

JOHN LEAKE

(1780-1865)

John Leake was born in Kent, U.K., in 1780, son of Robert and Sarah Leake. The family were merchants connected with the firm of Travis and Leake of Hull and John worked as a shipping and cargo agent, trading in various commodities between Hamburg, Hull, and North Sea and Mediterranean ports. In Hull in 1805 he married Elizabeth the daughter of a Hull merchant, William Bell, and between 1806 and 1819 they had six sons and two daughters, but one daughter died in childhood. After the Napoleonic Wars Leake and his family settled in Hamburg, an important trading centre and home for many British merchants, where he acted as agent for a number of East Yorkshire and German business companies, especially in agricultural produce, linseed oil, whale oil, cotton, etc. In the 1820s and 1830s, however, business began to decline and many of the Anglo-German merchant community emigrated. Leake was encouraged by William Wilberforce and the British consul in Hamburg to emigrate to Van Diemen's Land and he and his family sailed from Leith in 1822 and arrived in Hobart in 1823. The family settled near Campbell Town in the Midlands where many other former merchants of Hamburg and Altona (Holstein) settled, including Lewis Gilles and the Oakden and Milliken families etc. Others, later settled in South Australia, including Osmond Gilles and two of Leake's sons, Robert and Edward. Leake still kept in touch with friends and relatives in Hamburg and Hull. Former business associates acted as Leake's agents for the sale of wool and other business, especially Leake's father-in-law William Bell of Hull and his son, William Bell jr. Leake's father-in-law left property in Hull, in the street called "Land of Green Ginger", in trust for the education of Leake's son John Travis Leake as a surgeon, the residue for Bell's daughter Elizabeth Leake and then for Elizabeth's other children (*see* L.1/D.277-99). John T. Leake studied medicine in Kiel and Dublin and later received an MD. from Kiel University. William Bell the younger offered to educate a younger son, Arthur, and teach him the merchant business, so he was sent back to Hull and spent some years there and also in Hamburg with his other uncle Edward John Bell. One of Edward Bell's daughters, Clara, came to live with the Leakes in 1857 and in 1869 married the youngest son, Charles. Bell's son Ernst joined Robert Leake at Glencoe for a few years and then settled at Mt. Drummond near Port Lincoln, South Australia. Another son, Edward Geiss settled in Queensland, and after their father's death the youngest sister, Helen, came out to join the Leake family at Campbell Town in 1878.

The Leake family arrived with merchandise worth £3000, including Leake's special pride a small flock of merino sheep from Saxony, and necessities such as farm implements, horse and ox harness, ploughs, carpentry tools, millstones, seeds of grass, clover, rye for pasture, garden vegetable and flower seeds, pots and pans, tea boiler, camp oven, candle moulds, furniture and 12 boxes of crown glass. He was granted 2000 acres and immediately travelled inland to select suitable land, choosing a location on the Elizabeth River near its confluence with the Macquarie River west of Campbell Town naming it Rosedale. Having improved his initial grant, in 1828 he received a further 1000 acres adjacent and another 1000 acres at the "Hunting Ground". A mistake in measuring the original grant, in fact, made the adjacent grant less when measured from the correct boundary and this led to a dispute with Leake's neighbour, Richard Willis, over the location of their dividing fence. In 1833 Leake purchased Lewis Gilles' property, Lewisham, and later the property adjacent to it, Ashby, which together formed a second large property managed by one of Leake's sons. With further smaller purchases and leases of Crown grazing land Leake accumulated a substantial holding.

The early days were hard work, however, for, as Mrs Leake said, settling in a new country required "unremitting labour and perseverance" and to the younger children it seemed a dismal land after their German home. As soon as he had established his property, built a rough turf cottage for his family near the river and begun to work and improve the land, Leake took a job as an accountant in the Derwent Bank in Hobart for a few years until 1830, leaving most of the management of the farm to his wife and eldest son. Mrs Leake kept a rough diary for a couple of weeks during this period, perhaps as memoranda for letters to her husband, and noted the work being done, such as: "2 men binding barley", "Emsley threshing", "Thomas and John skin oak for lime", "Robert and Cox branded the sheep", "Cox and John ploughed". Some bullocks strayed on to a neighbour's property and when claimed were found to have been worked (L.1/B.634). Mrs Leake still found time for lessons for the younger children and family prayers and made a note to get a sermon book, spelling book, prayer books and Bibles. She sometimes complained, however that the two teenage boys, Robert and Edward were naughty and insolent.

