

Tales of Eureka episode 1: Aunt Lizzie of the Wathaurong people

The debut of a series telling stories from many perspectives of the events leading up to, including and after the Eureka Stockade.



"This is my country, my story and I'll tell you. I remember a time before you white fellas come to the Yarrowee Valley.

First time we see you, our eyes wide open, cause we see strange trees come into the bay down at Jillong. They masts of sailing boats.

Your people come looking for seals, live like black fella near the coast.

One of these sealers take my sister for wife and I say to husband, "Don't let those fellas take me I want to stay with my own people

Then another mob arrive from the north, with strange animals, sheep and cows and they want all the best watering holes and their hard hoofs trample all the murnong too, now no yams to eat.

Mindye not happy with his people and he send his magic dust. My people suffer, scales of the dragon, plenty get sick and die. *(Correspondent's note: The natives believe a mythical snake-like creature has punished them but the scars they talk about appear to be the signs of smallpox. Is it possible the disease has spread down from the Port Jackson area?)*

Now one of your mob live with my people, we think him Murrangerk but you fellas call him Buckley. When more and more arrive, Buckley talks to white fellas and blackfellas, say must keep the peace. We show you fellas through our country and tell you our names for places.

But me still laughing, when Mr Yuille ask me name for swamp in Ballarat, I tell him in my language 'Wendouree' - 'go away'. Now he call that place 'Lake Wendouree', good joke hey?

Ballarat - that's our name, it means good place to rest and this was most beautiful camping spot before you white fellas.

We looked after our country, burnt off to keep grasses down, careful always leave some murnong bulbs for next year and only catch what can eat.

But you fellas make great holes in my country, make our rivers dirty, tear down the trees, blackfellas not happy.

All this trouble, because you fellas find 'gold'. So happy, but I never understand what's so good – you can't eat. Then like termites to the mound more and more people swarm into our valley.

But my husband he knows where plenty gold and he was out looking for horse,

one of them miner fellas lost, to make 'em sixpence and when he find horse he showed that miner little stone of gold he'd found.

They called that place Eureka Lead.

But plenty trouble there.

My people tell story: All the animals gathered in the bush to see who was strongest, even man had come to test his strength. All the animals argued they were the most cunning, the fastest - so kangaroo jump, emu run and fish swim. The man said I'll show you strength. Bang! And with his gun he shot the kangaroo. Wombat looked at man and said that not strength, that death. And all the animals ran away from man.

Same with Eureka, government call it strength, but it death. I saw mother and children crying for lost husband at that Eureka place. But some of my people like those death sticks too and they got to wear fancy uniforms. They Native Police and they bad as white fella with a gun.

My husband and me make a few shillings on the goldfields, sometimes look for gold and sometimes make possum skin rugs and sell 'em.

Some fellas want to pay us with fire-water but I tell my husband no. I don't like what it does to my people. I seen white fella get poor old cousin Jackie very drunk, everyone laughing when the old man keep falling over. I tell husband 'go get your cousin.'

Now I hear you call this place 'Victoria' for your Queen. They say she a good woman, plenty of children, smart and kind and Governor LaTrobe say all this land belong your Queen.

But that's not right, this is Wathaurong land and my people have lived here since the Dreamtime.

You write that Queen of yours and you tell her, 'this my country belonging to me.'

Tales of Eureka episode 2: Jack Hewitson, Harbour Master

Part 2 of the series telling stories from many perspectives of the events leading up to, including and after the Eureka Stockade.



Port Phillip Bay

Jack Hewitson has been the harbour master at Port Phillip Bay for over fifteen years. He's seen many changes in the district and was at the celebration of July 1851 when the Port Phillip district separated from New South Wales and became the colony of Victoria. In that time he has guided many ships safely through the heads into Corio and Hobson's Bay and has first hand experience of the rush for gold.

"It was like a forest of masts, as far as you could see, sailing boats laid anchor in the bay. Sailors reckoned they could do better than £2 a month so they jumped ship and headed for the gold fields.

In fact what always struck me was that so many types of men from the four corners of the earth were lured by that great lottery of nature, gold. On the goldfields Jack was good as his master and it was a simple matter of luck who'd strike it rich. **He gave me a book by a new writer, fellow called Charles Dickens, who reckons that all of us should be treated with dignity**

Never tempted myself, had a good life on the boats, I like to stay by the water.

"I am currency lad, born right here in the bay at Sorrento. A native woman attended to my birth, Ma and Da were both convicts sent out from Scotland but they did their time and became free settlers. They moved to the Port Phillip District because it didn't have the stain of being a convict settlement.

Charles Latrobe arrived in 1839 to become the superintendent of the district; he was a very clever man, good heart and a great sense of duty. I read in the newspaper that he believed 'he had come to found a mighty empire.'

An empire built on the sheep's back, we all thought, and by 1850 there was nearly 80,000 settlers in the district. Them squatters had claimed all of the land for their sheep runs.

They say it was some of those Americans who'd been at the Californian rushes, saw the similarity in the terrain and found gold. Latrobe was wary of them though, they'd had their independence from Great Britain since 1776 and he feared they'd be pushing for republicanism.

Well the population near tripled in only a few years and the pastoralists weren't keen to share their land. Latrobe struggled to cope with the needs of all his peoples so he introduced the licence fees in August '51, to pay for services.

One chap I greatly admire is that John Humffray, a Welshman. I first met him when he stood at the wheel with me as I brought his ship up the channel into Corio Bay. He's an educated man, a great thinker and he has a peaceful calm about him.

He's a Chartist; he believes the voice of the common man should be heard and that everyone has a right to a vote. He gave me a book by a new writer, fellow called Charles Dickens, who reckons that all of us should be treated with dignity.

I met that Peter Lalor too, he had that passion of the Irish about him. 'Years of persecution at English Hands and now *Un Gorta Mor*, thousands of Irish are dying everyday while corn and beef are still being shipped to England,' he told me. *(Editor's note: 'Un Gorta Mor' is Irish for the Great Famine.)*

Last year I brought the Lady Kennaway into the bay, with a cargo of Irish orphan girls. I swear some looked no older than my own daughter of 14.

I'm always picking up news from the sailors down at the docks, that's where I heard about that famous general Guiseppe Garibaldi, fought in the Italian War of Independence, 1846... terrible trouble and hardships there. I met that Carboni who'd fought alongside him.

We supported Garibaldi and his men took up a collection of funds and sent them over to help with struggle for justice and democracy. He sent a letter of thanks back and I read it where it was pinned up in the library in town.

As I said, men came from the four corners of the earth and many had left troubled times in the country of their birth seeking their democratic rights. Latrobe knew these immigrants were politically restless and he was fearful.

Latrobe resigned and I sailed him out the bay aboard the Golden Age on the 6th of May 1854 to return to England.

Tales of Eureka episode 3: Colonial Secretary Foster; Governor out, Governor in

Part 3 of the series telling stories from many perspectives of the events leading up to, including and after the Eureka Stockade.

John Lesley Fitzgerald Vesey Foster, known to all as 'Alphabet' Foster served as Colonial Secretary to both Governor Latrobe and Governor Hotham. He is well acquainted with the running of the Victorian Government during the turbulent times of Eureka. Today he sets sail for England and leaves us with this last interview.

To my mind putting a military man into the top position, when negotiations were so delicate on the goldfields, was a big mistake. Hotham would have been used to absolute subordination during his long time at sea. He was the most self-willed man I ever met with.

Things were different under Latrobe; he had more of a conciliatory nature and legacy of harmony and good order. When the mob from Bendigo refused to pay no more than ten shillings a month for their license fees they defiantly wore red ribbons as a sign they wouldn't pay; Latrobe backed down and compromised from £30- the fee was set at £20....**the miners genuinely thought Hotham was the man to set things right..**

You've got to see it from Latrobe's side though; the population increased from 5000 to 250,000 in the time he was here, that's fiftyfold and in the three years leading up to Eureka, public expenditure went from £75,000 to £1,225,000.

