

Presented to the Royal Society of Tasmania by
A.J. Crosfield, 1933.

JAMES BACKHOUSE CORRESPONDENCE

1831 - 1838

James Backhouse (1794-1869) was a Quaker missionary, of Darlington, and later, York, England. In 1831 he sailed for Australia, accompanied by George Washington Walker (1800-1859), with the financial support of the London Yearly Meeting. They arrived in Hobart in February 1832 and from then until their departure from Australia in 1838 they visited most of the scattered settlements throughout Australia. They spent three years in Van Diemens Land where they visited the penal settlements, reported to Lieut.-Governor Arthur on conditions and made suggestions for improvement of the prisons, chain gangs, assigned servants etc. They also encouraged the formation of benevolent services, such as the Ladies Committees for visiting prisoners on Elizabeth Fry's model, inspected hospitals and recommended humane treatment for the insane, as well as distributing religious tracts and school books. In 1833 they established a Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends in Hobart and in 1834 the Hobart Yearly Meeting. In 1837 they bought property for a Meeting House in Hobart. James Backhouse also collected many botanical specimens and continued to correspond with the Tasmanian Society and the Royal Society. After his return to England, Backhouse published an account of his journeys as A Narrative of a Visit to the Australian Colonies (London, 1843) (See Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 1.)

The correspondence consists of letters addressed to James Backhouse and his companion relating to their missionary journey. Most are from people in official positions thanking the missionaries for their work, acknowledging books and reports, replying to requests for information or offering introductions, help and hospitality and also some discussion of religious matters and references to botany in which J.B. was interested. A later letter of 1844 acknowledges Backhouse's gift of his book to the Tasmanian Society.

The letters were kept by the Backhouse family until 1933 when a grandson of James Backhouse, A.J. Crosfield, presented letters of Australian interest to the Royal Society of Tasmania through Ernest E. Unwin, headmaster of the Friends' School, Hobart. With them were a few other letters not connected with James Backhouse but of the same period and also of Australian interest. These (numbers 29-37) are mainly addressed to John Gould and refer to his study of Australian birds. It is unlikely that they were ever in the possession of James Backhouse who died some years before Gould, but they were probably

collected by a younger member of the family. Apart from their interest in connection with John Gould and ornithology, many are signed by or include references to well known explorers. Many of the letters bear a pencil note in a later hand identifying the writer, often by a position or title received some years after the date of the letter.

About the time of their presentation to the Society the manuscripts were professionally guarded on to mounting paper and bound into a volume entitled "Autograph Letters". At the front, typed directly on to the mounting paper, is a list of the letters, probably copied by the binder from a handwritten draft as it contains a number of misreadings, such as Bushy for Busby, Benk for Back, Hirst for Stirt, Jawler for Gawler, etc. Also typed on to the mounting paper is an "introduction" by Mr. Unwin:-

"The letters contained herein are original autograph letters which have been preserved by the family of James Backhouse. They came into the possession of Albert J. Crosfield of Cambridge, England, a grandson of James Backhouse, on the death of his brother James Backhouse Crosfield, and were offered to the Library of the Royal Society of Tasmania through Ernest E. Unwin, Headmaster of the Friend's School, Hobart, who was consulted by Mr. A.J. Crosfield in the matter.

Most of the letters are addressed to James Backhouse or to James Backhouse and George Washington Walker from prominent people in this and mainland states mostly during the years 1832 to 1838. There are also a few letters addressed to other persons, which were probably collected by James Backhouse for their autographic value.

Ernest E. Unwin.

Presented to the Royal Society, September 1933."

Other papers of James Backhouse are in the Friends' Library, London.

LETTERS TO JAMES BACKHOUSE & G.W. WALKER

28 James Busby, 2 Sept. 1831

Introductions to suitable acquaintances in Australia, cordial wishes to Backhouse and his friend for "success in your Christian Mission" and his own plans for visiting vineyards in Spain.

James Busby (1801-1871) had a vineyard in the Hunter Valley, N.S.W. but in 1831 was visiting Britain.

