

SKY PILOT NEWS

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AUSTRALIAN PIONEERS: ELIZABETH HAWKINS.

IN March 1963 Charlotte Emily Langford-Smith, the mother of the "Sky Pilot", passed to her rest. She was the great-grand-daughter of Elizabeth Hawkins, the first white woman, with a family, to cross the Blue Mountains to Bathurst in 1822. Elizabeth Hawkins wrote to her sister in 1822 telling of this crossing of the Blue Mountains in a bullock dray and this letter was published by the Parramatta and District Historical Society in 1963. An account was also given in the Sky Pilot News in 1963. These and other publications aroused much interest and Mr. K. Langford-Smith has been asked frequently for further details about the life of his remarkable ancestor, Elizabeth Hawkins.

Elizabeth Hawkins' husband was a Paymaster in the Royal Navy, a descendant of Sir John Hawkins, who (with his cousin, Sir Francis Drake) was knighted for his part in the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. In 1822 the Hawkins family, newly arrived in New South Wales, decided to travel to Bathurst of which town Hawkins had been appointed Commissary-General and Paymaster. Included in the party were Mr. and Mrs. Hawkins, their eight children, and Mrs. Hawkins' mother, then a plucky old lady of seventy.

Bathurst was at that time the Western outpost, and was manned by soldiers to protect the settlers from attacks by the natives, and to look after the convicts. Up to this time no white family had ever crossed the Blue Mountains. After their arrival in Bathurst, Elizabeth Hawkins wrote the letter referred to above to her sister. One of her grand-daughters, Lady Russell French, gave a copy of this letter to the Royal Australian Historical Society; it is published in volume nine of the Society's journal. The Hawkins family left Sydney by cart on 5th April, 1822. In her letter Elizabeth says: "We possessed no furniture but one table and twelve chairs; these with our cooking utensils, bedding, a few agricultural implements, with our clothes, constituted the whole of our luggage. We had a waggon with six bullocks, a dray with five, another with three horses, a cart with two, and last of all a tilted cart with Mother, myself and seven children. Hawkins and Tom (the eldest son) rode on horseback." It is not our purpose now to reprint the story of that most interesting trip but to quote a further letter written by Elizabeth Hawkins over forty years later. This

letter was addressed to Emily Webb, the grandmother of the Sky Pilot; the original was carefully copied for this leaflet. Here it is:

Sydney, Sept. 22nd 1863

(Finished Oct. 27th).

"My dear Emily,

I have received Helen's letter and she tells me you wish me to write to you. I will endeavour to do so whilst I can for I think I shall not be able to write many more. What subject can I find that will be interesting to you? I must imagine something about myself may prove so. I was born in the year 1783 and married in 1802, and altho' there have not been any very remarkable events in my life (to the appearance of others) yet to me individually it has been a life of many changes; a life of many sorrows and troubles - as well as of many blessings. Could I record the many thoughts, fears and anxieties that in so many years have agitated and embittered my hours it would fill a volume. Many events appear so remote I can hardly at times think I was ever present at them.

You have much reason to be thankful my dear girl, that you entered life in a different age to what it was when I was young. Religion now appears — and I hope it is — a living, active principle in all. All at least have an opportunity of understanding God's Word and Commandments. Those who do not profit by the knowledge the fault must rest with themselves. I have no recollection of Sunday Schools or District Visitors or of the many charitable institutions and means adopted to find out and relieve the afflicted. There was a Workhouse for the poor and aged, and a Charity School for children who were all sent to Church but without the instruction that is now imparted: few, I think, understood what they heard there.

I could have been a few years old when I heard everyone speaking of the many pernicious doctrines that were spread abroad from infidel writers poisoning the minds of the ignorant, and although I could not understand much, an impression was in my mind that our own reason was to be our guide and that all people ought to be equal. That impression as I grew older left no impression on my mind and why it has just now entered my thoughts I cannot tell.

I think I must have been about 10 years of age when the dreadful Revolution in France broke out and I used daily to hear all its horrors

—nothing else was thought of or talked about. I think during my childhood I must have been impressed with very gloomy thoughts of the world. I used to ponder and think very seriously for my age. I am quite aware of that now and when I look on young children I think how different it is with them now—all with me was War, all WAR. When I married it was the same for many years. I was often Left—once your Grandpa was absent for three years, once two years and a half, once eighteen months and often for shorter periods. Whenever the ship returned into Port then I always joined him, so that I never had any fixed home.

He was in all parts of the world. In his last long absence he went up the Dardanelles to Constantinople. In returning down a shot weighing 700 lbs. struck the ship, set fire to it in three different places and wounded sixty five people. On his return we expected rest and took a place a little way from the town of Portsmouth called Drayton. We took possession of the thing as it might be this evening and we were planning and pleasing ourselves thinking how comfortable we should be, but the next morning orders came; for the ship, the Berwick, of seventy guns, was ordered away immediately with secret orders and was absent fifteen months—but the battle of Waterloo took place and then the war was ended.

But enough of war, let me find a little to say on peace. I left England to find a home in this colony in 1821 with eight children, the eldest not twelve years old, and with my mother nearly seventy. We crossed the mountains to Bathurst, a great undertaking at that time for we were eighteen days in getting there from Sydney; and there I lived and brought up my children and for eighteen years I had as much peace and comfort as I think is generally enjoyed by any and I may truly say the happiest period of my life was when my children were past childhood and not old enough to cause me anxiety for their future conduct. I am now referring to my boys. Oh that was a peaceful and happy time seeing them every one at home, generally at their lessons. The summer evenings we always spent in the verandah.