But the licence fee was in force long before I took office; my first act in the House as Colonial Secretary, on the 30th of August 1853, was to recommend its total abolition and the substitution of an export duty.

Of course the major problem with the licence fees was they way it was enforced. It was inhumane, I tell you. No more than a bloody fox hunt and the incompetent fools and lags sent out were allowed to gather money for their own purses.

No wonder they were so eager.

I talked to Peter Lalor, a fellow Irishman and he told me it was degrading on the goldfields. 'All these men John, have come out with their hopes and dreams, only to be treated like petty criminals.'

I was so hopeful the day he arrived in June '54; he disembarked from *The Queen of the South* amongst much fanfare, thousands gathered at the docks to cheer him. He rode across the Princes Bridge under a banner that read 'Victoria Welcomes Victoria's Choice.'

Although, as Hotham told me later, he didn't have much of a choice. This was the last place he wanted to be; he thought his next posting should have been at the Crimean War. But the Colonial office back in England wanted someone who could rule Victoria with a firm hand and he seemed to be the man.

He and lady Hotham were positively adored when they toured the goldfields of Ballarat and the miners genuinely thought Hotham was the man to set things right. But when he returned to Melbourne and officially took up his position in September, after checking the books finding himself in need of revenue, he decided to double the licence hunts.

Hotham rarely took my advice and from the commencement he took everything, great and small, into his own hands... It was not his habit to consult his executive council as to his future policy; he was accustomed from his previous naval education to act for himself. As a matter of fact, I do not recall any one occasion on which he called us together and consulted us upon his future policy.

He had Rede, the commissioner at Ballarat as his main advisor on the goldfields and I don't have it in writing - but I'm sure Hotham encouraged the use of force. But Rede took it into his own hands; that last provocative licence hunt on 30th November, that he ordered when tempers were so frayed he was asking for trouble.

Eureka was the final straw for me though, seeing all those honest hardworking men mowed down was more than I could bear.

I became Hotham's scapegoat and I'm sure it will haunt me the rest of my life.

Tales of Eureka episode 4: The death of Scobie, and a powder keg is set to blow

Part 4 of the series telling stories from many perspectives of the events leading up to, including and after the Eureka Stockade.

On the 7th day of October

In the year of our Lord 1854

James Scobie of Aberuthven, Scotland

Beloved youngest son of George and Mary Scobie

Passed away as result of a blow to the head by a shovel

May he Rest In Peace.

His brother George was inconsolable at the funeral and kept repeating 'If only I hadn't gone to Geelong, I would have dragged him away. I never liked The Slaughterhouse... rough as bags that place... Ma told me to always keep an eye on him... He was a hothead... but all he wanted was one last bloody drink.'

Dear Readers,

Have you ever seen the experiment where chemicals are added to a test tube and then a final explosive ingredient causes it to fizz all over? Such was the death of Scobie at the Eureka Lead on the Ballarat Goldfields.

It was this instance that confirmed to the diggers that the government was corrupt, and set events on their inevitable path to a violent end only months later. There were witnesses that had Bentley, the pub owner at the scene of the crime - but Commissioner Rede and Dewes, his assistant tried to hush it up. Bentley was acquitted. **...corruption of every Department connected with the Government in Ballarat is become so notorious and so barefaced that public indignation is thoroughly aroused...**

Scobie had been well liked on the diggings and George Scobie openly grieved for his brother. The miners were outraged. To add to the furore, newspaper man Henry Seekamp went into print with a forthright description of events and the governments involvement and I quote his article of the Ballarat Times, 28th October 1854: *"The corruption of every Department connected with the Government in Ballarat is become so notorious and so barefaced that public indignation is thoroughly aroused. And even though, numerous armed mercenaries have been lately sent from town, the fire of indignation is not extinguished."*

The Eureka Lead was home to the Tipperary mob, a cohesive bunch of Irishmen who wore their history of persecution by the English like a badge. They lived in close proximity to the Catholic Church and they were devoted to Father Smyth, the only Catholic priest on the goldfields.

Not long after Scobie's death, Father Smyth's manservant, a poor crippled fellow who Smyth had taken under his wing, was bailed up while on an errand for the priest. They demanded his license fee and although he explained he was exempt he was treated roughly and fined 5 pounds.

The Irish felt this slight against their priest keenly and Peter Lalor could no longer stand by and watch his fellow men denied their democratic rights - first Scobie, now this - so he stepped to the fore and became part of Committee that would met with Rede.

Father Smyth went to Rede and cautioned for calm, the Irish were a passionate lot. He warned there is 'the highest feeling of indignation in the breasts of my flock.'

They gathered outside Bentley's Hotel after a letter to the editor proclaimed his innocence and planned a course of action, calling for a retrial. It was a hot day and tempers were frayed; some miners gathered to slate their thirst and as thousands of others gathered to hear any news, tension became palpable. (*Correspondent's note: Reports estimate the crowd at 10,000*)

I have it on authority that it was two young lads skylarking who threw the first stone and knocked out a lamp - but as to who started the fire, that will remain a mystery. The timber structure was away and burnt to the ground under half an hour.

The Welshman John Basson Humffray called for calm in a letter to the Ballarat Times dated 21st October 1854:

"The rafters of the Eureka Hotel are now a heap of charcoal and provide a bundle of crayons with which to write the black history of crime and colonial misrule. I call on my fellow diggers for their continued solidarity and wait to see whether the liberty-loving professions of our new chum governor are honest."

Tales of Eureka episode 5: John Basson Humffray; quiet achiever

Part 5 of the series telling stories from many perspectives of the events leading up to, including and after the Eureka Stockade.

They say that Welsh language and culture survives in part because of the love of storytelling amongst the Welsh people and I must confirm this by saying that the most passionate, eloquent and engaging speaker interviewed during my stay on the Ballarat goldfields, was the Welshman John Basson Humffray.

He was a man of the highest integrity and completely apposed to any form of violence. I asked him to tell me his story starting with his place of birth.

A little Welsh town in Glamorganshire called Newton on the 17th April 1824;

Basson was my mother's maiden name. My father was a master weaver and a wise and gentle man and he insisted on his children getting a good education.

Many hours I would sit with my father as he worked and we would talk together.

I remember my father reading the works of great philosophers and thinkers and discussing with me the evolution of democratic thinking.

I heard of Aristotle's belief that the people should 'have a voice in making the laws', and the Romans' conviction that the emperor's ruling power was bestowed by the people.

Salus populi suprema lex - 'the well being of the people is the highest law.' **...the diggers weren't even allowed to own land for growing vegetables - just a hole to tunnel down...**

Father had been involved with the Chartists for some time and he helped draw up the 'Peoples Charter' of 1838. Universal suffrage, a vote for all and fair representation. Yes, these were the ideas I was brought up with and they made a great impression on me.

I was articled to a solicitor and spent some time as a law clerk before I decided to try my luck on the goldfields. I remember the sense of excitement when we rowed up to Customs House at the turning point in the Yarra River.

Here I was in a new colony of proud working men and women. The goldfields - a place where anyone could try their luck. But I had not counted on the squatters.

They were very comfortable with the huge tracts of land they had claimed at least twenty years before any digger arrived and they were not about to give it up. Why, the diggers weren't even allowed to own land for growing vegetables - just a hole to tunnel down, and of course you had to own land before you could vote.

Now that's a system for you.

Wealthy businessmen were in the ear of the Government; it was totally corrupt. It was as though the diggers were non gratis and every day on the goldfields I was seeing daily violation of personal liberties.

There was no one to represent us, so with my firmly held beliefs ingrained in me since early childhood, I knew what I had to do. Alongside Scotsman Thomas Kennedy and the English Chartists George Black and Henry Holyoake, the Ballarat Reform League was formed.

