

Presented by Amelia Patricia Booth elder daughter of Capt. Booth, October 1909. (Extracts from Capt. Booth's diary, owned by Major Richmond and of T.H.Lempriere's Journal made by members of the Royal Society of Tas.)

CAPT. C.O'H. BOOTH - CODE OF SIGNALS

Capt. Charles O'Hara Booth (1800 - 1851) of the 21st Fusiliers was commandant of the Convict Stations on Tasman's Peninsula from 1833 until 1844 (Civil Commander of Port Arthur and Point Puer only from 1844). It was under his command that the township of Port Arthur was laid out. As commandant of convicts he was both efficient and impartial. The Lieutenant Governors Col. Arthur and Sir John Franklin both expressed great satisfaction after visits of inspection; Arthur describing him as 'kind, humane, active and most determined'. One of his main achievements was the establishment of a semaphore signalling system throughout the peninsula and also connected with Hobart. This provided a speedy means of communication, especially useful for notifying constable's posts of escapes of prisoners. For this purpose he drew up a code of signals.

In 1838 Booth was lost in the bush for 4 days which undermined his health. In 1844 he was appointed superintendent of the Queen's Orphan School, New Town.

Booth was born in Basingstoke, England in 1800. In 1838 he married Elizabeth Charlotte Eagle (referred to in his diary as Lizzie) step-daughter of Booth's regimental surgeon. They had two daughters, the elder, Amelia Patricia, born in 1839. After Booth's death in 1851 his widow returned to England and petitioned for a pension.

See W.E. Masters, The Semaphore Telegraph System of Van Diemen's Land (Hobart, Cat & Fiddle press 1973) - includes copy of instructions in chap. 3.

1. Instructions for making semaphore signals. ND.

Also includes a note of the Royal Humane Society's methods of treatment for persons apparently drowned or dead.

(1 paper folio)

RS.31/1

2. Tasmanian Code of Signals. ND.

Compiled for the Penal Settlement of Tasman's Peninsula, including instructions and diagrammatic examples, list of stations and their numbers, including Battery Point, Mount Nelson, Eaglehawk Neck, Norfolk Bay, Wedge Bay, Settlement Staff, etc.; alphabetical list of words and corresponding code numbers (with some later additions in red ink); also list of codes for 'persons' (ie. officers, etc); nautical (ie. ships and descriptions of ships etc., such as 'the vessel is a female prison ship', the vessel has brought out emigrants; weather; boats (ie small boats); places; prisoners absconding, provisions; tools; stores; arms and ammunitions etc.

(1 folio volume, bound calf, but spine and boards loose) RS.31/2

3. Tasmanian Code of Signals, originally used in Tasman's Peninsula,

Revised and extended for general communication. 1842, 1843.

Including diagram of semaphores, list of signal stations, including Launceston, Battery Point, etc.; alphabetical index of words and code numbers (important words in 'black letter'); also special sections: absconding, arms etc, natives aboriginal, nautical, persons, places, provisions, quantities, stores, timber, etc. also spare numbers.

Printed title pages (1842 and 1843), ms. entries, folio gatherings unbound but filed by thin cord between thin wooden slats.

RS.31/3

4. Lempriere's Diary 1838

Copy of part of T.G.Lempriere's Diary for 5 June 1838, giving an account of Captain Booth's accident, when he was separated from his party and lost in the bush for four days suffering from exposure.

Handwritten copy made early 20th cent.

RS.31/4

5-10 Letters from Colonial Secretary's Office to Captain Booth. 1836-1841

(5) 1834 May 9

Lt. Governor's recent inspection of the settlement at Port Arthur afforded him 'perfect satisfaction to observe the result of your zeal for the public service manifested by the general good order and discipline of the station'. He commented on the convicts' 'abandonment of all hope of escape', Booth's procuring and maintaining his own horse, needed for visiting other stations, requested the extension of the classification system for the prisoners, and observation and espionage -- it had been recently detected by this system that some convict was fabricating base coin -- some huts were dilapidated although all were clean and wholesome; the school building alone should give the appearance of comfort; the need for solitary cells. It was stated that, while His Excellency 'desires to see nothing like comfort' he stresses the importance of cleanliness. Workshops were to be renovated and a chapel to be constructed. H.E. found a greater degree of sickness than he expected; inspection of the bread proved it to be slightly sour and unwholesome, the method of making it should be improved. Boys should have school instruction but not spend an undue proportion of time on it. Convicts' hair was to be kept short. More vegetables should be grown for food. Grass Tree Hill was less satisfactory.

