



THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE ARCHIVES

NAME OF COLLECTION	BUTCHART, JAMES
ACCESSION NO	A.1990.0083
CATEGORY ACTIVITY	Business, individuals
DATE RANGE	1841-1853
SIZE OF COLLECTION	12 cm. 38 letters and photocopies of them
HISTORICAL NOTE	Butchart landed in Melbourne 1842 as a 19-year-old migrant from Broombrae, Auchtermuchty, Fifeshire. For the decade covered by these letters he worked in various pastoral capacities (labourer, overseer) for a series of prominent squatters, acquired land himself, and in 1853 entered a stock and station agency partnership with William Kaye.
DATE OF TRANSFER	November 1973
ACCESS CONDITIONS	Access: Open
LISTED BY DATE	

RECORDS SURVEYED

NAME: JAMES BUTCHART

ACTIVITY: Shepherd, overseer, manager, pastoral licensee,
stock and station agent.

NATURE OF RECORDS: Letters to members of family in Scotland.

DATE RANGE: 3 Sep. 1841 - 15 May 1853.

DATE SURVEYED: November, 1973.

GENERAL NOTE: James Butchart migrated from Fifeshire, as a lad of 19, disembarking in Melbourne from the William Nicol in February 1842. Over the ensuing decade (the period encompassed in these letters) he undertook pastoral employment with James MacArthur at Ballawarra, Capt. John Hepburn at Smeaton Hill, Donald Campbell Simson at Glenisla and Charlotte Plains, and with William Campbell, M.L.C., at Strath Loddon. During this time, James Butchart also acquired pastoral interests of his own. In 1853 (when the present series of letters ceases) he entered into partnership with William Kaye as a stock and station agency (Kaye & Butchart), purchasing the business of Messrs Mickle & Bakewell in Bourke Street. This enterprise was very successful, and after ten years James Butchart retired. He built a mansion - 'Beleura' - at Mornington, and died there on 11 Nov. 1869, aged 47.

All but one of the letters in the present series were written by James Butchart, and were addressed to his father, Robert, his brother George, his sisters Cecilia and Isabella, or a combination of family members. The odd letter in the series, from D.C. Simson to George Butchart, has been placed last on the following list, otherwise the letters are listed in simple chronological order. This collection of letters is presently held by James Butchart's grand-nephew.

JAMES BUTCHART LETTERS

LIST OF RECORDS SURVEYED

1. JB, Leith, Scotland - father; 3 Sep. 1841; 3 pp.
Written just prior to embarkation to Port Phillip.
2. JB, aboard the William Nicol, off Wick - father; 9 Sep. 1841; 3 pp.
3. JB, 'The Ocean's mighty waste' - father; c. 29 Oct. 1841; 5 pp.
4. JB, Atlantic Ocean - father; 29 Nov., 18 and 21 Dec. 1841; 3 pp.
5. JB, Melbourne - father; 15 Feb. 1842; 3 pp.
Has just arrived; talks of the current depression in the colony; ~~prices~~; received by James Graham, who introduced him to James MacArthur (fourth son of John MacArthur); impressions of Melbourne; his prospects; is going shepherding for MacArthur.
6. JB, Ballawarra (MacArthur's run, near Ballarat) - brother (George); 4 Sep. and 7 Oct. 1842; 3 pp.
More about the depression; may be his own master in four or 5 years; description of aborigines and their way of life; has been offered an overseer's job; has had no word from home yet.
7. JB, Ballawarra - father; 23 Oct. 1842.
Details of Capt. Hepburn's offer of a job, and his property; still no word from home.
8. JB, Melbourne - father; 20 Dec. 1842; 5 pp.
Has received letters from father and brother; more details of job with Hepburn; prospects; prices; father and James would do well if father could come out with c.£300 capital, but he might not weather the voyage too well; depression; wages.
9. JB, Smeaton Hill (Hepburn's run) - father; ? Mar. 1843; 4 pp.
An account of his routine as overseer; flies; grass fires, and method of extinguishing; contains this postscript: 'I never write poetry now'.
10. JB, Smeaton Hill - father; 24 Sep. 1843; 5 pp.
Discusses the possibility of his father's emigrating; prospects; prices; estimates how much it would cost to stock a run and live for a year, what the following year's expenses would be, etc.; fortune-seekers bad for the colony; state of Hepburn's property; James now has 24 men working under him.