We based our ideas on the English people's charter and I could hear my father's voice ringing in my ears as I dictated the guiding principles of our reform. *It is the inalienable right of every citizen to have a voice in making the laws he is called upon to obey, that taxation without representation is tyranny.*

Well we'd been working on it for a couple of months when the poor young lad Scobie was killed, and I feared things would get out of hand. The mob had burnt down Bentley's Hotel and Rede had indiscriminately arrested three upstanding diggers as retribution

We decide it was time to take our reforms to the diggers, to let them know we were working to represent them. The Ballarat Reform League was officially launched on the 11th of the 11th 1854 at a huge meeting that was held at Bakery Hill, a date that will go down in the history of Australia.

As Henry Seekamp reported in the Ballarat Times 'the birth of the league was the germ of Australian Independence'.

Tales of Eureka episode 6: Hotham meets with the Goldfields delegation

Part 6 of the series telling stories from many perspectives of the events leading up to, including and after the Eureka Stockade.

My name is George Webb and I am the shorthand writer for the Victorian Government. I was employed by Governor Charles Hotham on the 27th November 1854 to keep an accurate transcript of the first visit by members of the Ballarat Reform League.

Present at the meeting was Governor Hotham, The Colonial Secretary John Alphonso Foster and the Attorney general William Stawell. The delegation from the diggers consisted of Messrs Humffrays, Black and Kennedy.

Below is a true and accurate account of the proceedings of that meeting.

MR BLACK

We are here, your Excellency, at the request of the diggers of Ballarat. We are requested to demand the release of Fletcher, McIntyre and Westerby who are now in goal under sentence for having been concerned in the burning of The Eureka Hotel...

HIS EXCELLENCY

You have made use of one word which I think it at once my duty to allude to - that is the word demand. You 'demand' you say the release of the men who have been convicted for burning the Eureka Hotel. Was that not what you said?

MR BLACK

That is the message we have been requested to deliver to your Excellency. The diggers of Ballarat feel very deeply that the men who are now in prison should not be there.

HIS EXCELLENCY

As soon as I heard of the trouble I ordered a retrial and I set up the Goldfields Commission of Inquiry to look into the matter. But you must agree gentlemen, I cannot depart from the verdict of the jury, we are bound to respect their decision.

(Correspondent's note: What is not clear from the transcript is the jury's recommendation for mercy and their rider that the whole affair would not have happened but for the incompetence of the Ballarat authorities...

The Commission handed down its findings stating that all was well on the goldfields - but recommended the dismissal of the Police Magistrate Dewes and Police Sergeant-Major Milne who were duly removed)

MR BLACK

Passing from that subject we would wish to know from your Excellency what the government intends to do with regard to giving the diggers full and equal representation.

HIS EXCELLENCY

You know that a dispatch has gone home asking for the franchise. You know also that I have no power to deal with the question, and could not do so if I would. However, there is a clause in the Constitution Bill that allows me to put a diggers' representative in the Legislative Council, and I am prepared to do that in haste.

MR HUMMFRAY

But each goldfield should have the right to representation. I am quite sure that only one seat in the council would not satisfy the diggers.

HIS EXCELLENCY

I have not the means of doing more. You are asking me to do what is impossible, and an impossibility cannot be got over, I do all I can.

MR BLACK

As to the Constitution Bill, the diggers are dissatisfied with the qualification of members, the qualification of voters and that no digger can be elected to a seat in the Assembly unless he is worth one or two thousand pounds of freehold property. This is meant to disenfranchise the diggers.

MR HUMMFRAY

The diggers feel as a class they are excluded from rightful privileges which ought to be awarded to good citizens and are rather treated as wandering vagabonds.

HIS EXCELLENCY

With regard to the new constitution, whatever my desire may be, we can do nothing now until the Bill comes out from home and with the regards to the goldfields the fullest and fairest inquiry shall be had.

MR BLACK

I am desired by the married men of Ballarat to make request that they are anxious to settle upon the land, but at present the difficulties of their so doing are too great...

HIS EXCELLENCY

That shall be looked into and considered certainly - but my time is up. Good day gentlemen.

The deputation withdrew.

It was with heavy hearts that Hummfray, Black and Kennedy of the Ballarat Reform League headed back to the goldfields to report to the diggers on the meeting with Governor Hotham. They had nothing to offer the diggers that would take away the excuse for a riot.

Tales of Eureka episode 7: Anastasia Hayes & the flag of the Southern Cross

Part 7 of the series telling stories from many perspectives of the events leading up to, including and after the Eureka Stockade.

Yes, I was there at the making of the flag.

As if I didn't have enough to do without Timothy volunteering my services for this particular job.

It was myself, Anne Duke and Anastasia Withers. Our husbands often gathered at night after a day of digging to talk politics. Women were never encouraged to attend, but it was at one of these meetings it was decided that they needed a flag to rally their supporters.

You see everyone had their flag on the goldfields, to let you know who and where they were. I noticed a doctor's flag has gone up the other week, outside a tent closer to town, yellow background with mortar and pestle. There's a flag for the undertaker, the different shops and nations are camped together under their flag like the Lone Star of the Texans nearby. **Irrespective of nationality, religion and colour, I call on you to salute the Southern Cross**

Why, the night Tim came home and talked about the flag his eyes were shining bright and he was full of fire when he talked of it. 'Here in our new home Annie, the flag will be a symbol of our quest for human rights.'

The design came about when Captain Charles Ross, a Canadian stepped outside the tent to stretch his legs and take a pipe. Tim said he looked up into the sky, saw the Southern Cross glittering against the night blue sky and remembered the similar flag of Canadian Quebec. He went back inside and announced to the meeting, 'I have it gentlemen, a design for our flag. Come outside and I'll show you.'

Well, we were all handy sewers, what else could we be making every stitch of clothing for our families. We gathered together all the material for the flag from our own supplies. Mrs Withers had a dress length of navy blue wool for the backdrop and I brought the material that was supposed to be a petticoat for my oldest girl. If I remember right, I think it was Mrs Duke who had the Indian cotton used for the cross.

We hemmed the background material and appliquéd the stars onto it. We got our stars. By folding, and refolding a square of white petticoat cotton and cutting out a triangular shape, this gave it eight points.

We worked all day while the older children attended the school nearby on the Eureka Lead and the little ones hung about their mothers. My youngest was only a few months old so I was happy to sit for the day; I still was in pain when toileting.

As well as all my other chores I had planted a little garden and it was growing well but it was such hard work and with Tim gone all day it was up to me. I heard some good advice from one of the sailors, at sea they ate lots of greens to avoid the scurvy so I'd planted some spinach seeds an old Chinaman had given me along with onions, carrots and spuds.

I still can't look at a spud now without cursing the English and thinking of all my family who had died during the Great Hunger.

We were all at that first meeting... Waiting for Mr Humffray and the delegation to arrive back from Melbourne. Our flag was raised and we were rather proud of our handiwork. There were tears in our eyes when Mr Carboni proclaimed,

"Irrespective of nationality, religion and colour, I call on you to salute the 'Southern Cross' as the refuge of all the oppressed from all countries on earth."

And I was there to see it being torn down by trooper King who laid it in the dirt and stamped into the dust, I was furious I can tell you.

And it is true that when I walked up to Lieutenant Thomas Richards who had arrested my Tim after the massacre at Eureka, I said with as much venom as I could muster, "If I had been a man I would not have allowed myself to be taken by the likes of you.."

Tales of Eureka episode 8: Hummfray out, Lalor in at the Monster Meeting

Part 8 of the series telling stories from many perspectives of the events leading up to, including and after the Eureka Stockade.

My name is Duncan Gillies and I arrived on the goldfields when I was 18, in 1852.

They were tense times. Ballarat was but a fledgling town and the government camp was like a military fort. After the burning of Bentley's, Hotham sent the 40th Regiment to Ballarat and rather than keep the peace they seemed like an eternal thorn in the side of the diggers.

I was much in awe of the men who came from the ranks of the diggers to lead us, and I am proud to call them friends. Men like Hummfray, Carboni and Lalor.

