

Misfold J 54/12058 J54/12.058

Date 27th Oct. Regd 31st Oct. 1854

Acting CC Police Report on the state of Gold Fields at Ballarat, with regard to the recent Disturbance  
Camp Ballarat

October 27th/54

J12058

Sir, I have the honor to report for His Excellency's information my return to the Ballarat Camp on the evening of the 25th Inst and found matters in a tolerably quiet state. I immediately issued instructions for the apprehension of such parties as we could identify as being prominent in the late disturbances and as it was plainly intimated to me by many that such a course would be the signal for a general disturbance I at once consulted with Capt. Thomas the Officer in command of the military as to the most advisable plan of disposing the combined force of military and Police to the best advantage in case of an attack being made on the Camp. Detachments of the 12th & 40<sup>th</sup> Regts, had arrived as well as reinforcements of Mounted Police from the Carls ? , Castlemaine & Kilmore Districts who reached this camp in accordance with my orders within 12 hours after the receipt of my letter making a total of 6 officers 117 mounted 88 foot constables all of whom had been assembled within 36 hours of their services having been applied for. I have now the honor to enclose a desposition of the five as an agent by Capt Thomas & myself & communicated to the officers and men & I am of opinion that in this manner we could for some time successfully resist any attack which however is not at all probable unless in resorting to extreme measures with the mob we should cause the death of some respectable Diggers which would cause such a general excitement as to lead them to commit any act of folly. In accordance with His Excellency's I have caused 5 men to be arrested & brought before Messers Sturt and Hackett two of whom have been committed to stand their trial & the others discharged from want of sufficient proof of identity. I am making every exertion to arrest some more but it is an extremely difficult matter as several who we know were foremost have gone away to avoid the consequences & the confusion on account of the suddenness of the affair together with the number present prevented the Constables taking an accurate description of the principles & as I am perfectly convinced the whole affair was unpremeditated there are none to whom the name of Ring Leaders can be applied The cause of all this feeling as far as I can learn from parties in whom I can place the most implicit confidence is that the Diggers are greatly irritated at having to shew their licences so frequently The Gold here being contained in a very concentrated space – Parties of Police being daily employed in hunting for those without licences it frequently happens that the honest men who have licences are obliged to shew them several times per diem while those who have not when they see the Police coming manage to slip away. This together with several decisions of the Bench & the presence of a number of ill disposed persons who having nothing to lose are urging others on with the hopes of profiting by the confusion. Under all these circumstances I take the liberty of suggesting that His Excellency's

attention should be called to the importance of effecting with as little delay as possible a radical change in the present system of collecting a Revenue by Diggers Licences my apology for introducing this subject were immediately the province of the Gold Commission is my anxiety for having the Police into creditable order which cannot be done as long as the present system exists as they are now more like a military body kept for coercion than a Civil Force for Public protection & I've got to say they are far from efficient as Constables as on account of the direct opposition in which they are placed with the Diggers I find it impossible to use them in a manner I should like in obtaining information either as to crime or other matters which it is important the Government should be acquainted with This is so much the case that on several occasions within the last few days having considered it necessary to send men in different guises to mix up with the people they have been discovered & in some instances roughly handled, in this account I bought a Gentleman a personal friend of my own from Town who is well acquainted with many here & who is now living among the Diggers from him I find out what is going forward. I am given to understand that here as well as at all the other Gold Fields it is proposed to get up a great demonstration in opposition to the present licensing system & that Delegates from Bendigo arrived last night at the place induced most likely by the rumours of a disturbance & considering this is a good opportunity to forward their views. From what I can learn it appears undoubted that at the commencement of this week it was intended to have created a disturbance & burnt the camp & that on Saturday a party had actually stated fir that purpose but a few of the better disposed had a reflection thought better of the matter & dissuaded the others. The Sunday immediately after Dinner the Resident Commissioner and myself were called on on side & informed by the Inspector of Police of the District that a Constable in plain clothes had just arrived to say that he had seen a very large body of men move off in regular order from the Eureka and that he had stepped to one side & concealed himself in a hole from where he heard instructions given to the party that they should proceed through the bush to the back of the Camp where they would be met by others I immediately sent for the man & questioned him closely when he swore most positively to the bulk of his statement and that there could be no mistake as he had himself seen & heard them & added that if we did not look smart they would be on us (?) I accordingly turned out all the men and placed them in such positions as I thought most advisable the Military also being similarly arranged by Colonal McCarthur. Fearing lest any opportunity should be given to the mob we remained in this position all night & on the following morning not liking the responsibility of protecting the camp with such a small number of men I considered it right to call in some more mounted police from other Districts & to report the state of affairs to you when His Excellency was pleased to order a company of 25 mounted men of the 40th to proceed to the Camp. On the whole should all go on quietly I consider the active measures which have been adopted highly beneficial & Capt. Thomas agrees with me in considering I would not have been doing my duty had I not pointed out the necessity of the presence of a larger force. At this moment though matters are gradually settling down which is I believe to be ascribed to a respect for the force we can bring into operation & a knowledge that should we be driven to use violence we should make a severe example of those implicated. Mr Sturt the Police Magistrate of Melbourne proposes leaving tomorrow & on his arrival will report himself to you in case His Excellency should wish to see him His presence here has been of great benefit in restoring the confidence of the public in the Bench which was greatly shaken by recent circumstances & I consider that the manner in which he has acted in this unpleasant business has been marked by sound judgement & discretion, which is born out by the warm reception and good feeling shewn towards him on visiting the different places of amusement accompanied by some of the Officers of Police. Should all go on quietly for the next couple of days & there be no appearance of further excitement, I shall start for Melbourne leaving such instructions as will guide the Inspector or Officer in charge of the district as my presence in

