

**A COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT OF THE AUSTRALIAN SECTION OF CHARLES  
DARWIN'S DIARY**

(transcribed by Jan and Frank Nicholas)

**12 January 1836**

Jan 12th Early in the morning, a light air carried us towards the entrance of Port Jackson: instead of beholding a verdant country, a straight line of white cliffs brought to our minds the shores of Patagonia. A solitary light-house, built of white stone, alone told us, we were near to a great & populous city.

Having entered the harbor, it was a fine, spacious, appearance; but the level country, showing on the cliff-formed shores, bare & horizontal strata of sandstone, was covered by woods of thin scrubby trees that bespoke useless sterility.— Approaching further onwards, patches of the country improved; everywhere very beautiful Villas & nice cottages were scattered along the beaches. Large white stone houses, two & three stories high, & Wind-mills standing along the edge of a bank, pointed out to us the Capital of Australian civilization which had not yet come into view.—

At last we anchored within Sydney Cove; we found the little basin containing many large ships & surrounded by Warehouses. on one point stood an insignificant little fort.—

In the evening I walked through the town & returned full of admiration at the whole scene.— It is a most magnificent testimony of the power of the British nation: here, in a less promising country, scores of years have effected many times over, more than centuries in South America.— My first feeling was to congratulate myself, that I was born an Englishman:— Upon seeing more of the town on other days, perhaps it fell a little in my estimation; but yet it is a good town; the streets are regular, broad, clean & kept in excellent order; the houses are of a good size & the Shops excellent.— It may be compared with great accuracy to the large suburbs, which stretch out from London & a few other great towns:— But not even near London or Birmingham, is there an aspect of such rapid growth; the number of large houses just finished & others building is truly surprising; & with this, every one complains of the high rents & difficulty in procuring a house.—

In the streets Gigs, Phaetons & Carriages with livery Servants are driving about; of the latter vehicles, many are as neat as those in London.— Coming from S. America, where in the towns, every man of property is known, no one thing surprised me more, than not readily being able to ascertain to whom this or that Carriage belonged.— Many of the older Residents say that formerly they knew every face in the Colony, but now that in a morning's ride, it is a chance if they know one.—

Sydney has a population of 23 thousand & is as I have said rapidly increasing; it must contain much wealth; it appears a man of Business can hardly fail to make a large fortune; I saw on all sides large houses, one built by the profits from Steam-Vessels, another from building, & so on. A convict Auctioneer is said intends to return home & will take with him 100,000 £.— Another Convict, who is always driving about in his carriage, has an income so large, that nobody ventures to guess at it.— But the two crowning facts are; that the public revenue has increased 60,000 £ during this last year & that less than an acre of land within the town sold for 8000 £.—

There is one advantage which the town enjoys in the number of pleasant walks in the Botanic Garden & Government domain; there are no fine trees, but the walks wind about the Shrubberies & are to me infinitely more pleasing than the formal Alamedas of S. America.—

**16 January 1836**

I hired a man & two horses to take me to Bathurst, a village about 120 miles in the interior & the centre of a great Pastoral district; by this means I hoped to get a general idea of the country.—

In the morning of the 16th. I set out on my excursion; the first stage took us through Paramatta a small country town, but second to Sydney in Australia.— The roads were excellent & made on the Macadam principle; The whinstone with which they are made is brought from the distance of several miles. There are turnpikes.— The road appeared much frequented by all sorts of Vehicles.— I met two Stage Coaches.— In all these respects, there was a most close resemblance to England; perhaps the number of Pot-houses was here in excess.

The most novel & not very pleasing object are the Iron gangs; or parties of Convicts, who have committed some trifling offence in this country, they are dressed in yellow & grey clothes, & working in Irons on the roads; they are guarded by sentrys with loaded arms.— I believe one great means of the early prosperity of these Colonies is Government thus being able to send large partys at once to make good means of communication nearer the Settlers.

I slept at night at a very comfortable Inn at Emu ferry, which is 35 miles from Sydney & not far from the ascent of the Blue Mountains.—

This line of road is of course the best & longest time inhabited in the Colony.— The whole land is enclosed with high railings; for the Farmers not having been able to rear hedges.— There are many substantial houses & cottages scattered about; but although considerable pieces of the land [are] under cultivation, the greater part yet remains as when first discovered.— Making allowances for the cleared parts, the country here precisely resembles, all that which I saw during the ten succeeding days.— The extreme uniformity in the character of the Vegetation, is the most remarkable feature in the landscape of all parts of New S. Wales.— Every where we have an open woodland, the ground being partially covered with a most thin pasture. The trees nearly all belong to one peculiar family; the foliage is scanty & of a rather peculiar light green tint; it is not periodically shed; the surface of the leaves are placed in a vertical, instead of as in Europe a nearly horizontal position; This fact & their scantiness makes the woods light & shadowless; although under the scorching sun of the summer, this is a loss of comfort, it is of importance to the farmer, as it allows grass to grow where it otherwise could not.—

The greater number of the trees, with the exception of some of the Blue Gum's, do not attain a large size; they grow tolerably straight & stand well apart. It is singular, that the bark of some of them annually falls or hangs in long shreds, which swing about with the wind; & hence the trees look desolate & untidy.— Nowhere is an appearance of verdure & fertility, but rather that of arid sterility:— I cannot imagine a more complete contrast in every respect than the forest of Valdivia or Chiloe, with the woods of Australia.