As the family prospered, a good stone house with nine rooms was built in 1828. Edward and Sarah were sent to boarding schools, Edward at 17 a little resentful and "unmanageable" after so many years comparative freedom as shepherd boy. Robert, too old to go back to school, continued to supervise the sheep, but in later years regretted that he did not complete his education. John Leake was able to leave his bank job and return to

his property in 1830, although he later managed a local bank, opened in 1838, for a short time. The eldest son William, in his turn went to work in the bank for a few years before returning to help manage the property.

After ten years in Van Diemen's Land Mrs Leake wrote to a friend:

We now live in a very comfortable house containing eleven good sized rooms beside gig house, stables, dairy etc. standing upon an area of 10,000 square feet. It is an exact square each side being one hundred feet. The first five years passed here was in a neat sod hut nicely white-washed with only three rooms in it. We have about 9000 acres of land and upwards of 4000 sheep, 9 horses and about 50 head of cattle. We have a good garden and a well stocked orchard. Last year I made about 80 gallons of gooseberry wine and plenty of gooseberry and currant jams to serve for winter use. As settlers in a new country we have plenty of the necessities of life but in a new country it requires unremitting labour and perseverance - in Hobart Town they live as expensively as in London and are most extravagant in their dress. One of our greatest drawbacks is the want of Respectable female servants. It is almost impossible to endure the Female Convicts and it makes many people only employ men about their household work.

. . . I am not infrequently up at five in the summer - we have about ten men upon the farm who live separate from the house and have weekly rations weighed out to them. During the last year Mr Leake has been appointed Police Magistrate to the district. At present it is worth about two hundred a year and gives him a good deal of influence.

William superintends the farm. John who has studied surgery in Ireland arrived a few months ago, Robert superintends the sheep, Arthur is in England with his Uncle, Mr W. Bell, but owing to his dislike of England & some other unpleasant circumstances it is most likely we shall send for him home again . . . I should take it very kind if you would speak to him as a parent. He was a very fine boy when he left us about six years ago. Sarah, my only little girl, is about fifteen - unfortunately is lame. About 4 years ago she was attacked by a hip complaint & since that period altho' quite restored to health is lame for life, one leg being considerably shorter than the other. She is a good disposition and bears it with great fortitude. In the summer she is much occupied in the garden and at other times reads a good deal. She had been at a boarding school two years when her illness began. . . Female society would be a great comfort to her. I wish your daughters were within the distance of a visit. Few of our neighbours have any young children in their families. Our youngest son, Charles, now thirteen, goes on a Pony three miles every day to school to a Scotch clergyman. (L.1/B.524)

Their first home, a white-washed cottage of three rooms on the river bank, was in fact only a "sod hut" until 1828 when a stone and brick house was built on a site back from the river, a little distance from the farm. This house had a stuccoed front and contained 9 rooms, extended later to eleven. A sketch of it by young Arthur for his uncle when he arrived in England in 1829 shows a typical single storied, square, colonial house with a steeply pitched roof overhanging a verandah and an attic under the roof with a single dormer window. On either side of the house are tall, narrow, gothic looking out-buildings, presumably the gig house, stables and dairy etc. mentioned by Mrs Leake. The house is shown to be some distance from the farm, separated by the gardens and orchards. In 1846 the house was extended to a design by John Blackburn and turned into a stately Italianate mansion, with a turret, pillars, etc. Paving tiles by Minton in buff, red, black and white and Copeland statuettes were purchased from Britain, a bath, shower bath and water closet and also an octagonal ironwork orangery made in London. There was a marble chimney piece and a fine chandelier for the drawing room and pictures for the walls, including "The Millman" by John Waterston which Robert Leake won as an "Art Union" prize in South Australia and sent to his sister. Fine furniture, a piano, carpets, glassware etc. were purchased. Outside on the lawn were peacocks and a sundial.