Melbourne is urgently required in matters connected with the Police arrangements of the Avoca and Maryboro Gold Fields.

I have the honor to be Sir, Your Obed. Servant

C MacMahon Acting CC of Police

To the Hon the Col Secretary Melbourne Plan of Camp Defences

Shewing the relative Commonwealth of Offices, Descriptions of Posts to be occupied, and the strength of each Post &c On the "General Assembly" being sounded, every Individual will immediately repair to his particular post, without any previous parade formation Extent of each command/Particular Post to be occupied/Strength of each post/Remarks applicable to Particular Posts/-General Remarks-

Every party to be provided with an axe, and if possible same tools for making loop-holes. A member of Camp followers will be made available to act under the direction of the Commissariat Officer to supply the several Posts with Both Sacks, Tents & c.

The Water Barrels are to remain full at Night and all spare Buckets should be placed

All available Carpenters will have posts assigned to them, to be employed in making loop-holes, and strengthening the different positions. Responsible persons are to be appointed to take charge of, and arrange the issue of Ammunition.

All Government Officers and Gentlemen not connected the Forces, who do not desire to remain in their own Residences, and having no appointed duty, will be good enough to repair to the Reserve

The Women and Children will be sent to the Commissariat store Buildings The Utmost Silence is to be preserved by all persons, no talking above a whisper is to be permitted in the instance of necessary Commands in which case Officers and Non Commissioned Officers in charge of Parties, will speak in as low a tone of voice, as the nature of the service requires at the moment.

Captain White and Ensign Moller / Rear Face of Camp: From Angle of fence adjacent to the Military Barracks, to the Police Stables Captain Holland Police / Right Flank, From Police Stables to Surgeons House Lieutenant Brodhurst / Right front of Camp From Surgeons House, to Officers Mess House

Lieut Adams / Front face of Camp, From Resident Commissioners House, to Military Barracks Lieut Richards / Left Flank From Resident Commissioners House, to Military Barracks

Military Barracks, Escorts Stables – Commissioners Stables, Blacksmiths forge, Police Stables Hospital Dead House Surgeons House, Mess House Line of Government Officers Tents Commissioners House, Court House

JM Thomas Capt. 40th Reg. Commanding Garrison

Cavalry Reserve The M.M Force and Mounted Police, not employed as above, will form in the Ravine between the standing camp, and that of the 12th Regt: The former facing towards, and protecting that part of the rear of Camp, The latter, a relative position to the Front of Camp. This Force connects the two camps. The Company. 12th Foot will Guard its own Camp detaching 1 Subaltern and 35 Men to join the Reserve at the Standing Camp

M.M. Force – 26 Sabres Mounted Police 50 –do-

Jm Thomas Capt. 40th Regt. Commanding Garrisons Camp Ballarat 27th October 1854 Plan of Camp Defences

For the Chief Commissioner of Police