

On 12 th December 1891 Mr Appleby from Clunes, wrote to the Ballarat Town Clerk requesting the transfer of a nest of blackbirds and thrushes from the gardens for Clunes. In his letter he says "The inhabitants of Clunes and District, by sending a nest of each, will enable us to hear to hear the sweet songs again of these birds we loved to listen to in the old country and bring back remembrances of our youthful days..

Mr Appleby summed up the sentiments which prompted the introduction of European birds to the area to complement the introduction of European trees by the migrant population. Skylarks, blackbirds, starlings and goldfinches were supplied by travelling dignitaries such as James Oddie when in New Zealand and White Swans by Charles Summers when in Rome.

Often there was an exchange involved and Ballarat supplied 4 Black Swans for the Pincian Gardens in Rome in return. These swans were carried by P & O to Italy on the " Carthage" cared for by the ships butcher in return for a gratuity of One Guinea. (the consequences for the swans if the gratuity was considered insufficient is not hard to imagine!)

The supply and arrangements for the birds from New Zealand (where they had been introduced some years before) were in the hands of a coal merchant, possibly a left over from the times when birds were used in mines to demonstrate the purity of the air.?

George Longley was responsible for the release of these immigrants with a varied result. The white swans had a hard time with dogs, humans and climate and the experiment was not a success, whilst the descendants of the starlings would have few supporters today.

Addendum - Tom Toop would row James Oddie on the Lake and they would listen to the birds, Tom Toop rears blackbirds and thrushes.