Although this is such a flourishing country, the appearance of infertility is to a certain extent the truth; the soil without doubt is good, but there is so great a deficiency in rain & running water, that it cannot produce much.— The Agricultural crops & indeed often those in Gardens, are estimated to fail once in three years; & it has so happened on more than one successive year:— So that the Colony cannot supply itself with the bread & vegetables which its inhabitants consume.— It is essentially pastoral, & chiefly so for sheep & not the larger animals: the Alluvial land near Emu ferry is some of the best cultivated which I have seen; & certainly the scenery on the banks of the Nepean, bounded to the West by the Blue Mountains, was pleasing even to the eye of a person thinking of England.

At Sunset, by my good fortune a party of a score of the Aboriginal Blacks passed by, each carrying in their accustomed manner a bundle of Spears & other weapons.— By giving a leading young man a shilling they were easily detained & threw their spears for my amusement.— They were all partly clothed & several could speak a little English; their countenances were good-humoured & pleasant & they appeared far from the degraded beings as usually represented.— In their own arts they are admirable; a cap being fixed at 30 yards distance, they transfixed it with the spear, delivered by the throwing stick, with the rapidity of an arrow from the bow of a practised Archer; In tracking animals & men they show most wonderful sagacity & I heard many of their remarks, which shewed considerable acuteness.— They will not however cultivate the ground, or even take the trouble of keeping flocks of sheep, which have been offered them; or build houses & remain stationary.— Never the less,

they appear to me to stand, some few degrees higher in civilization, or more correctly a few lower in barbarism, than the Fuegians.—

It is very curious thus to see in the midst of a civilized people, savages, although harmless, wandering about without knowing where they will sleep & gaining their livelihood by hunting in the woods—

Their numbers have rapidly decreased, during my whole ride, with the exception of some boys, brought up in the houses, I saw only one other party.— They were rather more numerous & not so well clothed.—

I should have mentioned that in addition to their state of independence of the Whites, the different tribes go to war. In an engagement which took place lately, the parties, very singularly, chose the centre of the village of Bathurst as the place of engagement; the conquered party took refuge in the Barracks.—

The decrease in numbers must be owing to the drinking of Spirits, the European diseases, even the milder ones of which such as the Measles are very destructive, & the gradual extinction of the wild animals. It is said, that from the wandering life of these people, constantly great numbers of their children die in very early life; When the difficulty in procuring food is checked of course the population must be repressed in a manner almost instantaneous compared to what can take place in civilized life, where the father may add to his labor without destroying his offspring.

### **17 January 1836**

17th Early in the morning we crossed the Nepean in a ferry boat. This river, although at this spot it is both broad & deep, has a very small body of moving water.

Having crossed a low piece of land on the other side, we reached the slope of the Blue Mountains. The ascent is not steep, the road having been cut, with much care, along the side of some Sandstone cliffs; at no great elevation we come to a tolerably level plain, which almost imperceptibly rises to the Westward, till at last its height exceeds three thousand ft.

By the term Blue Mountains, & hearing of their absolute elevation, I had expected a bold chain crossing the country, instead of this a sloping plain presents merely an inconsiderable front to the low country.— From this first slope, the view of the extensive woodland towards the coast, was interesting & the trees grew bold & lofty; but when once on the Sandstone platform, the scenery became exceedingly monotonous. On each side there is a scrubby wood of small trees of the never-failing Gum family; there are no houses or cultivated land with the exception of two or three small Inns.— The road is solitary, the most frequent object being a bullock waggon piled up with bales of Wool.—

In the middle of the day, we baited our horses at a little Inn called the Weatherboard. The country here is elevated 2800 ft above the Sea.

About a mile & [a] half from this place there is a view, exceedingly well worth visiting. Following down a little valley & its tiny rill of water, suddenly & without any preparation, through the trees, which border the pathway, an immense gulf is seen at the depth of perhaps 1500 ft beneath ones feet. Walking a few yards farther, one stands on the brink of a great precipice. Below is the grand bay or gulf, for I know not what other name to give it, thickly covered with forest. The point of view is situated as it were at the head of the Bay, for the line of cliff diverges away on each side, showing headland, behind headland, as on a bold Sea coast.