JAMES BUTCHART LETTERS

11. JB, Smeaton Hill - brother; 10 Dec. 1843; 5 pp.

Shearing and shearers; wages; bush furniture; food; continuing insolvencies in town; methods of conducting money matters; saved £49 in the last year (out of a wage of £50); mentions that they had thought of migrating to America; low cost of living in Victoria - prices of meat, wheat, tea and sugar; visit of Sir John and Lady Franklin to the property.

12. JB, Smeaton Hill - father; 5 Mar. 1844; 3 pp.

Again urges his father to migrate; sheep prices rising because of the boiling-down system; may go to New Zealand when his term with Hepburn expires; squatters all annoyed at Gipps's proposed new licensing regulation.

13. JB, Melbourne - brother; 31 Jul. 1844; 2 pp.

First trip to Melbourne since Dec. 1842; prices very low.

14. JB, Smeaton Hill - sisters & father; 6 Aug. 1844; 4 pp.

Story of being lost in the bush; is glad to hear that his family is migrating; tells them what to bring, and what to do on board; should get rid of Scots accent if they wish for jobs as governesses.

15. JB, Smeaton Hill - brother; 1 and 8 Feb. 1845; 5 pp.

Is upset that his family has apparently been deterred from migrating by something which James said in a letter; has bought and sold some sheep; wages; weather; grass fires; prices low; what they should bring if migrating.

16. JB, Melbourne - whole family; 21 Aug. 1845; 3 pp.

Has left Hepburn; several offers of partnership; again advises them ~~on~~ migration procedure; price of farms.

17. JB, Mount Eliza - brother, then father; 4 Dec. 1845; 5 pp.

Is in partnership with Henry Davis in a 'small' (12½ square miles!) cattle run; getting some sheep; a little cultivation; lots of kangaroos and birds; four hours' ride from Melbourne; wreck of the Cataraqui on King Island; prices and wages; father is now in Glasgow.

18. JB, Melbourne - brother; 7 May 1846; 3 pp.

Has sold out of the partnership at a loss, and signed up with D.C. Simson as superintendent; growth of Melbourne; prosperity in the colony; a railway projected; James Graham is married, and doing well; Australia's prospects.

19. JB, Charlotte Plains (Simson's home station, near Hepburn's property) - sisters; 28 May 1846; 3 pp.

Simson could take one sister as a governess, and the Coghill family the other (Mrs. Simson was a Coghill); more advice on migration.

JAMES BUTCHART LETTERS

20. JB, Glenisla (the property which he is superintending for Simson, on the Glenelg River, near Balmoral) - brother; 13 Dec. 1846; 3 pp.

Has bought a 'small place' near Glenisla; shearing time; wages; James lives in a slab hut, and the storekeeper's wife acts as his servant.

21. JB, Glenisla - father; 'January 1847' is written at the top in pencil, but the letter was evidently commenced in about Aug. 1846, and resumed on 13 Dec. 1846, the latter date appearing at the top of p.2; 3 pp.

Description of the property and his job; cultivation on neighbouring land; description of a trip with Coghill to the Murray River looking for a run; followed by blacks; again urges his father to migrate; wages, prospects.

22. JB, Melbourne - brother; 26 Apr. 1847; 3 pp.

Further reference to the small property he has bought, with 20 cows; wages; prospects; 'I am sorry to say, Age and hot climate have not done much to improve my personal appearance however what I want in good looks I make up by Blarney so that I am not after all behind my neighbours except in the length of my purse however I hope that will mend'.

23. JB, Melbourne - father; 23 Mar. 1848; 3 pp.

Is sorry that his sister Cecilia has died without ever having come to Australia; has engaged for another year with Simson; wool prices have fallen, and things are dull; is not married.

24. JB, Charlotte Plains - brother and sister; 22 Apr. 1848;

Is minding the Simson homestead while that family is in Melbourne for the races; gives a sketch of life at the homestead; stone house.

25. JB, Charlotte Plains - brother; 19 Dec. 1848; 3 pp.

Refers to brother's exchange of letters with Simson (see letter No. 38, below); haymaking, and harvesting barley, then wheat; affairs still dull; stock and stations have fallen in price - 'not now worth more than half what they were worth two years ago'; many settlers have abandoned runs for lack of water.

