

THE GELL AND FRANKLIN PAPERS

at

HOPTON HALL, DERBYSHIRE *

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Papers of importance for the study of Australian history are being copied continuously under our Joint Copying Project. The work has been proceeding steadily since 1948 but much remains to be done both in Great Britain and elsewhere. There are recorded and unrecorded deposits in public institutions and in the archives of religious and other societies and many papers are in private possession. The family concerned is often glad that special groups of papers should be placed where they will be of the greatest use to scholars but other family records are carefully preserved by their owners. The Gell-Franklin Papers at Hopton Hall, Wirksworth, Derbyshire, are in the last category.

The Rev. John Philip Gell, 1816-1898, great uncle of the present owner of Hopton Hall, was the first headmaster of the Queen's School, Hobart, and the first warden of Christ's College. In Hobart he met his future wife, the only child of the Governor, Sir John Franklin. Hence the presence of papers of Australian interest at Hopton Hall, though they are a small group in a great collection covering seven centuries.

The existence of the papers has been known for many years. I heard of them in 1948 from Mr. E. Osborne, then County Librarian of Derbyshire. Our meeting took place in London and he told me of the interest of the papers to Tasmania. Unfortunately, I had no opportunity of going to Derbyshire for a sufficiently long visit during my few months in England. In 1952 Mr. J.D.A. Collier, then State Librarian at Hobart and Miss O'Connor of the staff of the Public Library of Victoria, both told me that they saw the papers earlier that year while they were on loan to Mr. Osborne.

When I arrived in England in 1957 I asked the National Register of Archives whether a survey of records at Hopton Hall had yet been made and found that it had. Some of the nineteenth century records were described in their mimeographed list but emphasis was naturally upon the magnificent series of deeds and records going back to the 13th century.

* These papers have been microfilmed for the Australian Joint Copying Project by permission of Colonel and Mrs. P.V.W. Gell. For an account of the Project see H.L. White - "Source Material for Australian Studies" in Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand, May 1957, Vol. 7, No. 28, pp. 452-465.)

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So I wrote to Colonel Gell of Hopton Hall and to the Derby County Library, the Librarian of which is now Mr. D.A. South. Mrs. Gell replied extending a cordial invitation to call and Mr. South kindly gave me all the information he could. He was away when I arrived at Derby but members of his staff showed me the County Library and provided directions for a visit to Hopton Hall about twenty miles away.

The papers of Australian interest are quite voluminous, three tin despatch boxes and about nine bundles of various sizes, occupying a couple of shelves in the Muniment Room. It was impossible to examine them properly in one day and three weeks seemed a minimum time in which to sort and prepare them for microfilming. I thought that in one week the Australian papers could be separated, so Colonel and Mrs. Gell generously agreed that these might be taken to London by safe hand and it was arranged that I should spend a week in the nearby village of Carsington at some future convenient date.

Time slips by when there are several parties to such a scheme and it was not until October 1960 that this plan was carried out. It took five and a half days to examine the papers to make reasonably certain of having found all those which should be microfilmed. By writing up notes during the evenings a list was ready on the fifth day and was left at Hopton Hall as a receipt. In February, 1961, sorting, listing and microfilming being completed in London, I stayed a couple of nights at Hopton Hall and returned the papers.

The Gell Papers are replaced in the three tin despatch boxes in the Muniment Room but the Franklin papers are now with Franklin furniture and relics in an upper room on which the name "the Franklin Museum" has been bestowed. Sir John Franklin's sea chest is here and several of his great trunks. On the walls are prints and a fine wax medallion portrait. The room also contains a little writing desk which belonged to his first wife, Eleanor Anne, née Porden. She was a gifted girl, a member of the Institut de France, and organiser of a literary circle at her father's house in London. The Attic Chest, the manuscript periodical produced by the circle is at Hopton Hall and over the mantelpiece in one of the drawing rooms is a portrait of Eleanor by Flaxman. Copies of two red leather bound volumes of her published work shown in the picture lie on a table near the mantelpiece.

The oldest part of Hopton Hall is an Elizabethan building and additions have been made from time to time especially about 1800. The house, with its gardens and woods, is set amongst its farm lands on the southern slopes of a high Derbyshire hill in the centre of an ancient tin-mining district. It is known that the Romans mined tin in these hills and the traditions of the family go back to Roman times though the earliest record of a Gell holding lands at Hopton and Carsington is during the reign of Edward III. His direct or collateral descendants have been at Hopton ever since.