These cliffs are composed of horizontal strata of whitish Sandstone; & so absolutely vertical are they, that in many places, a person standing on the edge & throwing a stone can see it strike the trees in the abyss below: so unbroken is the line, that it is said to be necessary to go round a distance of 16 miles in order to reach the foot of the waterfall of this little rill.— In front of the gulf & about 5 miles distant another line of cliff runs & so can have the appearance of completely encircling it; Hence the name of Bay is justified as applied to this grand amphitheatrical depression.—

If we may imagine & I believe such nearly the actual origin, a harbor & its various arms, its deep water surrounded by cliffy shores, suddenly to be laid dry; let a forest spring up on

the sandy bottom, & we shall have the appearance & structure which is here exhibited. The class of view was to me quite novel & certainly magnificent.

In the evening we reached the Blackheath; the Sandstone plateau has here attained the elevation of 3411 ft; & is as before, covered with one monotonous wood.— On the road, there were occasional glimpses of a profound valley, of the same character as the one described; but from the steepness & depth of its sides, the bottom was scarcely ever to be seen.—

The Blackheath is a very comfortable inn, kept by an old Soldier; it reminded me of the Inns in North Wales. I was surprised to find that here, at the distance of more than 70 miles from Sydney, they could make up 15 beds for travellers.—

### **18 January 1836**

18th Very early in the morning, I walked about 3 miles to see Govett's leap; a view of a similar, but even perhaps more stupendous, character: So early in the day the gulf was filled with a thin blue haze, which, although destroying the general effect, added to the apparent depth of the forest below, from the country on which we were standing. Mr. Martens, who was formerly in the Beagle & now resides in Sydney, has made striking & beautiful pictures from these two views.—

A short time after leaving the Blackheath, we descended (about 800 ft) from the Sandstone platform, by the pass of Mount Victoria. To effect this pass, an enormous quantity of stone has been cut through, the design, & its manner of execution, would have been worthy of a line of road in England, even that of Holyhead.—

We now entered upon a Granite country: with the change of rock, the vegetation improved; the trees were both finer & stood further apart, & the pasture between them was slightly greener & rather more abundant.—

At Hassan's Walls, I left the high road & made a short detour from the road, to a place called Walerawang; to the superintendent of this I had a letter of introduction from the owner in Sydney.

I found Mr Browne a sensible well informed Scotchman; he asked me to stay the ensuing day, which I had much pleasure in doing.

This place is a specimen of one of the large farming establishments of the Colony; it would however be more appropriately called a sheep-grazing establishment. They have here rather more Cattle & horses than what is common on account of some of the valleys being swampy & producing some right sort of pasture. The number of the sheep is 15,000; far the greater part of them are feeding at the distance of more than a hundred miles, under the care of different shepherds & beyond the limits of this Colony on unoccupied ground. They had just finished this day, the last of the shearing of 7000 sheep; the rest are sheared in another place.— I believe the value of a quantity of wool from 15,000 sheep would be more than 5000£ sterling.

Two or three flat pieces of ground, near the house were cleared & cultivated with Corn, which the Harvest men were now reaping. No more wheat is sown, than sufficient for the annual support of the labourers; the general number of assigned Convict servants is here about 40; but at present there were rather more.

Although the farm is well stocked with every requisite, there was an apparent absence of comfort; and not even one woman resided here.— The Sunset of a fine day will generally cast an air of happy contentment on any scene; but here the brightest tints on the woods surrounding this retired farm-house, could not make me forget that forty hardened profligate men were ceasing from their daily labours, like the Slaves from Africa, yet without their just claim for compassion.

### **19 January 1836**

19th Early on the next morning Mr. Archer, (the joint superintendent, & the only other free man about the farm) took me out Kangaroo hunting. We continued riding the greater part

of the day; but my usual ill-fortune in sporting followed us & we did not see a Kangaroo or even a wild dog.—

The Grey-hounds pursued a Kangaroo Rat into a hollow tree from out of which we dragged it: it is an animal, as big as a Rabbit, but with the figure of a Kangaroo.

A few years since this country abounded with wild animals; [now] the Emu is banished to a long distance & the Kangaroo is become scarce. To both of them the English Greyhound is most destructive.

