

# Australian Emigrant's 1854 Letter

Sarah Tinkler's Melbourne letter to her family back in Whittlesey Cambs. – Transcribed by Janet Kilburn

SOURCE: Cambridge Independent Press Page 7 of 8 - Saturday 03 June 1854 – British Newspaper Archives.

Sir - I enclose a copy of a letter from the wife of one of a very respectable party of agricultural labourers that emigrated from this place to Australia about eighteen months since; and as they were all well-known and highly respected in this neighbourhood, and the letter containing much of interest, you will greatly oblige their relatives and friends by inserting it. -- Yours respectfully,

Peregrine Rands, Postmaster.

Whittlesey, Cambs. May 24, 1854

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*"Collingwood, Melbourne, Feb. 14, 1854*

“My Dear Father<sup>1</sup>, Mother<sup>2</sup>, Brothers, and Sisters. - It is with pleasure I now sit down to write a few lines in answer to your kind and welcome letter, which we received on the 27th of December. I should have wrote sooner to you, but waited to see if we went to the Diggings; but we are not going until about April, for they are not doing much good there at this time for there is no water to wash the gold, nor yet to drink, only what they have to pay very dear for; but when there has been plenty of rain, which there is in the winter, the gold fields are likely to be very prosperous. There was a nugget found last week that weighed 52lbs. 1oz.

“My dear friends, we were very glad to hear that father<sup>3</sup> had been in work all winter. We thought about you at Christmas, for it is our summer now, and we had very warm weather about Christmas, and plenty to eat and drink, and plenty of firing when we needed it; but we thought perhaps you needed some of those comforts which we had to spare, for our cup is full and runneth over, while I fear yours is not full. Our Christmas dinner was roast beef and plum pudding. We wished you had been to dinner with us. My brother William<sup>4</sup> dined with us, and my sister Elizabeth<sup>5</sup> and her husband<sup>6</sup>, who arrived here from Moreton's Bay the 5th of December. So, I am happy to say, we are all together once more.

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<sup>1</sup> Father in Law – Thomas Tinkler, as own father (John Lovell) is deceased

<sup>2</sup> Mother in Law – Ann Tinkler, as own mother (Elizabeth Deboo) is deceased

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Tinkler

<sup>4</sup> William Abraham Lovell married Martha Bowland, in Whittlesey; she died in Australia in March 1853, shortly after their arrival. William was widowed less than 1 year when this letter was written. He would later return to Whittlesey, remarry; returning to Australia with his new wife. They would have a son before returning permanently to England where he died in 1903 in Clacton on Sea, Essex.

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Lovell (born 1829, Whittlesey, Cambs – died Australia?)

<sup>6</sup> James Hammond (born 1830, Whittlesey, Cambs – died Australia?)

My dear friends, we left the Bush on the 25th of last September and went to housekeeping. My brother William left the same time, or the week after, and went to a village called Heidlebergh, about eight miles from Melbourne and he is there now. He is taking £2 per week and board and lodging found him. My sister Jane<sup>7</sup> and her husband<sup>8</sup> are at the same place as they went to when they first came into the colony. When the first six months was up they engaged for another six at £2 per week and everything found them. She is cook and he gardener, so their wages is not so good as William's but wages are better now than when Henry let himself. My sister Elizabeth and her husband are living with us: he is a stonemason's labourer and has 16s per day, which is £4 16s per week and now I must tell you what became of my own husband<sup>9</sup> - when we left the Bush he engaged as a bricklayer's labourer from then until Christmas; he had 18s per day and from Christmas up to this time; and at this time, he has £1 per day and is now taking his £6 per week. I dare say you will be almost ready to think it untrue; for I know it will seem a great price to you but I can assure you it is quite true, for it would benefit me none to tell you an untruth; but I believe that to be the highest wages labourers are getting. There are different prices; from 14s to 20s per day is the average. Carpenters get from 25s to 30s per day: bricklayers and stonemasons from 35s to 37s per day. Provisions are rather dear, but they vary very much; sometimes they are much dearer than at others: bread is at this time 1s 6d the 4lb loaf; flour is 5s per stone, but if you take a large quantity it is cheaper; beef and mutton 6d per lb. I do not know how the pork is, for there is very little to be seen; bacon 1s 6d per lb, but it is not cured here; hams are the same price as bacon; potatoes 6d per lb; butter is very dear; salt butter 2s 6d per lb and fresh 4s per lb; shop currants 2s and raisins 10d per lb : all kinds of fruit are what you would call dear but we cannot expect to have high wages and everything else cheap; the cheapest apples you can get at this time are 9d per lb. I bought two pears the other day for which I gave 6d each. I gave 3s for 2lbs of plums to make a pudding so with the crust and sugar it was a dear pudding in your mind; but we are used to the price of things. A glass of ale is 6d but if we fetch a pot it is 1s. The English ale is 1s 6d a pot.