1,2, Sir George Arthur, 25 Feb, 1832, 12 Sept, 1832,
5 27 Jan. 1834

The Lieutenant-Governor of V.D.L., Sir George Arthur (1784-1854) or his private secretary, Government House, offering servant to drive J.B. to Bridgewater, inviting them to tea, granting permission to have religious interview with road gang, acknowledging report.

3 James Ross, Hobart Town, 27 May 1833

Printing of tract on the Sabbath, information in Chronicle.

James Ross (1786-1838) was Government Printer, V.D.L. and editor of the Hobart Town Gazette and also published the Hobart Town Courier, Almanac and Chronicle.

4 Joseph Hone 7 Oct. 1833

Concerning a tract on intemperance.

Joseph Hone (1784-1861) was Master of the Supreme Court of V.D.L.

6 Robert Officer 10 June 1834

Reply to queries on the influence of religion on the reformation of transportees.

Robert Officer (1800-1879) was Medical Officer at New Norfolk.

7 Charles O'Hara Booth [Port Arthur] 22 Nov. 1834

He regretted losing the opportunity of seeing them as he was anxious to converse about discipline; the appearance of the settlement had changed since their last visit, especially the boys. He was exhausted after his "Bush excursion", provisions had failed two days ago, saw "everlasting flowers" in bloom and remembered J.B. wanted seed and was sending 3 or 4 flowers.

Capt. Charles O'Hara Booth (1800-1851), army officer, was Commandant of the Port Arthur convict settlement March 1833-1844.

- 8 Henry Dumaresq, Port Stephens, 5 June 1835
 Hoped to see them "at our Adopted Home", his brother would inform them how to reach "this 'out of the way' place".
 Henry Dumaresq (1792-1838) formerly private secretary to Governor Ralph Darling and Clerk to the Executive Council, was Commissioner of the Australian Agricultural Company based at Port Stephens 1834-1838, and had settled in New England, naming his property St. Heliers.
- 9 Governor Bourke's Secretary, Mr. Holden, to acknowledge reports on Pauper Lunatic Asylum, 23 Jan. 1835.
- 10 Australian Subscription Library, Sydney, 1 March 1835
 To convey thanks to "Dr. Hodgkin for the present of his Anatomical Museum" from the Hon. Secretary T. Shadforth. (Lieut-Colonel Thomas Shadforth (1771-1862). Thomas Hoggkin M.D. (1798-1866), physician, Philanthropist, Quaker, was appointed curator of museum and pathologist at Guy's Hospital, London, in 1825. He published in 1829 a Catalogue of the Preparations in the Anatomical Museum of Guy's Hospital
- 11 Auxiliary Bible Society, Sydney, 25 May 1835.
 Invitation to attend monthly meetings, signed by secretary, William Cowper.
 William Cowper (1778-1858) was Colonial Chaplain, Sydney and minister of St. Philip's Church from 1809-1858. He was appointed Archdeacon in 1848 and commissary for the diocese 1852-55.
- 12 John C. Keane, chaplain, Bathurst, N.S.W. 18 June 1835
 Wishes for a temperance meeting in Bathurst.
- 13,14 Examples of writing by an aborigine of Lake Macquarie, Billy Blue, 1835.
 (see also No. 22)
- 15 Colonial Secretary, N.S.W. 18 March 1836
 Alexander McLeay (1767-1848) informs J.B. that, as requested, printed "indents" of convicts arrived in N.S.W. in 1833 had been sent to the Governor of V.D.L.

- 26 Colonial Secretary V.D.L. 30 April 1836

The Lieut.-Governor had granted permission for Abraham Davy to proceed to N.S.W. to be assigned to J.B.'s service; also acknowledged copy of convict indent, as adopted in N.S.W.