The Native Blacks constantly are trying to borrow their dogs; their use of them, offal when an animal is killed, & milk from the Cows, are the peace offerings of the Settlers, who push, further & further inland.— The thoughtless Aboriginal, blinded by these trifling advantages, is delighted at the approach of the White man, who is doomed to rob him of his country.—

Although with bad sport, we enjoyed a pleasant ride; The woodland is generally so open, that a person on horseback can gallop through it; it is traversed by a few flat bottomed valleys, which are green & free from trees; in such spots, the scenery was like that of a Park & pretty.—

In the whole country I scarcely saw a place, without the marks of fire; whether these may be more or less recent, whether the stumps are more or less black, is the greatest change, which breaks the universal monotony that wearies the eyes of a traveller.—

Neither in these woods are there many birds; although certainly some of the Parrots are excessively beautiful.— I saw some large flocks of the white Cockatoo which were feeding in a Corn field; & plenty of Crows, like our jack daws, & another bird, something like the magpie.

The English have not been very particular in giving names to the productions of Australia; one family (Casuarina) of trees are called Oaks, for no one reason, without it is, that there is no one point of resemblance; animals are called tigers & Hyaenas, simply because they are Carnivorous & so on.—

In the dusk of the evening, I took a stroll along a chain of ponds (which in this dry country represents the course of a river) & had the good fortune to see several of the famous Platypus or Ornithorhyncus paradoxicus. They were diving & playing in the water; but very little of their bodies were visible, so that they only appeared like so many water Rats. Mr. Browne shot one; certainly it is a most extraordinary animal; the mounted Specimens do not convey a proper idea of the head & beak; the latter being contracted & hardened.—

Earlier in the evening I had been lying on a sunny bank & was reflecting on the strange character of the Animals of this country as compared to the rest of the World. A Disbeliever in everything beyond his own reason, might exclaim, “Surely two distinct Creators must have been [at] work; their object however has been the same & certainly in each case the end is complete”.— Whilst thus thinking, I observed the conical pitfall of a Lion-Ant:— a fly fell in & immediately disappeared; then came a large but unwary Ant; His struggles to escape being very violent, the little jets of sand, described by Kirby (Vol I P 425) were promptly directed against him.— His fate however was better than that of the poor fly’s:— Without doubt this predacious Larva belongs to the same genus, but to a different species from the European one<sup>1</sup> — Now what would the Disbeliever say to this? Would any two workmen ever hit on so beautiful, so simple & yet so artificial a contrivance? I cannot think so.— The one hand has worked over the whole world.— A Geologist perhaps would suggest, that the periods of Creation have been distinct & remote, the one from the other; That the Creator rested in his labor.

## **20 January 1836**

20th A long days ride to Bathurst; before joining the high road we followed a mere path through the forest.

With the exception of a few Squatters huts the country was very Solitary.

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<sup>1</sup> NB. The pitfall was not above half the size of the one described by Kirby.

A "squatter" is a freed or "ticket of leave" man, who builds a hut with bark in unoccupied ground, buys or steals a few animals, sells Spirits without a licence, buys stolen goods & so at last becomes rich & turns farmer: He is the horror of all his honest neighbours.— A "Crawler" is an assigned Convict, who runs away & lives how he can by labor or petty theft.— The "Bush Ranger" is an open villain, who lives by highway robbery & plunder; generally they are desperate & will sooner be killed than taken alive.— In the country it is necessary, to understand these three names, for they are in perpetual use.—

This day we had a specimen of the Sirocco-like wind of Australia; it comes from the parched interior of the Continent. Whilst riding, as always happens, I was not fully aware how exceedingly high the temperature was.— Clouds of dust were travelling in every part, & the wind felt like that which has passed over a fire.— I afterwards heard the thermometer stood at 119° & in a room in a closed house 96°.—

In the afternoon we came in view of the downs of Bathurst. These undulating but nearly level plains are very conspicuous in this country, by being absolutely destitute of a single tree: they are covered by a very thin, brown pasture. We rode some miles across this kind of country, & then reached the township of Bathurst, seated in [the] middle of what may be called a very broad valley, or narrow plain. I had a letter of introduction to Capt Chetwode who commanded the troops there, & with him I staid the ensuing day.

Bathurst has a singular, & not very inviting appearance; groups of small houses, a few large ones, are scattered pretty thickly over 2 or 3 miles of a bare country divided into numerous fields by lines of Rails. A good many gentlemen live in the neighbourhood & some have good houses.— There is a hideous little red brick Church standing by itself on a hill; Barracks & Government buildings.—

I was told, not to form too bad an opinion of the country, from judging of it by the road way, nor too a good one from Bathurst; in this latter respect, I did not feel the least danger of being prejudiced.

It must be confessed; that the season had been one of great drought, & that the country does not at present wear a favourable aspect; although I understand two or three months ago it was incomparably worse.