Hummfray was the quiet achiever. He and a group had been tirelessly writing letters, drafting petitions as well as working on a set of reforms to put to the government. They called themselves the Ballarat Reform League and I was at its launch at Bakery Hill on the 11th November 1854. Mr Hummfray was most a eloquent speaker and we all dared to hope that he would negotiate our troubles away. **What good's a long bloody stick against hundreds of guns of Her Majesty's forces?**

But it was an uneasy peace and Humffray struggled to keep the diggers at the negotiating table, particularly after Commissioner Rede arrested 3 innocent men. Their bail was set twice as high as that rogue Bentley and you could feel the tension throughout the diggings. Humffray and his friends headed to Melbourne to visit Governor Hotham and demand the release of the prisoners.

At the same time Hotham dispatched the 12th regiment and they marched into Ballarat - right through the middle of the Eureka Lead. They were hooted and pelted with stones and the poor drummer boy was seriously injured.

Mr Seekamp of the Ballarat Times sponsored the poster calling to all to attend 'A monster meeting at Bakery Hill for Thursday the 29th November.'

'Bring your licenses - they may be needed', it said also.

I'll never forget that meeting. It was the first time I saw the flag of the Southern Cross and I remember the decisive moment when the moral force led by Humffray stepped aside, and gave way to a call to arms, with Peter Lalor at the helm.

They'd built a stage and the flag billowed 80ft up a flag pole in the steady breeze. A small group was assembled on the stage to address the crowd as we awaited the return of the delegation from Melbourne. Everyone wanted to know how Hotham would react to our demands.

He was a different man that day, when Humffray addressed the crowd. His shoulders stooped as he pleaded for one more meeting with the governor. But we wouldn't have it. Then Father Doyle, he'd made a special trip from Melbourne to call for calm and I remember that Carboni and his rallying cry to the diggers:

"Irrespective of nationality, religion and colour, I call on you to salute the Southern Cross as the refuge of all the oppressed from all countries on earth..."

And finally, Timothy Hayes - he was like a veteran performer: "Will ya fight for it? Will ya die for it?... then we'll burn our licenses."

But that was it - there was no turning back.

Another meeting was called for that very afternoon and my old work mate from the Gravel Pits, Peter Lalor was there to lead a war counsel for our defense. He divided us into groups and appointed leaders, then we marched to the Eureka Lead. "This looks like a good place for defense," said Lalor. We built the stockade from old mining timber and cartwheels and anything we could lay our hands on it.

A ragtaggle of men with a few rifles scratched between us and pikes - what good's a long bloody stick, even if its got a deadly metal point, against hundreds of guns of her majesty's forces?

It did not auger well in my mind.

Tales of Eureka episode 9: Robert Brown: a young rebel

Part 9 of the series telling stories from many perspectives of the events leading up to, including and after the Eureka Stockade.

My name is Robert Brown and I immigrated to Australia in 1852 with my family. I was fifteen years of age when my father was employed to build the first rail lines in the new colony of Victoria.

We sailed aboard the *Scindian* and that's where I first met Mr Lalor; he had been trained as a civil engineer back in Ireland and my father talked with him often.

My father respected Mr Lalor... thought he was an impressive young man and offered him a job when we arrived in Geelong. I didn't see him for several years but the next time was on the Ballarat goldfields.

Of course I wanted to head to Ballarat as soon as I got off the boat but my mother said I was too young. Finally, at seventeen, I was allowed to go, so I packed my swag and headed off, it was the first time I'd been away from my family. **My father often said, 'The Irish wear their persecution like a badge'...**

Digging for gold was a lot harder than I thought it would be; you had to dig right down into the ground to find a lead of gold and it was hard to breathe when you got down deep. Besides I'd been used to meals morning, noon and night and I had to fend for myself and eat the most basic of foods. Conditions were rough and I hated the policemen that checked my licence and treated me like a criminal - but I couldn't go skulking home after only a few weeks.

I didn't know that by staying I would be swept up in a series of events that culminated at Eureka.

Father wanted me to write about Mr Hummfray, a chartist like himself. You see, I had written to my parents and in trying to allay my mother's worrying I wrote that Mr Hummfray and others had established the Ballarat Reform league and were working to improve conditions on the goldfields.

But as soon as I'd sent that first letter off I realised things were changing.

Hummfray pleaded with the diggers to stay calm but things were getting very restless round the diggings.

I first ran into Mr Lalor at the funeral of James Scobie and later saw him at a huge meeting where he addressed a crowd of diggers. He said the acquittal of Bentley for Scobie's death was unjust and he rallied the men to call for a retrial.

My father often said, "The Irish wear their persecution like a badge," and in a letter to me he wondered if it was the Tipperary Mob causing the trouble...

I told him all the diggers were demanding their human rights and they were men from all over the world. But they could contain their fury no longer, they had been goaded and treated like dogs. As Peter Lalor called men to arms, Mr Hummfray slipped away into the shadows.

Many brave men took up the challenge and I, mere sapling that I was, stood alongside them. I too had always admired Mr Lalor and even though I wasn't sure of my fighting prowess, the call to arms for a young lad was enticing. There was about five hundred that Lalor divided into companies and I fell under the leadership of Captain John Lynch.

I wrote to tell father of the occasion, Lalor had us kneel down, raise our hand and pledge, "We swear by the Southern Cross to stand truly by each other and fight to defend our rights and liberties."

"Amen," we cried out in unison.

Mr Lalor said that Bakery Hill, the site of the meeting was too exposed - so we marched up to place on the Eureka Lead. There he had us build a stockade from old mining timbers that we criss-crossed. We turned over old wagons, cartwheels, whatever we could lay our hands on.

A few of us did some practise drills , marching up and down inside the stockade but it was late so I headed to my tent.

Tales of Eureka episode 10: Huyghue in residence at the Government Camp

Part 10 of the series telling stories from many perspectives of the events leading up to, including and after the Eureka Stockade.

"Chance, fate or whatever name we designate the occult law which rules our destiny, had so ordained it that, after a somewhat checkered career, the year of our grace 1854 found me a member of the government staff at Ballarat...

For many years after my arrival I could not shake off a forlorn sense of exile under strange stars, and I failed to recognize in the hard face of Australian nature, the face of a mother..."...*And so starts the manuscript of Canadian artist Samuel Douglas Huyghue, chief clerk to Robert Rede. He kept a diary and recorded events leading to the battle at Eureka. It is filled with pictures, sketches, maps of Ballarat, the diggings, the landscape and the flag - and an illustration of the plan of attack for the stockade.*

His perspective of Eureka is from within the government camp, and given with the artist's eye for detail; let me continue from his essay.

So to Eureka...

In the first place let me sketch in brief, the aspects of public affairs before the curtain rises.

The Government of the day schooled in the highways of Imperial tradition when aroused from repose on the sudden discovery of gold proved unequal to the emergency. **...the entire area of the goldfields became transfigured into a sea of palpitating flame..."**

Incidents piled high that caused ire amongst the diggers and when the licence fee was introduced the diggers mocked those sent to collect it, for you see, Gold commissioners and the armed troopers at their heels... were tricked out in scraps of braid and gold lace, redolent of perfume.

Hotham had sent more reinforcements to Ballarat and the camp was crowded with auxiliaries from every available quarters. These included detachments of the 12th and 40th regiments who had marched into town through the Eureka Lead.

The 40th from Geelong, commanded by Captain Wise were pelted with stones as they made their way to the camp, fortunately without casualty. I can see him now - young Wise, his face lit up with bright smile as he greeted old acquaintances at Ballarat, a place he was fated to never leave again.

We had been waiting for the 12th regiment all day and were on tenterhooks. We had been sleeping in our clothes for days and we were weary and jumped at any rustle or noise.

We were all startled by the notes of a bugle, a military call of alarm heard in the direction of the Melbourne Road. And then on one of those cloudless nights when the blackness under the stars seems palpable - the entire area of the goldfields became transfigured into a sea of palpitating flame, the light of innumerable fires and the incessant flashes from the discharging of guns and revolvers. The 12th regiment finally made it through but the drummer boy, a mere slip of a lad, lay wounded in the back of a cart.