- 16 Joseph Anderson, Norfolk Island. 2 May, 22 Aug. 1836

Thanks for kind letter, sympathy on fall from horse, reference to malicious attacks of Mr. Bull etc. in Sydney. Norfolk Island continued tranquil, J.B.'s advice did much good, efforts of Taylor & Shea continued; schools doing well, J.B.'s books used and others received from Dr. Polding. Anderson was satisfied there was a favourable change although sin and crime still abounded; corporal punishment not often necessary - 3-4 in 3 months - solitary confinement more effective, trials averaged 25 monthly generally for "neglect of work" or insolence to overseers. Anderson read prisoners' letters (except those to J.B.) but letters arriving were sometimes given to Mr. Pery who had altered and added to J.B.'s letter to the Prisoner Comstive; he was sending it to J.B. to decide the matter. Harvest was abundant, especially maize, Mr. Maclean most zealous. Dr. Ellson well. New buildings, splendid new commissariat store and military barracks. Since Julia Leach left a handsome tomb placed over her husband. In a postscript dated 22 August, Anderson noted that they had waited for months for a ship to call and lacking supplies were reduced to drinking "pea coffee". He would be losing his brother in law, Mr. Campbell, Capt. Whipple and Robert Taylor.

Joseph Anderson (1790-1877), soldier, was Commandant of Norfolk Island March 1834 - Feb. 1839. John Leach who died on 14 Sept. 1835 of consumption was a Wesleyan minister appointed as catechist to the Penal Settlement after serving some years in V.D.L. James Backhouse had met Leach and his wife in Sydney on their way to Norfolk Island in June 1835

- 17 Samuel Marsden, Paramatta, 8 June 1836

Introduction to people in Maitland and Newcastle. Samuel Marsden (1764-1838) was Senior Colonial Chaplain.

- 18 Foster Fyans, Moreton Bay, 28 June 1836

Thanks for letter, Bible and box of books. (letter "cross written"). Foster Fyans (1790-1870) was Commandant of Moreton Bay.

- 19 James Callaghan, Bathurst, N.S.W. 22 September 1836
Thanks for tracts, little done in Temperance Society, Bible Society had met.
- 20 Invitation to Government House, Parramatta ND [? 1836]
- 21 William Dumaresq, (1793-1868) St. Aubins, 24 Nov. 1836
Thanks for books.
- 22 L.E. Threlkeld, Lake Macquarie 13 Feb. 1837
Report on the Aboriginal Mission at Ebenezer, Lake Macquarie, N.S.W.; many blacks shot, many murdered at stations in the interior.
Lancelot Edward Threlkeld (1788-1859), missionary and Congregational Minister was missionary to the aboriginals of Lake Macquarie region at "Ebenezer" 1831-1841 and published studies on aborigines and their Language (see also 13,14).
- 23 George Fletcher Moore (1789-1886), Perth, W.A. 31 Jan. 1838
Thanks for book "Doctrine of Friends".
- 24 Frederick Chidley Irwin, Perth, 1 Feb. 1838
Thanks for "school lessons" and "school furniture" of the British and Foreign Schools Society which would be beneficial to the community there; the Governor and Chaplain anxious to introduce the system there; Mr. Logue a graduate of the Irish University; reference to W.A. Temperance Society. A son born the previous day.
F.C. Irwin (1788-1860) commandant of military forces in Perth, sponsored religious affairs, temperance and attempted to establish "National" schools.
- 25 Alfred Wayben, Perth, W.A. 7 Feb. 1838
Acknowledges book sent, farewell, invitation to stay at his father's place in Devizes.
- 26 See after 15.

- 27 John Philip Gell (1816-1898) 14 June 1844

Thanks on behalf of the Tasmanian Society for book for library. R.C. Gunn to be future secretary. (Although the title of the book is not stated it was almost certainly Backhouse's Narrative of a Visit to the Australian Colonies (London 1843), which was noted in the Society's catalogue as presented by Backhouse).

- 28 See beginning of list.

LETTERS TO JOHN GOULD

These letters were with the Backhouse correspondence when it was presented to the Royal Society of Tas. They have no connection with James Backhouse and their provenance is not known. They may have been collected by a later member of the Backhouse family. Most are connected not only with John Gould, the ornithologist, famous for his studies of birds but also with Australian and Arctic explorers.