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<sup>7</sup> Mary Jane Lovell (born 1828, Whittlesey, Cambs – died 1904 Maldon, Australia)

<sup>8</sup> Henry Bowland (born 1829 Whittlesey, Cambs - died 1896 Maldon, Australia)

<sup>9</sup> Samuel Tinkler (born 1825, Whittlesey, Cambs – died Australia?)

All kind of clothing is much cheaper than it was when we first came here. I think men's clothes are as cheap as they are in England. Boots and shoes, I think are cheaper; for a man can get a good pair of strong shoes for ten or twelve shillings, and when we first came here he would have to pay 30s for the same kind of shoes. I gave 17s for a pair of Cashmere boots last winter and now I can get a pair like them for 7s or 8s but they are not made here, for they make them in England and pay their carriage out here and then sell them cheaper than when they are made here; because labour is the dearest thing there is here, excepting house rent and that is very high. When we first left the Bush we paid 30s per week rent and only had two rooms and that was cheap because out of Melbourne we could pay it then save some beside every week but thought we should like to save a little more so we are now living in a tent and we are now paying 12s per week. It would seem strange to you but there are plenty of tents here, and better people than us live in a worse place than we do, for mine is a nice snug little place. We have an American stove in it, and that cost us £5 so I can assure you we are happy and comfortable. If we want anything it is a great blessing to say we have the means to get it, and we can always keep a bottle or two of wine, or anything that we like, in the house to use when we require it: for a bottle of port wine we give 2s 6d and it is cheaper and better than beer.

And now my dear friends, I have told you the price of provision- and what our coming in is, and I wish you had the same, for we can live first rate on - say £3 per week; and then I have three more to put in one corner till called for.

My dear friends, I will now tell you a little about the country. This is our summer, and very warm it is sometimes, but so changeable - in the middle of the day very hot mornings and evenings very cold. There is a deal of wind here; but what we call the hot winds are the worst, but they do not come very often. When the winds are strong you cannot see anything for dust; for there is no rain in summer of any account for months. The winter is all rain; there is no frost to hurt anything. If there is ice as thick as a penny piece they think it very sharp indeed. Water is very scarce at this time about the Bush and the Diggings, but Melbourne is supplied with water from the Yarra River. It is 5s per load in town, but we

pay 8s per load in Collingwood, as they have further to bring it; a half load lasts us about ten days. Our firing is wood, which for a good horse load we pay £2 and that lasts us about three months. Melbourne is a very large place, and a thriving one for business. The streets a mile and a half in length. There are some very fine buildings and plenty of shops of all descriptions. There are a great many churches and chapels of all kinds and I am happy to say Sunday is kept here with the same regularity as in England. The public houses are open from one o'clock till three, and then closed for the day. Collingwood is a large place; it joins Melbourne but is more pleasant to live in than Melbourne; it is more like London than any other place I know.

And now my dear friends, I have told you all can about the colony; if any you think well to come we shall be very happy to see you; for you will be better off than we were when we got here; for we shall be here ready to receive you, but I must say it is a great undertaking with a family of small children. If it was not for that one thing, I should say come by all means.

