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22 Aug 2012 ADB

## Dana, Henry Edward Pulteney (1820–1852)

by Marilynn I. Norman

Henry Edward Pulteney Dana (1820-1852), soldier and police officer, was born in England, the eldest son of Captain William Pulteney Dana of the 6th Regiment, and related on his mother's side to Lord Kinnaird. It was intended that he join the Indian service, and while awaiting his commission, Dana was appointed to the staff of the lord lieutenant at Dublin Castle. In 1840, impatient at delay in granting his commission, Dana migrated to Van Diemen's Land where he was introduced to Lieutenant-Governor Sir John Franklin as a candidate for the public service. After two years he was still applying in vain for positions at Launceston, so he went to Port Phillip where he renewed acquaintance with Charles La Trobe, to whom he had been introduced by Lord Kinnaird in London. The two men became firm friends, and Dana subsequently twice saved La Trobe's life. Soon after his arrival La Trobe appointed Dana to establish a native police corps on the pattern of the one unsuccessfully formed by C. de Villiers in 1837. On 24 February 1842, twenty-five Aboriginals from western and central Gippsland tribes were enlisted at the depot at Narre Warren, to be trained for mounted police duty by Dana and his second-in-command, Dudley Le Souef, under the general supervision of the assistant protector of Aborigines, William Thomas.

The troopers drew much favourable comment on their professional conduct, but it was reported that only eight finally had unblemished records; some became drunkards and nine deserted. The sending of Aboriginals to arrest and perhaps to shoot down their own people proved demoralizing for both sides. But Dana, as a police officer, was concerned only with the satisfactory execution of duty, and while on duty his troopers generally acted with the military efficiency and bearing demanded of them. A notable weakness in the system was that Dana failed to take full advantage of the natives' tracking skill, preferring to retain them as a troop of mounted police.

The troopers rendered valuable services to the squatters and to the administration as the main force representing the authority of the crown land commissioners and the early goldfields commissioners. In September 1851 Dana caused much ill will among the gold diggers at Ballarat by attempting to collect the first licence fees. By 1852 the native police corps had outlived the objects of its organization. On 24 November 1852 Dana died of pneumonia as a result of severe exposure while searching for bushrangers, and the corps was disbanded early in 1853. Henry Dana was married and the father of four children.

For some time Dana was assisted in the corps by his younger brother, William Augustus Pulteney Dana (1825-1866). Educated at Bridgeworth High School, he had followed Henry

Dana to Port Phillip in 1843 and was appointed second-in-command of the native police from 1 January 1844, later being appointed a superintendent of the Victorian police. He is believed to have been the model for the character of Captain Desborough in Henry Kingsley's novel, *Geoffry Hamlyn*.

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### **Citation details**

Norman, Marilyn I., 'Dana, Henry Edward Pulteney (1820–1852)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/dana-henry-edward-pulteney-1952/text2327>, accessed 22 August 2012.

**This article was first published in hardcopy in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 1, (MUP), 1966**