The situation at the goldfields was like a painful boil festering and Governor Rede meant to bring it to a head. On the Thursday morning before Eureka, Rede sent Assistant Commissioner Johnstone out to the Gravel Pits on a provocative licence hunt. It was to be the last time they were ever collected in Victoria but he came back to camp with seven diggers under arrest.

Rede was edgy as hell; the officers were all terrified that if they showed anything but absolute force they would lose the upper hand and I, like many others, thought that the diggers might attack at any moment.

And now 400 hundred diggers, marching in a long line, had arrived from Creswick to support the course.

Another mass meeting was held and our government spies tell us there's a thousand that have heeded the call to arms and they've pledged to fight to the death. They also planned another massed meeting for Sunday 2pm on the third of December, but as history will tell Rede saw to it that they didn't get to keep that appointment.

Late that night I saw Father Smyth and Carboni head in to see Rede; they were pleading with him for conciliation.

But Rede, Captain Thomas and his aide de camp, Captain Pasley had agreed that the time was right to attack the stockade.

Tales of Eureka episode 11: Father Smyth - Blessed are the peacemakers

Part 11 of the series telling stories from many perspectives of the events leading up to, including and after the Eureka Stockade.

When I think back to my days at Dublin University and my lofty aspirations to spread the word of the lord throughout the colony of Victoria, I shudder at my conceit.

Bishop Gould from Melbourne had visited Ireland to enlist priests for those far flung realms and I jumped at the adventure, little realizing that I would end up a very inadequate, bit player in the events at Eureka.

I arrived in Melbourne in 1852 and was posted to Geelong; then I headed to the Ovens goldfields, where I was to conduct my last baptism at Beechworth in July 1854. Then it was off to Ballarat.

Father Dowling had recently retired. He'd spent two years there... built a church at Bakery Hill... and to all accounts he had tamed the Tipperary boys. Doyle was well loved and respected as he lived amongst the diggers. **...if they fight they will die as determined and as foolish as their forebears...**

But not only did I have his hard act to follow, Ballarat as I found out was a place seething with unrest. The diggers had expected a lot of their new Governor Hotham, and they put on quite a show for his visit; but bubbling underneath in the hearts of my flock was a surge of discontent and anger.

Only months after Hotham's visit, a young Scottish lad was murdered on the goldfields and one of my flock came to my notice. His name was Peter Lalor and he was descended from ancient Irish chieftains. He was deeply troubled that the lad's murderer had been allowed to go free and I could see that he was a born orator, a skill I've tried to emulate myself. Lalor was sincere and captivating and I could see he held sway of many of my Irish flock.

The next incident involving my parishioners and Lalor was when my manservant Johann was stopped on the goldfields and harassed. The poor fella was crippled and spoke very little English. I had taken him under my wing and he helped with odd jobs and had a real talent for cooking. He was set upon by the brutish Trooper Lord, even though he was exempt from paying the licence fee, and we ended up in court.

The Irish felt this slight keenly and before long companies of men prepared to fight and die for their rights had assembled.

I went to see the commissioner of the goldfields, Robert Rede time and time again to call on his good nature to stop this unrest and relax the licence hunts unless until the end of October.

What I met was a man so caught up in the upholding of the law that he failed to see the slights against human dignity. He replied 'Some Irish take to Rebellion as a duck to water...if they fight they will die as determined and as foolish as their forebears...'

I was at my wits' end when I wrote to Bishop Gould admitting my weaknesses.

'I really don't know how to act... What am I to do...'

He must have been startled at my admission because, he made a hasty overnight trip from Melbourne, with Father Dowling now at Keilor meeting him on the way.

Father Dowling, always well respected, assembled amongst the leaders at the monster meeting of 29th November. He called for calm but to no avail. When I heard the stirring cries for liberty and equality I knew my peacemaking efforts would come to nought.

On the Saturday, the day before the slaughter, I entered the stockade to seek permission to talk to any Catholics, I spoke against useless bloodshed and reminded them they were Christians.

I informed them of 'the eight hundred well armed men and reinforcements on there way from Melbourne. But please all of you, come to mass in the morning.'

But we were never to get the chance.

Tales of Eureka episode 12: Captain John Lynch - inside the Stockade

Part 12 of the series telling stories from many perspectives of the events leading up to, including and after the Eureka Stockade.

I was chosen as one of Peter Lalor's captains and I was in the Stockade the day before the attack.

Our time that Saturday was spent planning ways to defend ourselves and talking about the monster meeting we had organized for the next day... Sunday at 2pm. Otherwise we milled about, some fellas practiced drilling - if you could call it that... Ah, but they were clumsy efforts... the blacksmith's hammer was banging away all day forging hooked blades and others sat about fixing the blades to long poles. Flies and mosquitos were droning about adding to the general agitation of the day.

They were the most primitive of weapons, the type used for centuries by Irish Patriots - why, even our flimsy breastwork of slabs was recognizable as typical of stockades used in Ireland since the days of Cromwell's suppression...**there was only two hundred or so left that night and I often wonder who was the spy that tipped Rede off to our small numbers...**

But the stockade was only meant as an enclosure to keep our men together; it was never erected with a mind to military defence and we never contemplated remaining within the enclosure till attacked.

We had scouts everywhere checking movement of troops through the diggings and men were coming and going all day. As I remember, at one stage that Saturday there were 1,500 inside the stockade.

'Vinegar Hill' was the password to get inside the Stockade and I remember the sorrowful look on Father Smyth's face when Bourke Finn mentioned he'd need that phrase to get back into the Stockade.

There was a great sadness about Father Smyth. He was thinking of other Irish uprisings that shared the name Vinegar Hill; to a time and place in Irish history where peasants were armed with pitchforks against British canons and women and children were slaughtered in the fray... as well as our own hopeless convict uprising near Toongabie, NSW, over fifty years before Eureka, where more slaughter shared the name.

Was Eureka to be the same? I could see it all in his resigned expression.

The good father said a few words with his Catholic flock and urged restraint, 'Leave the stockade; I appeal to you as Christians to keep the peace.' He'd been to see Commissioner Rede that very evening and he knew there was 800 reinforcements on their way up from Melbourne.

I was scared, but I knew what I was fighting. Sometimes a man needs to take a stance.

I've got to tell ya though, for me it was the land... a youngest son like me from Ireland had no chance of owning his own piece of turf. Ohhh, but the colony of Victoria with its acres of pasture and grazing lands... why, finding gold was the only chance I ever had and if I was to abide by the rules I wanted my say.

McGill and the men of the Californian Rifle Brigade left the stockade late in the evening to intercept Major Nickle's men enroute from Melbourne. Other men wandered off into the night and I wondered if this was the effect of Father Smyth's words.

I saw Lalor head to bed; he was dog tired. There were a few others left to stand guard and some of us sat round the dying embers of a fire, too tired to move. Outside the Stockade men could be heard in the distance enjoying a Saturday nights' revelry.

As Peter Lalor said; 'Brave and honest men who had come thousands of miles to labour for independence...enforced to endure long suffered grievances and constant brutal attack.' We had to arm ourselves.

But there was only two hundred or so left that night and I often wonder who was the spy that tipped Rede off to our small numbers. Rede knew the victory would be decisive with so few to defend themselves. That it was a Sunday was to him of little consequence.

As I lay down to sleep that night I saw a new moon rising and I vowed if I ever got out alive I was going to ask Isabella McGregor to marry me.

They were my very last thoughts as I drifted off to sleep.

Tales of Eureka episode 13: Anne Rebecca Stevens - the night was a slender moon...

Part 13 of the series telling stories from many perspectives of the events leading up to, including and after the Eureka Stockade.

I didn't know what I was more fearful of - the birth of my next bairn or the trouble brewing on the diggings... and there I was with a shop right in the middle of the stockade and five little ones at my skirt.