The kitchen garden and orchard was planted with a good variety of vegetables and fruit trees, including almond trees and grapes, some from the seeds Leake brought out with him and some from gifts of seeds and roots from neighbours, including a friend who moved to Sydney and sent orange and lemon trees from Capt. Moffatt's orangery at Kissing Point. A former gardener of Leake's sent him seeds of new varieties and others were purchased from the Botanic Gardens in Hobart. Leake sent grapes to a sick friend and cider, ale and ginger beer were made. (See especially L.1/B.981-997, C.374)

All the family were well-educated and enjoyed reading books from their own library and borrowed from neighbours and later from Turnbull's Library in Campbell Town and there was some social life even in the early days. The Archers, Gilles and Jellicoes called to drink tea with Mrs Leake. William Archer and his father she described as "gentlemen" and old Mr Archer, although about 70, was particularly agreeable and full of good humour especially with the young children. Mrs Leake was distressed to be obliged to put them to sleep overnight in the unfinished house where they were not so well accommodated as she would have wished. There were invitations to dine with other settlers in the district. Henry Keach found that his family dinner hour was the Leake "lunching time", but in the 1850s the dinner hour was varied to suit visitors. F. L. von Stieglitz

warmly invited Sarah Leake to recuperate after illness at Killymoon in the 1840s as he had coal fires. Several of Leake's old acquaintances stayed a few days when passing through the Colony. After the extensions to Rosedale there was more room for house guests. Mrs Oakden, who visited with her children, described the Leake's spare bed as "so capacious". Governor Denison played charades with other guests and was puzzled by F.H. Henslowe's "riddle" in 1850 (L.1/F.495, L.1/B.414) and on a visit in 1854 Sarah noted in her diary that Denison's party and the Leake family went to the steeplechase at Campbell Town which was won by a Port Philip horse called "Lottery". The household accounts for this period include delicacies such as Crosse and Blackwell's pickled salmon, souchong and orange pekoe tea, coffee, cheroots, wines and spirits and "Sydney Ale" (the latter brewed in London). Leake dined at Government House and he and his daughter were invited to Government House balls although as Robert wrote to Sarah they were "not a dancing family".

Sarah's hip complaint (?T.B.) left her lame. She and her brother, Charles, had whooping cough badly as adults in 1840 and Sarah was ill again in 1848 with "fits of desponding" and hysteria. William, the eldest, also gave his family cause for concern when he left home for Launceston in a fit of pique in 1836 owing to differences of opinion with his father, but his brothers told him to stop disgracing himself, a family friend, Lewis Gilles, helped to smooth things over and the father of a girl William had met, "very respectable in her class", realised that William was not in command of himself - a foretaste possibly of the illness which attacked William in his old age. William also had a "halt" in his leg. On the whole, however, the family were healthy, tall, strong and well built. As young men they were handsome. John, the father, in his very young days in the local Yorkshire militia wore long ringlets, sometimes powdered and son, William, had auburn curls which his mother loved to comb. Mrs Leake died in 1852 aged 66 after an arduous life and John Leake continued working until he was 80 and died at 85 in 1865. Elizabeth and John Leake were both buried together on the property, but in 1880 their remains were transferred to the Church of England cemetery in Campbell Town.