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The Gell who preceded Colonel and Mrs. Gell at Hopton Hall was the Colonel's uncle, Philip Lyttleton Gell, who, together with his wife, the Hon. Mrs. Edith Mary Gell, was very interested in the family records. They built a tower planned to house the muniments, which are now placed on its upper floors, access to the Muniment Room being gained from the first floor of the house through a passage and a fire resistant door.

Mr. Philip Lyttleton Gell compiled a family tree, on which, far down the long line, one can trace the family's Australian connections. Philip Lyttleton himself was the second son of the Rev. John Philip Gell (the eldest son died in Madras in 1884). His mother was Eleanor Isabella, 1825-1860, only child of Sir John Franklin. His younger brother, Henry Willingham Gell was the father of the present Colonel Philip Victor Willingham Gell of Hopton Hall, and there were four sisters, three of whom married and have descendants.

A cousin of the Rev. John Philip Gell, Philip Hoskins Gell, born at Windermere in 1822, settled at Baskerville, Macquarie River, Tasmania in 1851. He had property also in New South Wales and is listed on the tree as "Gell of Burrongong (N.S.W.)". He was buried at Connorville, Tasmania in 1883. Descendants are listed at both Burrongong and Connorville and the tree shows that there were Gells and connections of Gells in Victoria and Queensland. For example there was a Sherbrooke Leigh Gell, a nephew of Philip Hoskins Gell who served as a Captain with the Victorian contingent in South Africa 1900 to 1901, and the Captain's brother, Hugh Digby Gell (b.1853) is listed as being of Hungerford, Queensland. Unfortunately, there are no family papers at Hopton Hall of the descendants and connections of the Gells of Burrongong.

Philip Lyttleton Gell had business interests in Australia for which there are some records at Hopton Hall. Names of companies in which he was interested are British Exploration of Australia Limited, Australian Smelting Corporation, The Millionaire Limited (Australian Mining Company), Pilbarra Asbestos Company (Australia), and Consolidated Deep Leads Limited (Australia). None of these business papers have been examined or microfilmed for the Australian Joint Copying Project.

The papers microfilmed are those relating to Australia among papers of the Rev. John Philip Gell, of his wife, of Sir John Franklin and of Lady Jane Franklin. Among the papers of the Rev. John Philip Gell there is a small group relating to Arthur Daniel Gell, one of his younger brothers. These have been kept separate when microfilming.

The papers of the Rev. John Philip Gell and his wife with their letters from Sir John and Lady Franklin and a few miscellanea have found their natural resting place at Hopton Hall. The presence of

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documents connected with Franklin property which went to John Philip and of the little group relating to Arthur Daniel, is also natural. There are, however, other Franklin papers unconnected with John Philip, handwritten and typescript copies of letters written by Franklin and, in particular, a series of ninety eight letters from Franklin to his friend, Dr. John Richardson, afterwards Sir John Richardson. These may have been given to John Philip or to his wife as they were close friends of the Richardsons, but other non-Gell-Franklin correspondence was collected by Philip Lyttleton Gell, who had a wide correspondence about his Gell ancestors and his mother's father.

There are four reels of microfilm and on the first reel is a descriptive note and list. However, the microfilms should be read using a separate corrected typescript note and list, a copy of which is available with every set of positives. The separate typescript explains some misplacing of documents during microfilming, unfortunately not discovered before the papers had to be returned.

The arrangement on the films is as follows:-

- A. Papers of the Rev. John Philip Gell;
- B. Papers of his wife;
- C. Papers of Arthur Daniel Gell;
- D. Papers of Sir John Franklin, and
- E. Papers of Lady Jane Franklin.

For the brief account given here it seems best to take the Franklin papers first.

The papers of earliest date are copies of letters written by Franklin in 1800 from his first ship, the Polyphemus and seven letters referring to the voyage of the Investigator 1801 to 1804. Six of these are by Franklin and one dated 2nd May 1801, is from Matthew Flinders to Mr. Thomas Franklin. Franklin was only fifteen in 1801 and the voyage on the Investigator surveying the coasts of Australia laid the foundations of his love of discovery and scientific pursuits. His arctic explorations are represented by a number of documents at Hopton Hall but these have not been microfilmed. The next series photographed are copies of letters to his family 1836-1839, describing preparations for the voyage to Van Diemen's Land and first impressions of the colony. Some of his daughter's papers belong to this period, diaries of the voyage and of her life at Government House, Hobart, and letters to her relatives in England as well as letters from her father and step-mother. Among the latter are two quite long letters from Lady Jane to Eleanor both written in 1839. One is on twelve scraps of paper and describes her experiences at Wiseman's Ferry on the Hawkesbury after her first long Australian journey, the adventurous overland trip from Port Phillip to Sydney.