As with all my children, in the last months of my confinement I was restless and found it hard to sleep. Here on the diggings friends had died in childbirth and too many infants had been buried in their tiny white coffins.

Now, I'm not one for lying about, knowing I can't sleep, so often as not, I'd light a candle and tidy up around the shop; otherwise, I would stroll about till I felt weary and try again.

And so it was in the wee hours of the 3rd December 1854, with friends of my husbands rolled out in swags on the shop floor, I decided to take a turn about the stockade. I remember the night; there was a slender moon.

I don't know the time but the light had just started to creep into the day. In my sleepless haze I stared into the darkness and walked until I realised I was watching hundreds of redcoats marching towards the stockade, then like termites around a stone they parted to surround the enclosure.

At first I day-dreamed back to my childhood and thought of a company of redcoats I'd seen in a toyshop in London.

But in the next moment, a shot was fired to raise the alarm and I saw its burst of flame. This was followed by a barrage of shots whizzing past my head and I ran for my life - back to the tent and the children.

On my way I saw Peter Lalor climb on a stump and call out directions to his men... then I saw him fall to the ground when he was shot. I hesitated for a moment, but then I saw Captain Lynch coming to Lalor's aid. They rolled him in a hole and covered him with mining timbers.

...when it was obvious the diggers were outnumbered and beaten, soldiers took to bayonetting injured men, shooting those that tried to escape and setting fire to all the tents

Oh, it was a terrible sight to behold. For God's sake it was a Sunday morning; the Lord's day. All these frightened and confused men expected a sleep-in. Sure, many had too much too drink and others talked the night away, but no-one expected trouble on a Sunday and under the cover of darkness, skulking along by way of the creek, the cowardly redcoats.

But as the colour came back into the day I remember seeing redcoats and gold braid everywhere amongst the dust and dying diggers.

Then, in a frenzy, when it was obvious the diggers were outnumbered and beaten, soldiers took to bayonetting injured men, shooting those that tried to escape and setting fire to all the tents... it was a disgrace to the name of Queen Victoria.

Back at the tent my husband had rounded up the children and they were with a party of women and children who were led to safety at Black Hill. Many of the town natives had gathered there as well, and I was most pleased to see Aunt Lizzie.

The Wathourong women had frequented my shop and in our exchanges she had given me a native herb that steeped as tea helped with childbirth and now I could ask for more.

Although I was worn out, I was fine; the bairn inside me kicked in protest, all my children were safe and my husband, although arrested, was still alive.

I rested, comforted by the women surrounding me.

I bore a healthy girl not long after the battle and we called her Liberty Eureka Stevens.

Tales of Eureka episode 14: 'I was there, Mister' - the aftermath of the stockade

Part 14 of the series telling stories from many perspectives of the events leading up to, including and after the Eureka Stockade.

He was a young lad of fourteen, the oldest child of Henry and Anne Stevens - and if heroes are made of true grit in the face of adversity, then to be sure this lad was an unsung hero of Eureka.

I was there, Mister. When the shooting had finished, I came back to find me da.

Ma sent me and said 'Stay hidden Tom, and find out what,s happened to your father, then come straight back to Black Hill... we'll all be camped there.'

Ah mister, I gotta tell ya for a long time I had nightmares about that day and there was one image I couldn't get out of my head. Two fellas must have been right soused, 'cause they hadn't woken up until they were on fire and I saw them

running from their tents, like human torches. **Why, Mrs Emerson, it's Peter Lalor... his face pale as a ghost and his upper body stained red with blood**

Everywhere about me tents were burning. I watched wounded diggers being stuck with bayonets and I looked for the face of my father amongst them.

In one place they had dragged more diggers to die; some of them were still heaving, and at every rise of their breasts, the blood spouted out of their wounds, or just bubbled and trickled away.

But the saddest thing I saw that day was the lemonade man's dog as he howled for his dead master. I tried to call him away; the dog knew me from buying lemonade but he wouldn't come, nothing could call him away.

I hadn't found my father yet and I had tears in my eyes as I watched that dog howl his way into town up on the chest of his master, whose body had been thrown into the back of a cart.. He was so loyal, I reckon he deserved a medal.

But then Father Smyth spotted me and told me father was alive - but that he'd been taken prisoner and was being marched into town with 120 others. I watched as the priest moved amongst the dying men and performed the last rites.

'I know your mother will need you Tom, but would you first run and fetch Dr Carr, there's many here in need of his help.'

I didn't want to, but these were men I knew; some came by the shop everyday just to have a bit of a chat, so I ran like the wind - but in truth I felt like a startled and frightened rabbit.

When I returned to the Eureka Lead with Dr Carr we saw many of the wounded had been moved to a tent outside the stockade. Mr Carboni was there, helping as well.

Later that evening, in the early dusk I saw Mrs Emerson and she called out to me. 'Come here, Tom, that's a good lad. My dog's barking at something up there in the bushes and I want you to have look with me.' Once again I wanted to be off, but this was my mother's friend and she'd asked me for help. She clutched my arm and together we went to investigate what the dog was barking its death at.

And I said 'Why, Mrs Emerson, it's Peter Lalor... he looks badly injured, Mam.' His face was pale as a ghost and his upper body was stained red with blood.

'Tom you'll have to run and find Father Smyth, he's the only one we can trust now,' and I sped off as she bandaged his wounds.

I knew where he was hid all that time but I never told anyone.

You know he lost his arm because of a musket ball to his shoulder.

Tales of Eureka episode 15: The colourful Carboni

Part 15 of the series telling stories from many perspectives of the events leading up to, including and after the Eureka Stockade.

My name is Raffaello Carboni and I was born in Urbino, Italy in 1815. I come from a family of artists.

In my youth I attended the 'College of Nobles' then studied philosophy at the University of Urbino.

In Rome I worked amongst the pilgrims and convalescents at the Holy Trinity and it was there I had the opportunity to study the languages. When my dear mamma died things changed for me and that is when I decided to head to Australia and the goldfields of Ballarat.

I arrived there in 1852, then moved around the diggings for a while. I saw discontent and unrest but in regard to the licence fees 'the shoe had not pinched my toe yet' and I try to stay away from trouble. **I had come 16,000 miles - in vain - to get away from the law of the sword**

But in the morning of the 3rd of December, on our Lords day, 1854 I was asleep in my tent outside the stockade wall when I heard the military call of a bugle, the cry 'forward' and gunshots whizzing by my tent

I jumped out of the stretcher and rushed to my chimney facing the stockade.

The forces within could not muster above 150.

The battle only lasted for twenty minutes but then, in a 'foul deed, worthy of devils,' troopers took to bayonetting the wounded, and treating the prisoners like brutes... kicking and rough handling. Then they took a long firebrand and set in a blaze all the tents about... the howling and yelling was horrible.

Pleased with their handiwork the troopers now started fires outside the stockade, so I raced back to get my important papers and then I went to remonstrate with the authorities.

But I meet sub-inspector Carter; he holds me at the point of a gun and orders me to fall in with the prisoners. There were no two ways, I obeyed. Captain Thomas came to check the prisoners and I was released because I was captured outside the stockade.

My heart is filled with great sadness; good men lie dead and dying about me. So then I had come 16,000 miles - in vain - to get away from the law of the sword.

But those good souls need help and Dr Carr sent me to fetch his bag. We gather the wounded on stretchers and move them up to the London Hotel and tend them as best we can.

Next, that scoundrel, Spy Goodenough, comes into the tent and seizes on me.

'I want you' - and so once again I am captured. I was shackled and marched to the Government Camp on Lydiard Street, passing a company in red who greeted us with the vile exultations of a mob of drunkards.

I was beaten and stripped, and thrown naked into a cell. A kind friend brought me clothes in time to be dressed as we were then paraded before a bunch of gold and lace.

For our edification a document was read to the gathered prisoners; martial law had been imposed on the diggings. One by one, all 120 diggers were interrogated and finally they decided that 13 diggers would be tried for High Treason - a crime punishable by death.