The property was almost entirely sheep for wool, although some sheep were fattened for sale as meat after shearing (some butchers paid more if they were not washed before shearing as the washing left the sheep out of condition). Leake improved his flocks with the introduction of the Saxon merino strain. Wheat was grown for flour for rations for the men and household use. Thomas Ritchie of Scone Mill in 1838 explained the different qualities of flour: 12% or "ration flour" had the broad bran removed 12 lbs per 100 lbs of wheat, 20% or "military flour" 20 lbs of bran and pollard per 100 lbs of wheat and "seconds" had all the bran and pollard taken away. Fine flour cost 21s for 100 lbs compared with 19s for "seconds" and 17/6d for "ration" flour (L.1/C.289). Some surplus wheat was shipped for sale in Britain. Other crops were grown, including barley, rape and turnips for feed and tobacco for sheep dip. Leake imported ploughs and other machinery from Britain and Capt. Wood referred in 1855 to a reaping machine which cut the stubble close and so saved the dangerous task of burning it off (L.1/B.575). Letters from neighbours refer to drought or sometimes floods by the river. Charles Leake noted some of the effects of the drought of 1839, sheep dead in the mud and the river too low to work the mill to grind flour. That year the Leake's had a new water tank built and watched the level when the rains eventually came to fill it. The Hortons had a wind pump in 1842 to irrigate their garden (L.1/B.434). A grass fire was started on Wood's property by "vagabond fiddlers" dining at the roadside. Denison referred to a "grasshopper plague" in 1854 (L.1/F.527).

Most farm servants were convicts assigned to service for short terms, under strict regulations. When John Nokes was sent to the neighbour's property to fetch some strayed bullocks, a government "pass" had to be obtained to allow him to leave the Leake land. Leake appears to have been a good master, strict but benevolent. He considered it a duty to instil habits of industry and he assembled his servants for prayers with his family on Sundays "being far from a place of worship", but he also helped them to apply for pardons or tickets of leave or to have their families brought out to V.D.L. to join them. A special application was made for a remission of sentence for a good worker, William Plant, so that he could accompany Robert Leake to South Australia. A maidservant, Eliza Williams received a pardon a year before her sentence was completed in 1857 at Leake's request to "proceed to New York". Later as Mrs Hanley she wrote to the Leake family from Detroit, U.S.A. with happy memories of her life at Rosedale. In the 1870s in Detroit she had five children, the boys at college and the girls at a convent boarding school learning French and music and the family took a winter holiday in Florida (L.1/C.90-95, K.69-70, M.74-77, N.66). Leake admitted, however, that assigned servants often spent their leisure time smoking or roaming abroad without permission. It was difficult to find good skilled farm workers or respectable household servants and some experienced men or couples were recruited in England by agents. In 1853 when the last convict ship was expected Leake was advised to apply for assisted emigrants and his son, Charles, engaged some servants on his visit to Hull, U.K. in 1854. See especially L.1/C1-102, L.1/B.2b p.43, B.554-6). There no references to aborigines on the Leake property but J. H. Wedge in 1833 wrote to Leake of his "three native boys" and the death of Mrs Leake's "old acquaintance Whetee Coolera alias May Day" whose loss was much felt (L.1/B.546) and in 1840 Charles noted that John Wedge visited with a little Port Philip native

dressed in top boots.

Leake was a churchwarden of St. Luke's Church of England, Campbell Town, and also connected with the Bible Society and the Temperance Society and subscribed to the building of a Wesleyan Methodist Chapel. His friend, Philip Oakden, referred to his "love of God" and a visitor, P. Massingbird, remembered scripture lessons at Rosedale. A bundle of manuscript sermons dating from the eighteenth century with Leake's papers were probably bought by Leake to read on Sundays to his assembled family and servants. Naturally Leake was involved in other Campbell Town affairs, notably the disputes over the building of roads and rights of way across residents' land and the provision of a water supply for the district, as well as the usual charitable and patriotic funds, agricultural shows etc.

John Leake was appointed to the Commission of the Peace in August 1832. As well as serving as local justice of the peace he sometimes deputised for the resident Police Magistrate and was appointed Acting Police Magistrate 1833 - 1834. The Lieutenant-Governor praised his "zeal and integrity". In 1835 a circular sent to existing justices of the peace, including Leake, pointed out that as the number of paid magistrates was being reduced many of the duties performed by them would devolve on the unpaid magistracy "particularly the taking of informations, the issue of Summonses and Warrants, and the disposal of cases in Petty Sessions". In fact Leake had never treated his duties as "merely nominal". Many informations, etc. were taken before him and he appears to have taken his place on the bench regularly and also deputised during absences of the Police Magistrate.

Leake received a salary of £200 a year for the year he was Acting Police Magistrate. He was surprised that at that time the Colonial Office normally used Spanish dollars not British silver coin for magistrates' fees (L.1/E.332).