For Franklin's first years in Van Diemen's Land there are a few scraps on which he wrote drafts of letters to the Earl of Minto and to Matthew Forster and for the later years of his term there are copies of his letters to G.W. Boyes. Covering the whole period there are twelve holograph letters to Dr. Richardson and these are in a volume of the ninety eight letters to Richardson, which have all been microfilmed as they are probably the most important Franklin papers at Hopton Hall. The first letter from Hobart, 18th August 1837, gives a full description of Franklin's difficulties with his Private Secretary, Captain Alexander Maconochie, who, with his wife and six children had come out with Franklin on the ship Fairlie. One of the attractions of the new country to Sir John and Lady Franklin was the opportunity it would afford of aiding scientific studies by sending specimens back to England. Franklin says in his letter that he cannot employ Maconochie to collect natural history specimens and for this work will turn to his aide de camp, Henry Elliot, son of Lord Minto ... "I find that he (Maconochie) and Mrs. M. are actively engaged in catching the subjects of Natural History for their own purposes - without offering any proportion or share either to me or Jane though they must know that we both have many friends who would be glad to receive such presents occasionally from us." There are references in the same letter to other troubles with Maconochie ... "from your previous knowledge of his character you will not be surprised to learn that he does not feel himself happy here." He has disagreements with the public officers of the colony who have no "real regard" for him. He has written a report on prison discipline embracing also a "kind of Essay on Government (which) though it contains some points deserving consideration it yet is full of theories which in my opinion cannot with safety be introduced into a country constituted as this is."

The letters to Richardson are valuable because of their private nature and for the frankness with which they are written. Troubles with public officials, especially with Montagu, and with the local press are frequently mentioned. On 28th March 1838 he writes "The people are kept in a constant state of excitement by a vile press ... No sooner is one subject laid aside than another equally groundless is adopted and personal virulence and even misrepresentation is put forth in its cause. I quite feel the attempt to bring the parties together hopeless." The last letter from Australia, dated 22nd November 1843, Schooner Flying Fish off George Town, gives a detailed history of the Tasmanian Society for Natural History.

Lastly there is a "Memorandum of Agreement (signed by the parties concerned) between Sir John Franklin, in the one part, and Charles Ferguson, Master of the barque "Rajah" of Leith and agent for the owners of that vessel, on the other part "engaging passages to England for Franklin and his suite and ten tons of luggage freight free "exclusive of what the passengers think proper to stow in their state-rooms ... all luggage above ten tons to pay freight at the rate of

Five pounds per ton of forty cubic feet." The passengers are to embark at Port Phillip and are to provide their own cabin furniture and private cabin lighting. Half the amount of the passage money, £520 for the whole party, is to be paid in cash at Port Phillip and the other half by a draft in England. The party is to consist of Sir John Franklin, Lady Franklin, Miss Franklin, Miss Cracroft, Miss Williamson, a female servant and a male servant. The document is signed at Hobart Town, August 1843 and is witnessed by Fr. Hartwell Henslowe, Franklin's Private Secretary and by Joseph Henry Kay, his nephew, who had arrived in 1840 with the Antarctic expedition under Ross and Crozier on the Erebus and Terror and remained in Van Diemen's Land to take charge of the observatory.

The Rev. John Philip Gell's papers include a notebook of expenses 1835-1841, a diary of his voyage out 1839-1840, correspondence and an important series relating to the Queen's School and to Christ's College.