26. JB, Glenisla - brother; 7 Dec. 1849; 5 pp.

Starting to have more definite discussions with George on the question of his migrating to Australia; James says he himself is now worth 'upwards of £400 if my debtors don't fail'; Port Phillip 'is far superior to Scotland with all due deference to my native land'; description of Glenisla station; has sold his own place at a 'fair profit'; as to the suggestion that he write an article for a U.K. journal, 'I have observed that few persons who write much get on well & so I rather eschewed that line'.

JAMES BUTCHART LETTERS

27. JB, Melbourne - father; 20 Aug. 1849; 3 pp.

Has left Glenisla, and will spend the next six months at Charlotte Plains; may go to Adelaide after that; sends £15 - can't afford more, partly because 'my clothes cost me so much more now from the society in which I move'.

28. JB, Charlotte Plains - brother; 20 Oct. 1849; 4 pp.

Heavy migration to Port Phillip, even though wages have fallen (gives examples); is thinking of 'erecting a store in the Bush that is a mart of general merchandise', and wonders if George could establish contact with a house in Glasgow and run the export end of the business.

29. JB, Charlotte Plains - sister; 23 Dec. 1850; 5 pp.

Encloses two pages of verse entitled 'Sabbath musings in the Bush of Port Phillip'; still with Simson, but has also entered into a partnership with John Ralph Blois - Blois & Butchart - in a station near Western Port, not far from where he was at Mount Eliza, but not on the coast.

30. JB, Tongola (his property) - father; 10 May 1851; 3 pp.

Now residing on his station with Blois; they have 3,000 sheep although the run could carry 7,000; Blois, although a 'new chum', has been managing so well that James is thinking of leaving him in charge and going to New Zealand to take up another run there; has made his first trip to Gippsland; also comments that 'This country has given indications of becoming a second California and every day brings fresh Rumours of gold and silver and copper mines being discovered. And men of property begin to fear the effects . . .'. If reports turn out to be true, he may himself take a few weeks at the diggings; prices are rising.

31. JB, Tongola and Melbourne - sister and brother; 31 Aug. and 10 Sep. 1851; 4 pp.

It is the day after the 10th anniversary of his departure; Simson died shortly after James left his employ; because Tongola is small, he is leaving Blois in charge, and going to manage William Campbell's station on the Loddon; mentions the gold mines 'of which Mr. Campbell was the first discoverer'. In his pages addressed to George (10 Sep.), he mentions the elections for the first Legislative Council of Victoria, and believes that Campbell has been elected. Simson's widow wants him to return as manager.

32. JB, Strath Loddon (Campbell's property) - sister; 3 Nov. 1851; 3 pp.

The richest mines so far discovered are said to be on this run, six or 8 miles away; last week, he allowed one of his shearers two days at the diggings; and the man mined £120 worth of gold; steady stream of vehicles; men of all grades and professions; now c. 5,000 people: 'I supply them with sheep'; his house is said to be above a deposit, and he has needed police help to stop prospectors 'from digging within ten yards of the door'.

JAMES BUTCHART LETTERS

33. JB, Strath Loddon - brother; 27 Dec. 1851; 3 pp.
 Country 'almost revolutionized through the successful working of Gold'. Is himself bound till the following September, but intends then to try his luck; describes alluvial workings, cradling etc.; some 'dig deep holes and the gold they pick out with a knife from the crevices of the slate Rock'; wages have risen greatly.
34. JB, Mount Alexander diggings - brother, 19 Oct. 1852; 3 pp.
 'I write you from the El-Dorado of Australia'; has left Campbell, and is buying and selling sheep; he and Blois lost 1,000 sheep with catarrh; prices; advises George to invest all he has in books, shoes and Wellington boots and consign them to James; has had four offers of partnership.
35. JB, Smeaton Hill - sister; 9 Dec. 1852; 3 pp.
 Doing better than ever, dealing in sheep; goldfields a bit dull; tent city in Melbourne.
36. JB, Melbourne - "My Dear Friends"; 4 May 1853; 3 pp.
 Proposes to start with William Kaye as a stock agent; has had losses through scab; has £2,000 to put in with Kaye (and still has Tongola); they are to start on 1 July, and he may be able to get George a job as a clerk; sends £20.
37. JB, Melbourne - family; 15 May 1853; 1 p.
 Sends another £20.
38. D.C. Simson, Charlotte Plains - George Butchart, Commercial Bank of Scotland, Glasgow; 9 Nov. 1848.
 Simson assures George that his brother James is well (this is the letter referred to in letter No. 25, above).