Under heavy guard we were taken down to Melbourne. Hotham and his cohorts, the Toorak Spiders have decided that a Melbourne jury would not be so biased as Ballarat

Four months they kept me in that stinking hellhole awaiting trial for High Treason.

Tales of Eureka episode 16: Richard Ireland

Part 16 of the series telling stories from many perspectives of the events leading up to, including and after the Eureka Stockade.

Interesting when I look back at it, that it was three graduates of Trinity College, Dublin in 1837 that ended up Judge, Queen's Council and Council for Defense at the Eureka trials Redmond Barry, William Stawell and myself Richard Ireland, respectively.

I remember the prisoners arriving in Melbourne, crowds had gathered about up near the gaol demanding their release. At another meeting, a crowd of 10,000 gathered outside St Paul's Church. They were asked to choose, the British Flag, or the new Australian Flag of the Southern Cross. But they would not answer, even when pressed, they knew, to condemn the diggers was to compromise their own rights and liberties.

Everyday as I travelled from St Kilda into the courts, I saw people on their way to the trials, everyone knew these were important times.

I remember hearing it in discussion at the Melbourne Club, Hotham had surveyed the list of prisoners and an illiterate black man from America, John Josephs was chosen as the first of the defendants. No jury would feel particular sympathy for this man, and even more conclusively Hotham bargained, Josephs had shot and killed Captain Wise. **The diggers had been charged with High Treason and were considered traitors; disloyal to Queen and Country and a serious threat to the stability and continuity of the state.**

But the jury of honest working class men of Melbourne let him off.

I remember when Carboni was acquitted he turned to the jury and said "I owe you my life and I thank the unbending honesty, independence and integrity of this Melbourne jury."

It was one of my finest performances, I read in the Age, "Council for the defense was the 'liquid tongued' Richard Ireland who argued and debated his way through the trials with a dramatic flourish that would be the envy of any Shakespearian Actor."

The diggers had been charged with High Treason and were considered traitors; disloyal to Queen and Country and a serious threat to the stability and continuity of the state.

My first case was the colourful and flamboyant Mr Raffaello Carboni, the red-headed Italian. His case had been delayed a month after the first two acquittals, Hotham wanted new jurors. I must say he stared death in the face with a quiet bravery.

I followed the argument that it wasn't High Treason but an armed riot, they were not rebelling against the queen or state, they were protesting at the licence fee and its method of collection and I argued that the incident had been confined to Ballarat. There were precedents to this law way back in 1848 when I was at the bar and I defended members of the Young Ireland Movement who were also tried for High Treason.

My next tack was to describe for the jury the punishment for High Treason. I spoke nothing but the truth but I was pretty graphic and laid it on thick as I described events. First they'll take Mr Carboni and hang him, then while he's still alive he'll be cut down and dismembered and then finally they'll hang his head from the gates of Ballarat.

I looked over at Mr Carboni and pointed at him with quite a flourish as to the detail of the punishment and as I recall he looked very pale.

To heighten the drama a thunderstorm raged outside so Barry halted proceedings and reminded the jury that the eye of heaven was upon them and that they should remember this when handing down their verdict. Even with this austere warning Carboni was set free as were the remaining prisoners.

We were happy to work pro bono for the defendants because we shared their hopes and aspirations for the new colony.

Tales of Eureka episode 17: Coach driver for Cobb & Co

Part 17 of the series telling stories from many perspectives of the events leading up to, including and after the Eureka Stockade.

I think it was my love of horses that got me the job. I was only eighteen in the winter of '53 but I'd been around horses all my life. Mr Cobb knew that if your animals were looked after and refreshed regularly along the way, you were bound to get there quicker.

I was down at the Port of Melbourne when I meet Freeman Cobb; he was an American chap and he had imported a new type of coach for use on the rough roads of the colony, it was about to be unloaded.

As we waited, we got talking and he told me his story. He'd been working with that famous Wells Fargo at the California rushes and he was headed to the diggings with his Concord Coach to transport goods. **"It's not only the diggers on trial, it's about the right to live in a peaceful colony and the right to a vote..."**

Months after his coach arrived he realised there was more profit in transporting passengers and that's how I came to be carrying the Gold Commissioners about the Victorian diggings. It was just after the terrible trouble at Eureka.

We knew it was brewing though, when 105 soldiers were transported to Ballarat late in October 54. They paid Mr Cobb £840 to transport them regiments to the diggings.

But as we travelled about, to Ballarat, Creswick, Castlemaine and Bendigo we stopped often to eat, sleep and exchange the horses. Many a time I sat with those fellas as they discussed the business of the day and started to formulate the reforms they would hand down to Hotham. Small settlements were developing around our horse exchange stations and you could get a comfy bed and something to eat at most stops.

My favourite place to eat then was in Ballarat at Mr John Aloo's, the Chinaman. He did the best roast dinner I ever had.

But to the reforms, my dad was a political man and we often talked of the unrest, he even served on one of them juries and got to see the action first hand.

"It's not only the diggers on trial, it's about the right to live in a peaceful colony and the right to a vote. Now that gold is so hard to find, many of the diggers would rather try farming... they have to be able to buy land," my dad used to say.

Why it took so long to get rid of that licence fee... it'd been nothing but a curse since it was first introduced. But they came up with a good idea, a fee of £1 a year. They're going to call it a Miner's Right.

They'll get their land too, not much but enough for a house and garden and being landowners they'd be entitled to a vote. The Commissioners also decided that eight men would be needed to represent the diggers in Parliament.

Poor old Hotham, first all the prisoners acquitted and then the report. He died within a year of Eureka you know. They never should have taken him away from the water. Command at sea was the only life he knew.

Well, Ballarat changed after that; for a few weeks after Eureka the shock and grief of what had occurred could be felt as you walked through the streets. But when the soldiers left town, spirits started to lift and the town got onto the business of growing.

The commissioners had come up with another recommendation; a warden from amongst the ranks of the diggers would replace officials at the government camp and seven elected representatives from amongst the diggers would help to formulate the laws. It was a very popular reform.

Mr Cobb only stayed here a few years, sold his business and headed back to America. A few years after that another new owner, Mr Rutherford decided to follow the gold rush and relocated the Cobb & Co headquarters to Bathurst, and that's where I moved.

The warm weather suits me much better.

Tales of Eureka episode 18: Agnes Franks, Eureka Bride - the dawn of a new and hopeful era

Part 18 of the series telling stories from many perspectives of the events leading up to, including and after the Eureka Stockade.

It was all so strange and exciting for a young girl of sixteen.

After months at sea, then a stopover at Sydney I couldn't wait to get to Ballarat to see Father. He had gone ahead and my brother-in-law had come to fetch us from Melbourne.

On the trip up to Ballarat mother sat in the back of the dray and the children walked alongside her. We were always darting off to investigate something; there were so many new things for us to see. At night we slept under the dray with thousands of stars sparkling overhead and the strange sounds of the forest breaking the silence.

I was quite shocked when I got to Ballarat to know we were to live in a tent; I'd never been inside one in my life. Then after only two weeks on the diggings there was that terrible attack at the Stockade, not far from where our tent was in Rodier Street. **I was terrified and I'm ashamed to say my first girlish thought was, 'Oh no - all those handsome diggers are being shot.'**

Superstitious young thing, I worried for months that it was a bad omen for our life ahead in the colony. I remember Father, my-brother in law and their mates supported Mr Hummfray and they didn't approve of taking up arms. Sometimes they would stroll through the bush at night to avoid being badgered by the physical force men.

In the nights leading up to the attack father made us sleep in our clothes so we be ready to flee. Though it still came as a surprise that Sunday morning when mother woke us, we quickly gathered our belongings and stood at the door of the tent.

To the south we could see the backs of the soldiers as they knelt down to fire on the stockade. I was terrified and I'm ashamed to say my first girlish thought was, 'Oh no - all those handsome diggers are being shot.'