The notebook of expenses begins while Gell was an undergraduate at Cambridge and the whole book has been microfilmed for the sidelights it gives on his character as a young man. He was a pupil of Dr. Arnold of Rugby and went to Van Diemen's Land at Arnold's suggestion. One of his letters to his sister, Elizabeth, written on October 17th 1838 tells of a visit to Rugby, during which he stayed with his friend Merivale and "fed with Arnold when not engaged elsewhere." Guests of Dr. Arnold and conversations are described at length, especially the conversation of Richard Whateley, Archbishop of Dublin, who fascinated the young man. In his account of Whateley's talk there are some brief references to Australia and the Pacific. "The next thing I think was about the botany of the Pacific Islands, for he is a great botanist, but I forget much of what he said ... After all were gone to bed but him, Arnold, Stanley and me he began to talk about New South Wales of which he knows a great deal, and of the abominable state of society there, also he said about 50 doggerel verses upon the wonderful things to be found in that country which had got by some odd chance into his capacious memory."

A letter from the Rev. Henry Venn to the Rev. W. Jowett, dated 28 March 1839 and sent on by the latter to John Philip's father, illustrates the motives of Arnold and of the Government in offering the young man the position of headmaster of the projected Queen's School in Hobart and that of Warden of Christ's College when it should be established.

Highgate 28 March 1839

My dear Friend

I called this morning upon Jas Stephen to enquire about

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the situation in Van Diemens land. By doing so I got at once to the Fountain Head of information. For all the correspondence with Dr. Arnold has been thro' Stephen.

The intended College or School is not to be exclusively a Church of England Establishment but to be of the indiscriminate (or as Dr. Arnold would say the Catholic) character. Scotch Presbyterian Dissenters &c &c must be admitted on equal terms with the scholars of the Church. Such is the system of government education in the Colonies which Stephen says is absolutely indispensable in the present state of Colonial Society.

At the same time the Government wish to place a Churchman at the Head. & they w^d rather that he went out in holy orders than/otherwise but they made no such stipulation with Dr. Arnold.

The Government also would no way interfere with the question of his being married or not-- But Stephen feels strongly that it will be best on every account that the Master sh. ^d go out married- For his own comfort -- considering the present state of Colonial Society.

Upon all the other points to w^h Mr. Gell alludes nothing satisfactory c^d be explained without a personal interview. If the young man can conveniently come to London - & thinks the appointment sufficiently entitled to consideration to take such a step - Stephen will be glad to see him at the Colonial Office & to give him any information & advice on the subject.

My own impression is that if Mr. Gell has spirit enough for the undertaking it w^d be a very noble opening of usefulness - But I quite agree with Stephen that marriage in this country is most desirable.

I will only add that the climate is peculiarly salubrious & suitable to persons of delicate constitution.

If I can be of any further use in the matter I shall be glad to offer my services - not only for your sake but for the sake of showing my regard for Mr. Gell whose name & character I have long been acquainted with - as well as with some members of his family.

.... Very truly yours

H. Venn

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Thus John Philip Gell came to go to Van Diemen's Land and meet his future wife, a young girl of fifteen when he arrived in the Colony in 1840. The notebook of expenses already mentioned shows him preparing his outfit and travelling to see friends and relations to say goodbye. He lists the clothes and books he bought, the furniture for his cabin and the cost of travel to various places in England. His passage money is entered as £58. 0. 0 and his Letter of Credit at £101. 0. 0. There are several entries for spectacles and on September 9th 1839, not long before he sailed, he recorded, "Mr. Watson (stammering) £10. 0. 0." This is interesting as the family tradition is that he was an eloquent preacher in later life. The notebook ends with entries connected with the Queen's School, Hobart.

His letters to his family are full of vivid pictures of the colony and for his first Christmas he travelled to Adelaide to see his younger brother Arthur Daniel, Private Secretary to Colonel Gawler, Governor of South Australia. When he was back in Hobart in March 1841 he wrote to Elizabeth. "My dear Sister -- You will be glad to hear something about Arthur besides what I wrote from Adelaide to Mama. I came to Adelaide on Christmas Day and could not see him till the evening of the next day. He looked very burnt and wore spectacles, he is not so tall as I am, but very sufficiently stout. I think the place agrees with him very well." This and other letters describe the country and its settlers. One letter written in Spencer's Gulf on January 9th 1841 is a long one giving his impressions of Adelaide as well as some account of his journey. Gell writes that he "... Spent the last fortnight December 26th to January 8th with Arthur ... Lady Franklin took the opportunity of my going to spend Christmas in Adelaide to go as well and see the Colony. She had a schooner called the Abrone fitted up, and with Miss Franklin, Mr. Bagot, the aide-de camp, and two servants, we left Hobart on December 14."