The secret of the rapidly growing prosperity of Bathurst is that the pasture, which appears to the stranger's eye wretched, is for sheep grazing excellent. The town stands on the banks of the Macquarie: this is one of the rivers, whose waters flow into the vast unknown interior. The North & South line of watershed, which divides the inland streams from those of the coast, has an elevation of about 3000 ft (Bathurst is 2200) & runs at a distance of about 80 or 90 miles from the sea shore.— The Macquarie figures in the maps, as a respectable river, & is the largest of those belonging to this part of the inland slope.— Yet, to my surprise, I found it a mere chain of ponds separated by almost dry land—one-from-the-other; generally a little water does flow, & sometimes there are high & most impetuous floods.— Very scanty as the quantity of the water is in this district, it becomes, further in the interior, still scarcer.—

The Officers all seemed very weary of this place & I am not surprised at it: it must be to them a place of exile. Last year there had been plenty of Quail to shoot, but this year they have not appeared; this resource exhausted, the last tie, which bound them to existence, seemed on the point of being dissolved.— Capt. Chetwode had attempted gardening; but to see the poor parched herbs was quite heart-breaking. Yesterday's hot wind had alone cut off many scores of young apples, peaches & grapes.—

## **22 January 1836**

22nd. I commenced my return, taking a new road, called Lockyer's line.— The country was rather more hilly & picturesque.— At noon [we] baited at a farm house (there being no inns); the owner had only come out two years, & appeared to be going on very well; He had two pretty daughters, who, I suspect, will not remain long on his hands.—

This was a long day's ride & the house where I meant to sleep, was off the road & not easy to find — I observed on this, & indeed all other, occasions, the general civility amongst the lower orders; when one considers what they are & have been, this is rather surprising.—

The farm, where I passed the night, was owned by two young Englishmen, who had only lately come out & were beginning a Settlers life; the picture of the total want of all comfort (& in this instance filth) was not very attractive.

### **23 January 1836**

23rd We passed through large tracts of country in flames; volumes of Smoke sweeping across the road.—

Early in the day we came into our former road, & ascended Mount Victoria: I slept at night at the Weatherboard, & before dark took a walk to the grand Amphitheatre.

### **24 January 1836**

24th In the morning, I did not feel well, & I thought it more prudent not to set out.—

### **25 January 1836**

The ensuing day was one of steady drizzling rain; all was still, excepting the dropping from the eaves; the horizon of the undulating Woodland was lost in thin mist: the air was cold & comfortless — it was a day for tedious reflection.—

### **26 January 1836**

26th Escaped from my prison; Having crossed the wearisome Sandstone plain, descended to Emu ferry. A few miles further on, I met Capt. King, who took me to his house at Dunheved. I spent a very pleasant afternoon walking about the farm & talking over the Natural History of T. del Fuego.

### **27 January 1836**

27th Accompanied by Capt. King rode to Paramatta. Close to the town, his brother in law Mr. MacArthur lives & we went there to lunch. The house would be considered a very superior one, even in England.— There was a large party, I think about 18 in the Dining room.— It sounded strange in my ears, to hear very nice looking young ladies exclaim, “Oh we are Australians & know nothing about England”.—

In the afternoon I left this most English-like house & rode by myself into Sydney.—

### **28 & 29 January 1836**

28th & 29th Before we came to the Colony, the things about which I felt most interest were, the state of Society amongst the higher & Convict classes & the degree of attraction to emigrate. Of course after so very short a visit, our opinion must rank as vague conjectures; but it is as difficult not to form some opinion, as it is to form a correct judgment.—

On the whole, from what I heard, more than from what I saw, I am disappointed in the state of Society.— The whole community is rancorously divided on every subject, into parties. Amongst those, who from their station of life ought to be amongst the best, many live in such profligacy, that respectable people cannot associate with them. There is much jealousy between the rich emancipists & their children, & the free settlers.—

The whole population poor & rich are bent on acquiring wealth; the subject of wool & sheep-grazing amongst the higher orders is of preponderant interest. The very low ebb of literature is strongly marked by the emptiness of the Booksellers shops; these are inferior to the shops of the smaller country towns of England.—

To families there are some very serious drawbacks to their comforts, the chief of which being surrounded by convict servants, must be dreadful. How disgusting to be waited on by a man, who the day before, was perhaps, by your representation flogged for some trifling

misdemeanour? The female servants are of course much worse; hence children acquire, the use of such vile expressions: I heard of one instance, where the dear little innocent must have perfectly astounded its Mama.—

On the other hand, the capital of a person will without trouble produce him treble interest as compared to England: & with [care] he is sure to grow rich. The luxuries of life are in abundance & very little dearer, as most articles of food are cheaper than in England. The climate is splendid & most healthy, but to my mind its charms are lost by the uninviting aspect of the country.