John Leake served on the Legislative Council from 1846, after the resignation of the so called "Patriotic Six". The "Six" led by Richard Dry had resigned after the third reading of the Appropriation Bill on 31 October 1845 on the question of the expenses of the convict system, claiming that the economic depression was caused by the expense of the convicts and the loss of free labour from the Colony. Leake and others, reluctantly accepted the vacant seats "to relieve the Government of embarrassment" (as W.R. Allison wrote in a letter of 23 July 1847) from March 1846 until Governor Eardley-Wilmot was dismissed in September 1846, unjustly in Leake's opinion. The new Governor, Sir William Denison, in 1847 reinstated the "ex six", to the affront of Leake and his colleagues. In August 1848, however, Leake accepted the seat vacated by Capt. Swanston and served on the Legislative Council until 1855. During this period there were two vital issues: transportation of convicts and the introduction of representative government, and the two were inseparably linked by the question of expense and funding. Leake, himself, favoured continuing a modified form of transportation, reducing the number of convicts and putting them on arrival into private service to learn "habits of industry" and be absorbed into society. He did, however, protest at the expense of the police and judicial establishment being borne by the Colonial Government. The first elections for representatives were, therefore, fought largely on the anti-transportation question. Leake also doubted whether the Colony was ripe for representative government. Were there, he asked, enough "men properly qualified and willing to devote their time to public matters . . . at their own expense?" Nevertheless he seems always to have been willing to do his own duty conscientiously, bringing his experience of the local magistracy, servants, roads and stock fencing etc. to the Council. When he retired in 1855 his friend William Race Allison wrote that he had seen the sacrifice Leake had made "to discharge a most onerous duty, faithfully, to your country and the friends who had trusted in you, in which you never failed" (L1/F.566).

As an upright christian gentleman, Leake was always kind and charitable to friends and neighbours, especially old friends of his Hamburg days, and acted as executor of wills, trustee of settlements and charitable donor and advisor. In particular he acted as executor of the estate of Henry Jellicoe of Campbellford Cottage near Campbell Town, who died in 1841 (L.1/G.78-280).

JOHN LEAKE'S CHILDREN

After their father's death, John Leake's sons and his daughter Sarah remained closely united with Rosedale as their family home. After legacies to John Travis Leake, Sarah and others the land was left in common to three sons, William, Arthur and Charles, but owing to William's bouts of insanity, which began in 1863, the estate could not be sold or divided but had to be run as a whole and William's share of the profits kept in trust for him, until William died in 1886. The bulk of the papers of the younger Leakes relate, therefore, to the execution of John Leake's will and settlement of his estate and later the estates of his children.

Charles Henry Leake, the youngest son remained at Rosedale and in 1869 married his young German cousin, Clara Bell who had been living with them since 1857 - his pocket cash book records 13/4d spent on "stamps for bride cake". They had three daughters, Sarah Elizabeth Clara (Bessie), Mary Rose Alice and Helen Letitia

Constance (Dolly). Charles' sister, Sarah continued to live with them at Rosedale until she died in 1881 and helped to teach her little nieces, who were later sent to boarding school in Melbourne. Sarah's occasional diaries show that life was much easier and more leisurely for the second generation than it had been for her mother. She had time for music, wool-work, reading and work for the poor [ie. sewing] and the church and took a trip to Sydney and the Blue Mountains with her brother, William, when he was well enough. The brothers also spent much of their time at Rosedale, although William lived most of the time at New Norfolk, either at the Asylum or with Dr. Huston, the Superintendent and his family where he was happy and enjoyed gardening, fishing and reminiscing about Hull and Hamburg. His letters show he was usually quite rational, apart from occasional fantasies and extravagances, and his nieces all loved their "old Uncle Billy".