John Gould (1804-1881) was appointed taxidermist to the Zoological Society, London, in 1823. In 1829 he married Elizabeth Coxen, a talented artist, who did illustrations for his earlier books. *A Century of Birds from the Himalaya Mountains* (1831-32), *The Birds of Europe* (1837) etc. He began work on Australian birds from specimens sent by his brothers-in-law Charles & Stephen Coxen who had property in the Hunter Valley, N.S.W. In 1838 he started on an expedition to Australia with his wife, one young son, and a zoological collector, John Gilbert, and a nephew, Henry Coxen. They landed first at Hobart in September 1838. From there John Gould visited New South Wales and South Australia while John Gibson went to Western Australia. During the latter part of their time in Hobart the Goulds stayed at Government House and another son was born, named Franklin after Governor Sir John Franklin. There are brief references to the visit in Lady Franklin's letters to her sister (RS.16/8) and Sir John's letters to his wife. For example when Gould returned in April 1839, from New South Wales where there had been a severe drought broken by flooding, Sir John wrote: "Mr. Gould has made large additions in N.S. Wales to his collection and therefore in high glee" (26 April 1839, RS.16/1) and "Mrs. Gould is getting on rapidly - Baby too" (17 May 1839 RS. 16/1). Later in 1839 the

Goulds moved to New South Wales to stay at the Coxen property. They left Sydney for England again on 9 April 1840 and publication of *The Birds of Australia* began at the end of 1840. Elizabeth Gould died on 15 August 1841 shortly after giving birth to her sixth child. (See Aust. Dict. of Biography vol. 1).

- 29 George Back, London, to Gould 8 May 1838

Offering an introduction to his "old friend" Sir John Franklin and sending regards to Captain Maconochie and his family. Addressed "Dear Sir" and endorsed "Mr. Gould".

Sir George Back (1796-1878) had served with Franklin on the Arctic expeditions and shared his interest in Arctic exploration. He was knighted in 1839, became a Fellow of the Royal Society and was appointed Admiral in 1857. Capt. Alexander Maconochie accompanied Lieut.-Gov. Sir John Franklin to V.D.L. as his private secretary (see also No. 32).

- 30 John Hutt, Perth, W.A. to [John Gould] 23 April 1839.

Thanks for letter and "the two numbers of your work on Australian ornithology" brought by "your Assistant Mr. Gilbert" and praising the "splendid work". Hutt would be happy to enroll himself amongst the subscribers. He comments on the present lack of scientific knowledge of Australia and would like "if ever you have leisure to use the quill feather of one of your captives to hear of your progress". Addressed "My Dear Sir".

John Hutt (1795-1880) served as Governor of Western Australia from January 1839 - February 1846. John Gilbert (c 1810-1845) was employed as zoological collector by Gould.

- 31 Charles Sturt to John Gould 19 Aug. 1839

The birds and trunk were going by the "John Pirie", only 1 egg of a sea bird. He would see to everything as he would have a deputy "by and by". Signed "C. Sturt", addressed "My Dear Gould" and endorsed John Gould Esq., Post Office, Sydney, readdressed to "Care S. Coxen Esq., Darlbrook, Hunters River".

Charles Sturt (1795-1869) explorer and public servant served as South Australian Surveyor General from March to September 1839.

- 32 Sir John Franklin to Capt. Nias 20 Aug. 1839

Introducing Mr. Gould "the distinguished ornithologist" although it was unnecessary as he was "in possession of an official letter from the Admiralty". As Gould and Mrs. Gould had been staying with Franklin he knew them to be "worthy persons ... zealous in their devotion to science". Lady Franklin and party had returned "last evening" - the ship reached within 10 miles of Cape Pillar 17 days before but was driven off by a gale". He was expecting "our friend James Ross" who had intended to sail in July and make V.D.L. his headquarters. Addressed from Govt. House V.D. Land to "My Dear Capt. Nias" H.M.S. Herald.