My dear friends please to tell Mrs Bowland that William received her letter from Mr. Bishop on the 8th of February for they did not find us before my sister's husband met with George Trueman in the street. Mr. Bishop is living close to us, but not in any business at present.

George Trueman has got a situation at the Swan Hotel, Collingwood, close us. He is taking £2 per week, with board and lodgings, and washing found him. He was here last Sunday and says he is quite happy and likes his place. He is coming again next Sunday if nothing happens. You will please let his father and mother know this, with my kind respects to them. He will write home the first opportunity. I wished him do so. Henry Bowland, Jane, and William, desire their kind love to their father<sup>10</sup>, mother<sup>11</sup>, brothers<sup>12</sup>, and sisters<sup>13</sup>. They are quite well; hope they are the same, but they will write soon. We have found George Tims that we had a letter for, living in Collingwood and has a wife and six children. They are doing very well, and so may any one that is steady and keeps out of bad company. If they do

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<sup>10</sup> Henry Bowland (my 3<sup>rd</sup> gg father)

<sup>11</sup> Mary Ann Whittome (my 3<sup>rd</sup> gg mother)

<sup>12</sup> William and Charles Bowland

<sup>13</sup> Maria, Elizabeth, Mary Ann, Emma, Rachel and Eliza (Emma would join them with her husband in 1857)

that, and have their health, they will not take any harm. Please give our kind respects to Mr. and Mrs. Bowland and family and tell them they need not fear that we shall take any harm at the Diggings, for we shall all go together: it is more comfortable for the men to have their wives with them, and we can get all that is required fit us for the purpose. And all a man has to do to keep his own counsel and keep from drink, and then nobody will harm him. I have seen several persons that has been living there some time, and they tell me they would rather live the Diggings than at Melbourne. Brother and Sister Hammond desire their kind love to their father. Was sorry to hear of his situation last winter but hope by this time he is better situated. My brothers and sisters all send their kind respects to all inquiring friends. Samuel joins with in sending our kind love to father, mother, brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, and all friends; and if Thomas should like to come to this colony, send us word, and we will assist him, for they will not emigrate him out free. We mention him in particular because we think it easier for him, having no children, than it would be for any of you; but at the same time, we would assist any you that think well to come, but not wish any one to come out against their inclination. Samuel says mother is thinking her £20 a long time before she gets it, but she is not to despair - only wait a little longer, for they think there is better times coming this year than there ever has been yet.

SAMUEL & SARAH TINKLER<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Sarah Lovell (born 1825 Whittlesey – died Australia?)

Reference is made early in the letter to Sarah's sister Elizabeth and husband arriving from Moreton Bay (Brisbane QLD.) and being with them for Christmas (1853). Towards the end of the letter mention is made of 'Brother & Sister Hammond' and this has to be another reference to Elizabeth and her husband James Hammond. Elizabeth Hammond was a witness at her sister Mary Jane's marriage to Henry Bowland in 1852. Elizabeth's husband James may have died soon after this letter was penned and she revert to her maiden name, for there is an 1850's reference to Elizabeth Lovell in the records of the Victorian Gold fields.

The English Census of 1851 reveals Sarah's mother Elizabeth Lovell aged 61 living with Sarah and her husband, Samuel Tinkler listed as 'Head' at the Lovell family home, Church Street, Whittlesey. Elizabeth died later that year. Sarah was an older sister of Mary Jane Lovell who married Henry Boland in a double wedding where Sarah's youngest brother William Lovell also married Henry's sister Martha Boland on the 5 July 1852. Less than two years later, all eight—the Tinklers, Bolands Lovells & Hammonds—were living in Melbourne, Australia apart from Martha who died, probably in child-birth just days after her arrival in the colony. Sam's mother Ann Tinkler, who from the closing comments of the letter, appears to have loaned Sam & Sarah £20 probably for their passage to Victoria, was still waiting for repayment back in Whittlesey.

Later in 1857 another member of the family, Emma Boland and her newly married husband Benjamin Holdich arrived in Melbourne together on the same ship as widower William Lovell returning from a visit to Whittlesey with his new bride Carolyn Hughes.