One great advantage Settlers possess is, that it is the custom to send their sons, when very young men (16-20 years) to take charge of their remote farming stations; here they directly provide for themselves; this however must happen at the expense of their boys associating entirely with convict servants.—

I am not aware that the tone of Society has yet assumed any peculiar character; but with such habits & without intellectual pursuits, it must deteriorate & become like that of the people of the United States.—

The balance of my opinion is such, that nothing but rather severe necessity should compel me to emigrate.—

The rapid growth of prosperity in this Colony is to me, not understanding Political Economy, very puzzling.— The two main exports are Wool & Whale Oil;— Now to both of these there is a limit. The country is totally unfit for Canals; therefore there is a not very distant line, beyond which the land carriage of wool, will not render it worth while to shear & tend sheep: The pasture everywhere is so thin, that already Settlers have pushed far into the interior; moreover very far inland the country appears to become less profitable.—

I have before said, Agriculture can never succeed on a very extended scale. So that, as far as I can see, Sydney must ultimately depend, upon being the centre of commerce for the Southern Hemisphere; & perhaps on her future Manufactories:— possessing Coal, she always has the moving power at hand.—

I formerly imagined that Australia would rise into as grand & powerful a country as N. America, now it appears to me, that such future grandeur & power is very problematical.—

With respect to the state of the Convicts, I had still fewer opportunities of judging, than on the other points. The first question is, whether their state is at all one of punishment; that it is not a very severe one, no one will attempt to maintain.

The corporeal wants [of the convicts] are tolerably well supplied; their prospect of future liberty & comfort is not distant & on good conduct certain. A “ticket of leave”, which makes a man as long as he keeps clear of crime & suspicion, free within a certain district, is given, upon good conduct, after years proportional to the length of the sentence: for life, eight years is the time of probation; for seven years, four, &c.—

Yet, with all this, & overlooking the previous imprisonment & wretched passage out, I believe, the years of assignment are passed with discontent & unhappiness: & an intelligent man remarked to me, they know no pleasure beyond Sensuality.—

The enormous bribe, which Government possesses in offering free pardons & the horror of the secluded penal Settlements, destroy confidence between the convicts & so prevents crime.— As to a sense of shame, such a feeling does not appear to be known.— It is a curious fact, but universally I was told, that the character of the convict population was that of arrant cowardice; Although not unfrequently men became desperate, & quite indifferent of their lives, yet that a plan, requiring cool or continued courage was seldom put into execution.—

The worse feature in the whole case is, that although there is what may be called a legal reform, or that little, which the law can touch is committed, yet that any moral reform should take place, appears to be quite out of the question — I was assured by well informed people, that a man, who should try to improve, could not, while living with the other assigned servants;— his life would be one of intolerable misery & persecution.— Nor must the contamination of the Convict ships & prisons both here & in England be forgotten.—

On the whole, as a place of punishment, its object is scarcely gained; as a real system of reform, this has, as perhaps would every [other plan], completely failed.—

### **30 January 1836**

30th. The Beagle made sail for Hobart town: Capt King & some other people accompanied us a little way out of Harbor.— Philip King remains behind & leaves the Service.—

### **5 February 1836**

February 5th After a six days passage, of which the first part was fine & the latter very cold & squally, we entered the mouth of Storm Bay: the weather justified this awful name.— This Bay should rather be called a deep Estuary, which receives at its head the waters of the Derwent.—

Near its mouth, there are extensive Basaltic platforms, the sides of which show fine facades of columns; higher up the land becomes mountainous, & is all covered by a light wood.— The bases of these mountains, following the edges of the Bay, are cleared & cultivated; the bright yellow fields of corn, & dark green ones of Potato crops appeared very luxuriant.

Late in the evening we came to an anchor in a snug cove, on the shores of which stands the capital of Tasmania, as Van Diemen's land is now called.— The number of Ships was not very considerable.— The first aspect of the place is very inferior to that of Sydney; the latter might be called a city, this only a town.—

### **6 February 1836**

In the morning I walked on shore,— The streets are fine & broad; but the houses rather scattered: the shops appeared good: The town stands at the base of M. Wellington, a mountain 3100 ft, but of no picturesque beauty: from this it receives a good supply of water, a thing which is much wanted in Sydney.— Round the Cove, there are some fine Warehouses; & on one side a small Fort — Coming from the Spanish Settlements, where such magnificent care has generally been paid to the fortifications, the means of defence in these parts appeared very contemptible.—

Comparing this town to Sydney, I was chiefly struck with the comparative fewness of the large houses, either built or building. I should think this must indicate that fewer people are gaining large fortunes. The growth of small houses is most abundant; & the vast number of little red brick houses, scattered on the hill, behind the town, sadly destroys its picturesque effect.—

In London, I saw a Panorama of a Hobart town; the scenery was very magnificent, but unfortunately there is no resemblance to it in nature.—