Sir John Franklin (1786-1847), naval officer and arctic explorer was Lieut.-Governor of Van Diemen's Land 1837-1843. Lady Franklin, his wife (formerly Jane Griffin (1791-1875) was a great traveller and the voyage referred to was probably her return from Sydney after some months travelling overland in Victoria and N.S.W. Captain Joseph Nias (1793-1879), Admiral 1867, K.C.B. 1867) was given command of the frigate Herald in 1838 to serve in the East Indies, including Australia, the Western Pacific and China. He had also served on Arctic expeditions, including the 1818 expedition under Sir John Ross, whose nephew James Clark Ross (1800-1862) was the discoverer of the magnetic pole in 1831. In 1838 James Ross was appointed to command an expedition to the Antarctic with the ships "Erebus" and "Terror" and discovered Mount Erebus, etc. He was knighted in 1843.

- 33 Sir George Gipps to E. Mayne 10 Sept. 1839

Introducing Mr. Gould who was "Proceeding on a scientific excursion to the Northern parts of the Colony". Addressed "My Dear Sir".

Sir George Gipps (1791-1847) was Governor of N.S.W. from February 1838-1846.

- 34 See after 37

- 35 Capt. Phillip Parker King to Gould 6 Mar. 1840.

He would try to obtain a "skin of the kangaroo in question" but "the blacks here are very lazy". The large kangaroo was common there but he had seen none of the smaller kind; Edward Parry must have got his from the "New Mountains". He regretted Gould and Mrs. Gould had not time to visit Port Stephens. Signed (almost illegibly) Phillip P. King, written from Port Stephens, addressed "My Dear Sir".

35 (continued)

Phillip Parker King (1791-1856) naval officer and hydrographer, had surveyed the Australian coastal waters in the "Mermaid" and later the "Bathurst", 1815-1822, including Macquarie Harbour, Tasmania, in 1819, and also commanded the "Adventure" on the exploration of the south American coasts 1826-30. He was Commissioner of the Australian Agricultural Co. based at Port Stephens from 1839-1849. William Edward Parry (1790-1855), who had sailed on the Arctic voyages 1817-27 was an earlier Commissioner of the Australian Agricultural Co. 1829-34.

36 George Gray to John Gould 27 Dec. 1840

Had sent Gould natural history specimens collected on the north west coast of Australia and would like a descriptive list of these "as compared with the specimens from the S.W. which are likely to arrive immediately from S.[Swan] River". Addressed "Dear Sir" to "J. Gould Esq.", signed G. Grey.

Sir George Grey (1812-1898) after serving in the army in Ireland, led two expeditions to North West Australia, 1837-1839, to seek a site for settlement and in 1839 was appointed Resident Magistrate at King George Sound. On return to England in 1840 he wrote a "Journal of Two Expeditions of Discovery in N.W. and W. Australia during the years 1837-38" (London 1841). From 1841-45 he was Governor of South Australia, became Governor of New Zealand in 1845 and was knighted in 1848.

37 George Gawler to John Gould 22 Feb. 1842

Gawler's "packet of South Australian birds went with Mrs. Gawler to Derby" but she had just brought some of the best specimens to town to be stuffed. Gould might see them and might have them if "worth your acceptance", as duplicates were at Derby. Written from 33 Spring Gardens [London] addressed "My Dear Sir" to "John Gould Esq." and signed "Very truly yours George Gawler".

George Gawler (1795-1869) served in the army from 1810, was Lt. Colonel by 1834 and was Governor of South Australia 1838-1841.

34 Capt. John Lort Stokes to Gould ND. [c 1843-6]

Sending description of a Grey ibis shot on the N.W. coast of Australia in November 1839 and offering the head. Addressed "My Dear Gould".

Capt. John Lort Stokes (1812-1885) served on the expeditions of the "Beagle" and "Adventure" with Capt. P.P. King exploring southern America 1826-30. In 1837 he was appointed Lieutenant in the "Adventure" accompanying the "Beagle" on an exploratory expedition to Australia and in 1841 he succeeded another Stokes as Commander, returning to England in 1843.

The letter is undated but must be after his return to England in 1843.