In 1845 Arthur paid a visit to Hobart and wrote his journal of the visit in a small octavo volume now among his brother's papers. He was lost at sea three years later on a voyage from Adelaide to New Zealand to take up an appointment as Private Secretary to Eyre. There is a memorial to him in Trinity Church in Adelaide, an engraving of the memorial being in the Gell archives.

Arthur held a power of attorney for Sir John and Lady Franklin so that he could manage their property in South Australia. Before leaving Adelaide in 1848 he wrote to A.L. Elder on the matter describing a farm called Myponga and lands at Port Lincoln. Many years later, in 1867 Lady Franklin transferred these properties to the Rev. John Philip whose papers include the Conveyance and also other documents about Franklin estates in Van Diemen's Land, correspondence with Sir John's agent Ronald C. Gunn and in South Australia with Henry Gawler. Letters between John Philip and Lady Franklin show that Lady Franklin wished to make some return to her step daughter's husband for the loss of

Eleanor's money in helping to finance expeditions in search of her father after he disappeared in the Arctic.

There is a large collection of documents concerning the Queen's School and Christ's College and these are the most important body of Van Diemen's Land historical material among John Philip Gell's papers. His own Précis of Papers and copies of documents form a fat file and besides original correspondence there is a letterbook of F.A. Marriott 1844 to 1845. The whole story is here, the establishment of a non-denominational school, Sir John Eardley Wilmot's refusal to allow it to continue or to found the College, and the development of educational establishments by the Church of England. On their return to England Sir John, Lady Franklin and Eleanor discovered that the only hope for support for Christ's College was from the Church and John Philip Gell became its first Warden when it was finally opened at Longford on 1st October, 1846. He decided, however, that he must go back to England to marry Eleanor and that they would not return. The marriage took place in London at St. George's, Bloomsbury, on 10th June 1849 and thenceforward their life was in England. John Philip was curate at St. Martins-in-the Fields 1849-1850, curate at St. Mary, Marylebone 1850 to 1854, vicar at Notting Hill and finally Rector of the Parish Church at Buxted, Sussex from 1878.

A quotation from Sir John's last letter to his future son-in-law will complete this description of Franklin-Gell papers at Hopton Hall. It gives a picture of the Franklins and of John Philip which shows that the union of the two families was founded on mutual regard, affection and common interests and ideals. The letter is from H.M.S. Erebus and is dated 23rd May 1845.

"Eleanor's recent letters have I doubt not informed you of my present appointment - or the above address would surprize you. I parted from my dearest Jane, Eleanor & Sophy on Monday morn ye 19th inst. They had been remaining at Greenhithe for a few days ... they bore .. (our separation) as persons who would not close their eyes against the fact that the service upon which I was going will be attended with difficulties and dangers -- but who in fervent prayer committed me & my companions & our cause to the infinite mercy of God ... We all had the happiness of assembling together on the preceding day at the first performance of divine worship on board - and you can imagine that our prayers for each other were fervent to sincere - I am sure that more than myself thought of you on that interesting occasion ..

"Before this note can reach you, the intelligence will have reached you that we are still making efforts among the people of the Church of England to raise subscriptions for

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a College ... Marriott is most anxious that you should have the honor of being its 1st Warden ... On this point I should advise you to act precisely as you think best ... except for the Establishment of the College I should consider your longer stay there as wasting the most precious years of your life. If you should determine on coming to England at no distant period, you will probably arrive there much about the time I shall return from my Expedition - and truly rejoiced shall I then be to welcome you ... we must make our united efforts available to get you some certain employment ... I have no doubt however of your own talents & energy being quite sufficient for your securing a competency wherever there is a field for you to work in - free from the base & ceaseless intrigues which have everywhere crossed your path in V.D. Land."

The letter continues with an account of Franklin's protests in England against his recall from Van Diemen's Land. He describes the pamphlet he is publishing in which he quotes Montagu's letters. "I should have failed in getting anything so fully established against Montagu as is contained in his own letter ..." Finally after expressing his hopes for the success of the expedition and his confidence in his officers and men he takes leave of John Philip .. "Now my dear Gell I must stop. May the Lord bless & protect you -- and restore you to us in his good time."

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Note

The work by Eleanor Anne Porden published in two volumes, shown in her portrait by Flaxman at Hopton Hall is her poem "Coeur de Lion; or the Third Crusade: a poem, etc. 2 vols. London, 1822, 8vo.