The inhabitants for this year are 13,826: in the whole of Tasmania 36,505.— The Aboriginal blacks are entirely all removed & kept, (in reality as prisoners) in a Promontory, the neck of which is guarded. I believe, it was not possible to avoid this cruel step; although, without doubt, the misconduct of the Whites first led to the Necessity.—

### **7-10 February 1836**

7th ... 10th During these days I took some long pleasant walks examining the Geology of the country.— The climate here is much damper than in New S. Wales & hence the land is much more fertile. Agriculture here flourishes; the cultivated fields looked very well & the Gardens abounded with the most luxuriant vegetables & fruit trees. Some of the Farm houses, situated in retired spots had a very tempting appearance. The general aspect of the Vegetation is similar to that of Australia; perhaps it is a little more green & cheerful & the pasture between the trees, rather more abundant.—

### **8 February 1836**

One of my walks lay on the opposite side of the Bay or river; I crossed in a Steam boat; two of which are constantly plying.— The machinery of one was entirely made here in this Colony, which from its very foundation only numbers 33 years!

### **11 February 1836**

11th I ascended Mount Wellington. I made the attempt the day before, but from the thickness of the wood failed.— I took with me this time a guide, but he was a stupid fellow & led me up by the South or wet side. Here the vegetation was very luxuriant & from the number of dead trees & branches, the labor of ascent was almost as great as in T. del Fuego or Chiloe.— It cost us five & a half hours before we reached the summit.—

In many parts the Gum trees grew to a great size & the whole composed a most noble forest.— In some of the dampest ravines, tree-ferns flourished in an extraordinary manner;— I saw one which must have been about 25 ft high to the base of the leaves & was in girth exactly 6 feet:— the foliage of these trees, forming so many most elegant parasols created a shade approaching to darkness.— The summit is broad & flat & is composed of huge masses of naked Greenstone; its elevation is 3100 ft above the Sea.—

The day was splendidly clear & we had a most extensive view.— To the Northward the country appeared a mass of wooded mountains of about the same height & rounded outline, as the one we were standing on. To the South the intricate outline of the broken land & water was mapped with clearness before us.— We found a better way to return, but did not reach the Beagle til oclock, after a severe day's work.

### **12 February 1836**

12th ... 15th I had been introduced [to] Mr Frankland, the Surveyor General, & during these days I was much in his Society.— He took me two very pleasant rides & I passed at his house, the most agreeable evenings since leaving England.

There appears to be a good deal of Society here: I heard of a Fancy Ball, at which 113 were present in costumes! I suspect also the Society is much pleasanter than that of Sydney.— They enjoy an advantage in there being no wealthy Convicts.—

If I was obliged to emigrate I certainly should prefer this place: the climate & aspect of the country almost alone would determine me.— The Colony moreover is well governed; in this convict population, there certainly is not more, if not less, crime, than in England.—

### **16 February 1836**

16th The weather has been cloudy which has prolonged our stay beyond what was expected.— I went this day in a Stage Coach, to New Norfolk. This flourishing village contains 1822 inhabitants. It is distant 22 miles from Hobart town; the line of road follows the Derwent.— We passed very many nice farms & much Corn land. Returned in the evening, by the same Coach.

### **17 February 1836**

17th The Beagle stood out with a fair wind, on her passage to K. George's Sound. The Gun-room officers gave a passage to England to Mr. Duff of the 21st Reg.

### **6 March 1836**

March 6th In the evening, came to an anchor in the mouth of the inner harbor of King Georges Sound. Our passage has been [a] tolerable one; & what is surprising, we had not a single encounter with a gale of wind.— Yet to me from the long Westerly swell the time has passed with no little misery.—

We staid there eight days, & I do not remember since leaving England, having passed a more dull, uninteresting time.

The country viewed from an eminence, appears a woody plain, with here & there a few rounded & partly bare Granitic hills standing up.—

One day I went out in hopes of seeing a Kangaroo hunt, & so walked over a good many miles of country.— Every where I found the soil sandy & very poor; it either supported a coarse vegetation of thin low brushwood & wiry grass, or a forest of stunted trees.— The scenery resembled the elevated Sandstone platform of the Blue Mountains: the Casuarina, (a tree which somewhat resembles a Scotch fir,) is however in greater, as the Gum tree is in rather smaller proportion.—

There are very great numbers in the open parts, of the grass-tree, these have nearly the aspect of Palm trees, but instead of the crown of noble leaves, there is a tuft like coarse rushes.

The wiry grass-like plants & brushwood wear a bright green color & to a stranger at a distance would seem to bespeak fertility; a single walk will quite dispel such an illusion; & if he, thinks like me, he will never wish to take another [walk] in so uninviting a country.

