>
Supposed cause	...	...	...	<i>death of her child by drowning</i>
Whether subject to epilepsy...	...	...	...	<i>No</i>
Whether suicidal	...	...	...	<i>No</i>
Whether dangerous to others	...	...	...	<i>yes</i>
Whether found lunatic by inquisition, and date of commission or order for inquiry	...	...	...	<i>" "</i>
Name of one or more of the relations of the patient (if possible)	...	...	...	<i>See above</i>
Special circumstances (if any) preventing the patient being examined before admission separately by two medical practitioners	...	...	...	<i>Residence being so far from any medical men</i>

(Signed) *Lohr Currie*

[When the person signing the Statement is not the person who signs the Order, the following particulars concerning the person signing the Statement are to be added, viz.:-]

Occupation (if any)
 Place of abode
 Degree of relationship (if any) or other circumstances of connection with the patient

LUNACY STATUTE, 1867.

Section 11.

ELEVENTH SCHEDULE.

MEDICAL CERTIFICATE TO ACCOMPANY ORDER FOR RECEPTION INTO AN ASYLUM, ETC.

I, THE UNDERSIGNED, being a medical practitioner, hereby certify

(a) Give date.

that I, on the *Seventeenth* day of *September*

One thousand eight hundred and *eighty-nine*

(b) Give particulars of place of examination, street, number of house, and any other particulars.

at *Melbourne*

in the county of *Bunice*

(d) Name of patient.

any other medical practitioner, personally examined *separately from Catherine*

(e) Residence or occupation (if any).

Lucie of *Larmer* in

(f) Name of patient.

Lyppeland and that the said *Lucie Currie*

is a lunatic, and a proper person to be taken charge of and detained under care and treatment ; and that I have formed this opinion upon the following grounds, viz. :—

(g) Here state facts.

1. Facts indicating insanity observed by myself:

Speaks incoherently - informs me that her husband who is holding her is not her husband at all. She spat at me when I asked her who she was -

2. Other facts (if any) indicating insanity communicated to me by

(h) Here state the information, and from whom.

others: Her sister Elizabeth Wells informs me that she has been violent & has never slept for four days & four nights.

(Signed) *John Williams*

Place of abode *Collingwood Melbourne*

Dated this *seventeenth* day of *September*

One thousand eight hundred and *eighty-nine*.

LUNACY STATUTE, 1867.

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I, THE UNDERSIGNED, being a medical practitioner, hereby certify

(a) Give date.

that I, on the *seventeenth* day of *September*

One thousand eight hundred and *eighty nine*

(b) Give particulars of place of examination, street, number of house, and any other particulars.

at *Melbourne*

in the county of *Queensland*

(d) Name of patient.

any other medical practitioner, personally examined *separately from*

(e) Residence or occupation (if any).

Currie of *London*

(f) Name of patient.

Lyppahand and that the said *Samuel Currie*

is a lunatic, and a proper person to be taken charge of and detained under care and treatment ; and that I have formed this opinion upon the following grounds, viz. :—

(g) Here state facts.

1. Facts indicating insanity observed by myself

There is no doubt but that she is suffering from furious mania

2. Other facts (if any) indicating insanity communicated to me by

(h) Here state the information, and from whom.

others *that from her sister who says she is extremely violent, & under no control*

(Signed) *W. H. Campbell*
Place of abode *Russell street Melbourne*

Dated this *seventeenth* day of *September*

One thousand eight hundred and *eighty nine* —