But troubles came and very severe. First I lost my Husband, then my Home and then my Boys. I have no doubt that by many I was not thought to feel strongly, but I could never talk on what I felt or thought. But the many years

have passed since then. I too will know that time will never obliterate the grief that then settled on my heart and I believe it gave a stern expression to my countenance and manner very repelling.

I was tired when I had written so far and put my letter away and it is some weeks since I commenced it, but being alone this evening I have read it and feel ashamed to send it, so badly written and so badly worded, but you must take it as it is for it would be too great a fatigue to write another.

What more shall I say? My Pilgrimage is nearly at an end and I would not wish to live my life over again unless I was sure I could live it better, which I cannot be. I do not dread the near prospect of Death for I am calm and composed when I contemplate it, but I often fear I have not that strong love to my God and Saviour which I ought to have. My desire is to love Him with all my heart and mind and it troubles me when I think I do not, but God knows my secret thoughts; to His mercy I commit myself, in Him alone I trust, may He forgive me all my sins. Do not suppose I am gloomy and dull because I write on such a serious subject as the future. That is not the case, my dear Emily, I am cheerful and pass my days in peace and content.

Before I close my letter I will mention one circumstance which has had great influence on me. When I was a young child, after I was in bed one night, I began thinking about the Saviour, what He had done, how good He was and all that He had suffered that my feelings became so overcome that I began to cry and sob most bitterly. The recollection of that night has never left me and although at times, perhaps for years, I have not thought about it yet it has again returned and will return at long as I have life, with all its vividness. Whenever it occurs to me it is with the view of the room, of the bed and of the position in which I lay, and with all the feelings I had at the time.

I often think (and I hope I may be forgiven if it is presumption) that God's Holy Spirit then entered into me and from that time has never forsaken me, though often grieved, but has watched over me through this long life, and will, I humbly hope, sustain me at the last and final close of it. I am convinced, dear Emily, that young children have often very deep religious feelings. They do not know how to express them,

therefore cannot talk of them, but God in love and wisdom has implanted them in their hearts. I will now close this. It is the last you will receive from me. It may be difficult to read, the paper is too thin and my hand is not so steady to guide my pen at it was once. May God ever have you in His keeping is the fervent prayer of your affect. Grandmother.

E. Hawkins."

FROM OUR OWN MAIL BAG:

Clive (as we shall call him) was an alcoholic living on a country Reserve with his wife and children. His wife died from alcoholic poisoning at 24 years of age, leaving four small children. Clive was determined to make a break and with the help of Alcoholics Anonymous managed to give up the drink. He wanted something better for his children so came out to Marella to see if it was a suitable place for them to stay. He was satisfied with what he saw and it was a long way from the Reserve with its unpleasant memories. The four children came to us and stayed here for almost two years.

Clive married again and is now in a position to care for his own children, who returned to him when school broke up at the end of 1976. We have now had a lovely letter from him in which he says: "You know I certainly appreciate the work you and the rest of the staff at Marella are doing. The children are very hygienic and have learned a good deal of discipline, which makes it a lot easier on us. So the work done at Marella by Mr. & Mrs. Langford-Smith and all the staff is greatly appreciated by us. May God bless all of you and your work and especially the children over the next year. Well, I'll sign off now, hoping to hear from you soon. Lots of love and best wishes from Clive and Cynthia and the children."

ALSO FROM OUR MAIL BAG:

Anne, one of our faithful correspondents, says in her last letter to us: "Could you please keep sending me the leaflet because I always want to keep in contact with the most beautiful parents I have ever had. Will you please pray for these young couples up here, that they might come to their senses and stop being nasty and drinking too much. We'll Mum and Dad I'll have to close now and handing the pen over to you". The letter is signed with a row of kisses and there is a P.S. which reads: "I will always love and think about you both for as long as I live." **LAWN MOWER FROM WINDSOR HIGH SCHOOL.**

Our lawn mower, which has given such good service over many years, finally collapsed com-

pletely. It was important for us to have a mower, not only to keep the lawns neat and tidy, but also to prevent the grass in the playgrounds and elsewhere from becoming too long. Already this season several snakes have been seen in this district and we want to make sure there is no long grass to hide them where the children will be playing. The Windsor High School came to our aid and presented us with a new four-stroke mower which was just the answer to our needs. Their spokesman rang us one morning to know if there was anything special that we needed; in the afternoon the lawn mower was delivered on our doorstep! We are most grateful for this wonderful gift which will remind us of Windsor High School for many years to come.

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS:

As in past years all the children went away for the holiday period, this time for four weeks. Many of them went back to their parents or other relatives, in marked contrast to other years. This was an encouraging sign to us as we seek always to maintain the direct contact of the children with their parents. There are problems, of course, but these are outweighed by the advantages. The other children were placed in the homes of various friends, some of whom have the same child each holidays and so build up a happy relationship. The children returned from their holidays at the end of January and all were well and happy.

During the four weeks the Mission was closed down and the staff were able to take their own holidays. We are grateful to Mrs. Onslow, Mrs. Risk and Mrs. Hodges for acting as caretakers in our absence.

During the latter part of the holidays Mrs. Warwick and Mr. & Mrs. Langford-Smith made a trip to Cairns by car to visit Mr. Warwick's daughter, Heather and her husband, Chris Foley.

Mrs. Warwick stayed with Heather and Chris and the Langford-Smith stayed in a Caravan Park at Cairns. Heather and Chris are renting the down-stairs portion of a lovely two storey house. They have ample grounds studded with mango and paw paw trees which were bearing at the time. They have their animals which at present include a riding horse, a cow (milking), two dogs and three cats. A little sun-bird had built its nest on a rope clothes line under the verandah and it sat quite unmoved when curious visitors peered into the nest. It was not hard to guess that Chris and Heather were animal lovers. Chris was working with the transport of sugar cane during the season, but last we heard was working on a poultry farm in the off season.