The settlement consists from 30-40 small white washed cottages, which are scattered on the side of a bank & along a white sea beach.— There are a very few small gardens; with these exceptions, all the land remains in the state of Nature & the town has an uncomfortable appearance.—

At the distance of a mile, over the hill, Sir R. Spencer has a small nice farm & which is the only cultivated ground in this district.

The inhabitants live on salted meat & of course have no fresh meat or vegetables to sell; they do not even take the trouble to catch the fish with which the bay abounds: [indeed] I cannot make out what they are or intend to do.— I understand & believe it is true, that 30 miles inland there is excellent land for all purposes; this is already granted into allotments & will soon be under cultivation.

The settlement of King George's Sound will ultimately be the Sea port of this inland district.— Certainy I have formed a very low opinion of the place; it must however be remembered, that only from two to three years have elapsed since its effectual colonization, & for this, great allowances must be made. Whether however it will ever be able to compete with the Colonies which possess the cheap labor of convicts, time alone will show.—

They possess here some advantages, the climate is very pleasant, & more rain falls than in the Eastern colonies. I judge of this from the fact, that all the broad flat bottomed valleys, which are covered with the rush-like grasses & brushwood, are in winter so swampy as scarcely to be passable.—

The second grand advantage is, the good disposition of the aboriginal blacks; it is not easy to imagine a more truly good natured & good humoured expression than their faces show: Moreover they are quite willing to work & make themselves very useful; in this respect they are very different from those in the other Australian colonies.— In their habits, manners, instruments & general appearance they resemble the natives of New S. Wales.— Like them, they are very remarkable by the extreme slightness of their limbs, especially their legs; yet, without, as it would appear, muscles to move their legs, they will carry a burthen for a longer time than most white men.— Their faces are very ugly, the beard is curly & not at all deficient, the skin of the whole body is very hairy & their persons most abominably filthy. Although true Savages, it is impossible not to feel an inclination to like such quiet good-natured men.—

During the first two days after our arrival, there happened to be a large tribe, called the White Cooatoo men, who came from a distance paying the town a visit.— Both these men & the K. George's Sound men, were asked to hold a "Corrobery" or dancing party near one of the Residents' houses. They were tempted with the offer of some tubs of boiled rice & sugar.

As soon as it grew dark they lighted small fires & commenced their toilet which consisted in painting themselves in spots & lines, with a white color.— As soon as the dance commenced, large fires were kept blazing, round which the women & children were collected as spectators.—

The Coccoatoo & King George's men [formed] two distinct parties & danced generally in answer to each other. The dancing consisted in the whole set running either sideways or in Indian file into an open space & stamping the ground all together & with great force.— These were accompanied each time with a kind of grunt or sigh, & by beating of their clubs & weapons & various gesticulations, such as extending their arms or wriggling their bodies.

It was a most rude barbarous scene & to our ideas without any sort of meaning; but we observed that the women & children watched the whole proceeding with much interest.— Perhaps these dances originally represented some scenes such as wars & victories; there was one called the Emu dance where the set extended one arm in a bent manner: so as to imitate the movements of the neck of a flock of Emus. [In] Another dance a man took off all the motions of a Kangaroo grazing in the woods, whilst another man crawled up & pretended to spear it.— When both tribes mingled in one dance, the ground trembled with the heaviness of their steps & the air resounded with their wild crys.—

Every one appeared in high spirits; & the group of nearly naked figures viewed by the light of the blazing fires, all moving in hideous harmony formed a perfect scene of a festival amongst the lowest barbarians.— I imagine from what I have read that similar scenes may be seen amongst the same colored peoples, who inhabit the Southern extremity of Africa.— In T. del Fuego, we have beheld many curious scenes in savage life but never one where the natives were in such high spirits & perfectly at their ease.— After the dancing was over, they formed a great circle on the ground, & the boiled rice, to the delight of all, was distributed to each in succession. —

### **8 March 1836**

8th One day I accompanied Capt. FitzRoy to Bald head; this is the spot mentioned by so many navigators, where some have imagined they have seen Coral & others trees petrified, in the position in which they grew.— According [to] our view of the case, the rocks have been formed by the wind heaping up Calcareous sand, which by the percolation of rain water has consolidated & during this process enclosed trees, roots & land shells.— In time the wood would decay & as this took place, lime would be washed into the cylindrical cavities & become hard like stalactites.— The weather is now again wearing away these soft rocks, hence the casts of roots & branches stand out in exact imitation of a dead shrubbery.— The day was to me very interesting, as I had never before heard of such a case.—

### **14 March 1836**

March 14th Our departure was delayed by strong winds cloudy weather, until this day. Since leaving England I do not think we have visited any one place so very dull & uninteresting as K. George's Sound.

Farewell Australia, you are a rising infant & doubtless some day will reign a great princess in the South. But you are too great & ambitious for affection, yet not great enough for respect; I leave your shores without sorrow or regret.—