(6) 1836 Sept. 2

Offer of 5/- per diem for keeping horse

(7) 1838 Apr. 5

His appointment continued

(8) 1838 Apr. 24

Acceptance of further appointment

- (9) 1841 Jan. 12
Extract from Colonial Secretary's letter -

Forage allowance authorised so that Booth can make a personal inspection of stations of the Peninsula. Lt. Governor will recommend an increase in salary.

(6 - 9 filed together by tape, copies made on paper-water marked 1840)

- (10) 1841 Jan. 12

Lt. Governor's satisfaction at his inspection. Some suggested improvements. There were insufficient overseers at the lead mines. Temporary accommodation needed for probationary gangs. Insufficient dogs at Eaglehawk Neck. Instruction in boat building suggested for boys at Point Puer, possibly to provide boats for the Marine Department; some boys should learn the 'higher branches of gardening'. Particular attention should be paid to the 'separate' system. A water mill to be erected at Port Arthur for grinding corn. Usual forage allowance granted

(10 letters)

RS.31/~~8~~10

- (11) Letter from Franklin to Booth 20 Oct. 1843

Sir John Franklin to Capt. Booth regretting that he cannot visit Port Arthur but hoping that Booth might be able to visit Hobart to wish him goodbye personally, there being 'no friend in the Colony of whose services I have a higher opinion and of whose honourable character I have a higher regard than yours'. Also thanking Booth for documents giving numbers of prisoners etc.

RS.31/11

- (12) Letter from Government to Booth 29 Dec. 1843

From Government House asking whether Booth would be interested in the appointment of Master of the Orphan School, knowing how his health had suffered from his arduous labours.

(1 letter)

RS.31/12

- (13) Letter from Sophia Cracroft to Mrs Booth, 15 Oct. 1853

Letter from Sophia Cracroft (niece of Lady Franklin) to Mrs Booth giving the address of Mr and Mrs Williams, William Hays sight failing, expedition to search for Sir John Franklin, Mrs Booth's kindness to Sophia's brother, Mrs Booth's daughters. Note on back by Jane Franklin referring to her own health and conveying her good wishes.

(1 letter)

RS.31/13

(14) Testimonial 3 July 1854

Letter from Capt. James Ross, John Barrow, J.Beaufort, to Mrs Booth concerning Captain Booth's code of signals, 'an ingenious adaptation of the semaphoric telegraph'.

(1 paper)

RS.31/14

(15) Copies (certified) of letters of testimonials of Capt. Booth in connection with Mrs Booth's petition for a pension. 1852-1854.

- (1) 14 Aug. 1852, from Ramsay Stuart, Major 21st Fusiliers, written from Leeds Barracks.
- (2) 16 Aug. 1852 from Lt. Col. Frederick Ainslie, 21st Fusiliers, written from Hull Citadel (w-m 1850).
- (3) 24 Aug. 1852 from Henry Elliot at the Hague, formerly Sir John Franklin's private secretary.
- (4) 7 Jan. 1854 (and supplementary memo 20.6.54) from George Maclean, Commissioner General of the forces, from South Africa.

RS.31/15

(16) Petition for widow's pension ND ? 1854

Copy of part of Mrs Elizabeth Charlotte Booth's petition, drawing attention to her husband's code of signals.

RS.31/16

(17) Journal of Capt. Charles O'Hara Booth, 1831 - 1838

Extracts (typed) from the diary kept by Booth, made by R.W.Giblin in 1925.

The Journal was bequeathed by Amelia Patricia Booth, elder daughter of Captain Booth, to a great nephew of Booth, Major J.A.Richmond (formerly of South Staffordshire Regt.) who lent it to the Tasmanian Agent General in London, for extracts to be copied.

The extracts begin in October 1831, when it was rumoured that his regiment was to be sent to New South Wales, and the embarkation on 10 September 1832. Includes diary of sea voyage (crossing the line ceremony, behaviour of prisoners, etc.) and arrival in Hobart 2 February 1833. The diary includes references to his administration of the convict settlement at Port Arthur, visits to Point Puer, the mines (where he tested the coal and supervised the sinking of the shafts) and other stations of the Peninsula; his expeditions into the bush, his dogs, hunting, his garden, where he grew potatoes, convivial evenings with his friends the Lemprieres and their numerous children, visits to Hobart, Government House dinners (he describes Arthur's daughter as the Venus), inspections of the convict stations by the governors, Arthur and Franklin, the accession of the young Queen Victoria.

(typescript)

RS.31/17

- (18) Royal Society of Tasmania: Papers and Proceedings 1925, 'Notes on the Journal of Captain Charles O'Hara Booth, sometime commandant of Port Arthur', by R.W.Giblin (issued separately, 20 January 1926). Includes photographs of portraits of Capt. and Mrs Booth.

(1 pamphlet)

RS.31/18

- (19) Instructions for use of the semaphore.

(3 photographic copies mounted on board)

RS.31/19