To some extent Charles attempted to follow in his father's footsteps, especially in local Campbell Town affairs. He was churchwarden and treasurer of St Luke's Church of England and established an endowment fund for the maintenance of the church and the clergyman and so became involved in Dr. Valentine's disputes with the incumbents, Rev. Kirkland and Rev. Craig on questions of doctrine and ritual (L.1/M.130-214). The Leake family were themselves in disagreement with Rev. Craig over their niece Lettie's confirmation in 1875. Rev. Basil Craig's wife was in fact, Dr. Valentine's daughter, Rose, an old friend of the Leake family. Charles Leake continued the proposals for a water supply, which his father had been involved with and he was instrumental in establishing the Campbell Town Water Works Co. and persuaded his brother William to donate the £1000 bequeathed by Sarah Leake to complete the work of damming Kearney's Bogs to form a reservoir, which was named Lake Leake in his honour. He was one of the trustees of the Campbell Town Hospital. L.1/M239-272). He also served on the local Council, the Midland Agricultural Association and the Rabbit Trust (L.1/M.280-312) and was a member of the Legislative Council for South Esk for a few years, 1882-5. Charles Leake had a penchant for satirical writing on local events and politics and wrote letters to newspapers under the pseudonym Johnny Wideawake and also entertained his family and friends with a mock newspaper in manuscript, "The Midlanton Puffer", often illustrated with his own pen and ink sketches. His political satires tended, however to be "over the heads of the general" [reader] as a correspondent, J. Swan, commented (L.1/M.406). After Charles Leake's death in 1889, his property was left in trust for his three daughters and Bessie (Leake) and John Foster made their home there in 1896.

Arthur Leake remained at Ashby, and was still responsible for Lewisham which was leased to a tenant. Arthur liked Ashby House better than the grand Rosedale but he would have preferred to sell his share of the property and travel. Much of his time was also occupied with the settlement of the estate of his dead brothers, Robert Rowland, who died in 1860, and Edward John who died in 1867, at Glencoe, South Australia, as Charles and Arthur were executors. Arthur found the task wearisome - sheep farming was a holiday by comparison - partly owing to Edward's debts (L.1/J). Edward's will left his property in trust for his seven year old daughter, Letitia Sarah, and no provision was made for his son, John, born after the will was made. The girl was sent to boarding school in Melbourne, in spite of her mother's protest against sending her daughter, who had been baptised a Catholic, to a protestant institution. The Leake family did not altogether approve of Edward's wife, Letitia Amanda (Clarke) whom he married in 1854, because of a history of drink and the mental illness mentioned in Sarah Leake's diary, and after her remarriage in 1871 the girl, Lettie, came to live with her guardian, Uncle Arthur, and a governess at Ashby. In 1876 Arthur took Lettie to Britain, where she spent some time at school in Brighton and then toured Europe with her uncle. While in Europe he married a widow, Mary Turnbull nee Gellion, who he described to his sister and brother as "a lady in heart and bearing" who would be good for Lettie and for his own comfort, although his young cousin Helen Bell apparently exhibited some jealousy. While in Britain Arthur met many old Tasmanian friends, including Mrs Galloway and her daughter and bought from them their property Meadowbank which was adjacent to Rosedale. R.R. and E.J.L's property, Glencoe, had been leased to Capt. Lindsay but after Lettie came of age in 1880 the property was sold to the Riddocks of Yallam Park. From 1882 to 1884 Lettie and her uncle and aunt made another tour of Europe, spending some time in Italy and in Algiers where Arthur visited the slopes of the Atlas Mountains where the merino sheep originated. Arthur died in 1890. In 1891 Lettie married Charles Billyard who took the name of Billyard-Leake and they made their home at Ashby, as Lettie had purchased her uncle's property, but in 1895 they left and settled in England and later sold Ashby and Meadowbank.

Charles Leake's second daughter, Mary, married W.H. Hudspeth who drafted a history "The Story of Rosedale". The first part was subtitled "courtship one hundred years ago" and consisted of transcripts or extracts of letters between William Bell and his daughter Elizabeth or Betsey at school about her education, which appears to have been very extensive, including chemistry, natural philosophy, Roman history, Greek tragedies etc., and also correspondence between John Leake and Betsey (or Eliza). Unfortunately the original Elizabeth Bell letters were not with the Leake papers bequeathed to the University of Tasmania by Dorothy Foster and their whereabouts is unknown (see typescript L.1/P.73).