When the soldiers finally left the stockade area and marched the prisoners to the government camp we went back to the tent. It was fine and all our belongings were safe, so mother and I attended to the diggers and their families.

I think that's when I had my first aspirations to nursing.

The very next day martial law was imposed and mother would not let us leave her sight. Stunned silence permeated the town for weeks after the attack. People spoke in low shocked tones but slowly Ballarat started to recover. With the release of the prisoners, and new reforms passed into the constitution, Ballarat started to thrive. Mr Hummfray and Mr Lalor were elected to Parliament to represent the diggers. **Yes I was married here, and to a digger of course - my darling William. He was so handsome in his blue shirt with sash and Californian felt hat.**

On the first anniversary of Eureka I walked over to the old site of the Stockade with my husband where a few had gathered to mark the occasion. Mr Carboni was there, selling the first chapters of a book he'd written about The Eureka Stockade; an eyewitness account of the events. Mr Carboni said the Toorak spiders had done one thing for him - they had given him the wings of a hero, the main foreign player at Eureka.

The next year on the anniversary there were three hundred who marched up to the old cemetery and Captain Lynch paid tribute to the men who had fallen, martyrs to democracy. The date 3rd December 1854 would ever mark 'the dawn of a new and hopeful era.'

As I held my young son and stood by my husband I knew this to be the case.

They were happy times for me, rearing the children - but I got so busy with them that I didn't hear much about Eureka for the next few years.

Never knew whether to be ashamed or proud of the diggers' stand at Eureka but William was certain it was a fight for human dignity.

Tales of Eureka episode 19: Mr Oddie, the Father of Ballarat

Thursday, 2 December 2004

Presenter: Anne E Stewart

Researcher: Anne E Stewart

Part 19 of the series telling stories from many perspectives of the events leading up to, including and after the Eureka Stockade.

Last week this correspondent travelled to Ballarat for the 50th Anniversary of Eureka where I spoke to Mr James Oddie as he reminisced about the goldfields town. Often called 'The Father of Ballarat' he is well known for his benevolence and vision for the Golden City.

50 years... It's hard to believe... Time has gone so fast. You'll have noticed the changes... but where to start?

Ballarat in 1854 was wooden buildings, canvas tents, flags and licence fees. Add to this mosquitoes, dust, civil unrest, swarming officials and Eureka. The town was only three blocks - from Lydiard street down to Bakery Hill and two wide.

We had to pull down a whole row of timber buildings on the north side of Lydiard Street so we could extend the main throughfare, Sturt Street.

Its beautiful isn't it? Nice and wide and the trees are quite established now; I envisage there'll be statues and memorials the whole length one day.

On the 17th December 1855 the city of Ballarat was constituted a municipality and I had great dreams for my new home. I had done well in banking and real estate and I wanted to support my community as much as possible.

I was involved in quite a few public works and the building of the Ballarat Hospital, the Benevolent Asylum and the Women's Refuge.

I secured the Alfred Memorial Bells for the town hall - I had in mind my dear wife Rachael; she had so loved the bells of London and I thought Ballarat deserved their own.

We lay the foundation stone for the town hall on the 14th of January, 1870 and within a few years the bells were ringing out. There are other works I have had the privilege to sponsor, but my greatest joy has been the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery.

I have great dreams for the Gallery. I organized the loan of the Eureka Flag to the Gallery by Trooper King's family. One day it will become a powerful symbol of human rights and a reminder of our struggle for freedom. It was like I'd opened the floodgates and Eureka memorabilia poured in.

It was always a passion with me, the Eureka story. When my old mate Lalor died I commissioned a statue of him for Sturt Street. Strange, but many of the diggers stayed away from its unveiling; perhaps they wanted to remember him at the height of his glory on the diggings, not as we had him made in this statue

in his parliamentary ropes and wigs. Or maybe he had lost a few friends with some unpopular moves early in his parliamentary career.

The story seems to be spreading around Australia, often old colleagues will send me newspaper snippets from far flung corners of the Commonwealth. When we erected the memorial in '89 at the Eureka Reserve the place took on a deep reverence for me, a site of history.

The 50th celebrations started at the eight hour monument and there we walked to Bakery Hill. There was a wonderful moment when Captain John Lynch, a much loved and respected stockader walked onto the scene on the arm of his son. Many in the crowd took off their hats and bowed their heads as a mark of respect.

It was then I knew Eureka had the makings of a legend.

Tales of Eureka episode 20: The price of freedom is eternal vigilance.

Tuesday, 14 December 2004

Presenter: Anne E Stewart

Researcher: Anne E Stewart

The final in the series telling stories from many perspectives of the events leading up to, including and after the Eureka Stockade.

This morning in the final of our series 'Tales from Eureka' we speak to local storyteller Anne E Stewart as she prepares stories to tell for the 150th Anniversary of Eureka. I caught up with her a few days ago at the Eureka Stockade Memorial Gardens.

I've learnt in my years as a storyteller that legend is what we make of it and the stories we choose to tell define our sense of identity, culture and nationhood.

Over the years the story of Eureka has been like a game of chinese whispers; it has been stretched and shaped according to the teller and the listener and the powerful symbol of the flag has been used as a rallying point for many disparate groups.

But it's time the story of Eureka took its place as a truly national story - a defining moment in Australia's history. We should be proud that we are one of the oldest continued democracies in the world and shape our legends of Eureka accordingly.

Up here at the gardens, the reputed site of the original stockade, it's like a time capsule dedicated to the memory of Eureka. The cenotaph with its Crimean cannons and list of those who died at the site that was the first memorial, followed many years later by the hall that is used as a community space, then the fountains and trees. There's been lots of different plantings of trees over the years.

"..we should be concentrating on Ballarat as the cradle of democracy and the evolution of our democratic system..."

In 2001 came the Eureka Centre, with its Eureka Flag sails, the size of two tennis courts and inside an interpretation of events leading up to the battle. The new sculpture, the 150th anniversary memorial has just been erected. Anton Hassel, the creator has made a large circle of steel panels that depict key events of Eureka. Gaps in the panels allow you to move in and out of the story. It's fantastic.

And the new stockade inspired playground has been finished.

On a noticeboard the Ballarat City Council proclaims:

"Here is a place for a symbolic landscape dedicated to democratic government."

Now that's exactly right, that's what we should be concentrating on - Ballarat as the cradle of democracy and the evolution of our democratic system. That is a key part of the legend, not just the battle.

Premier Bracks called it a 'seismic social shift', at the launch of celebrations; the period when the old world order of rule by king, privilege or papacy changed to rule by the people for the people. Add to this the fact that Victoria's population tripled in the three years of the goldrush and subsequently the government struggled to maintain order through the turbulent times. This huge shift and influx of free, educated immigrants is a crucial component of the Eureka Legend.

In a recent survey it was found that less than 50% of Australians know the story of Eureka and those that do talk only of the battle and Peter Lalor.

Few people know of the unsung hero of Eureka: John Basson Humffray, the Welsh Chartist who drew up the guidelines of the Ballarat Reform League that was launched at Bakery Hill on the 11th of the 11th 1854. The charter proclaimed 'it is the inalienable right of every citizen to have a voice in making the laws he is called upon to obey and that taxation without representation is tyranny.'

Humffray was a moral force man who refused to take up arms. This peaceable approach is worth highlighting in our remembrances of Eureka.

In this year as we celebrate 150 years since Eureka and the Australian ideal of a fair go for all it's time we reinvigorated the legend.

The continuous wave of immigrants to Australia need to know and embrace the story of Eureka; likewise, does a fair go for all include indigenous Australians?

Ballarat is an aboriginal word for 'pleasant resting place', but the early miners gave little thought as they destroyed the landscape. As we move forward from these 150th celebrations, let's make new renewed efforts to care for and understand our great southern land and the environment.

It is important that we understand the words of Thomas Jefferson, who once said 'The price of freedom is eternal vigilance'.