

MADELEINE SAY

Thomas Hannay, photographer in 19th-century western Victoria

In 2013, State Library Victoria was offered a collection of over 100 historical photographs credited to Thomas Hannay and dating from the late 1850s, showing scenes of European settlement in western Victoria. After spending time in the possession of local Portland historian Joseph Wiltshire, the collection passed to Vern McCallum, who grew up in Digby, near Portland, and whose passion for historical photography began when he was involved with 'Back to Merino-Digby' celebrations in 1977. Since that time Mr McCallum has been copying images from local private collections and holds regular public displays of his material in western Victoria. He recognised the special significance of the Hannay photographs and believed the original material should be located in a public collection. Many of the images had been published in local histories of Portland and western Victoria,¹ but none were held by State Library Victoria.

Since its acquisition by the Library the collection has been conserved, catalogued and digitised. It is now viewable via the online catalogue, with the exception of a small number of culturally sensitive images of Indigenous people. The Koori Research Centre at the Library is investigating these images and will pass back to the relevant families and clans any information that is discovered.

The photographs are pasted onto both sides of individual sheets of paper that were once perhaps bound together as a book. Fortunately, many of the

36 ADVERTISEMENTS.

JAMES WOOD & CO.,
 WHOLESALE AND RETAIL
GROCCERS, WINE, SPIRIT,
 AND
PROVISION MERCHANTS;
 MAIN STREET, MALDON.

Agents for Messrs. A. Thunder & Co.'s Celebrated Ale and Porter, their Bottled Porter being equal to first-class English Brands of that article.

AGENTS FOR THE
AUSTRALASIAN INSURANCE COMPANY.

T. HANNAY,
 MAIN STREET,
 Bookseller, Stationer, and News Agent.
 CIRCULATING LIBRARY.
 TOYS AND FANCY GOODS.
 Photographs taken on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays ; to prevent disappointment one day's notice is desirable.

VICTORIA FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY
 Capital, £1,000,000.

VICTORIA LIFE AND GENERAL INSURANCE COMPANY.
 Capital, £2,000,000.
 HON. H. MILLER, CHAIRMAN.
T. HANNAY, Agent for Maldon.

Advertisement for T Hannay, from Jonathan George Moon, *Tarrangower, Past and Present: a history of Maldon from 1853; guide, business directory, and calendar, reminiscences of the good old times*, Maldon: Howliston, Tate, 1864, Rare Books Collection, RARELT 994.5 V66 (v.6), p. 36

sheets are annotated in a contemporary hand, giving us clues as to the subjects and locations of the images. However, none of the photographs is signed, and their attributions to Thomas Hannay have been achieved through use of circumstantial evidence, such as newspaper reports.

So who was Thomas Hannay and why are his photographs so important to the record of 19th-century Victoria?

The Hannays' arrival in Port Phillip

Thomas Hannay and his father, Charles, arrived at Port Phillip in November 1853 with 395 other émigrés on the *Ann Dashwood*. Their journey as steerage passengers must have been tedious. The ship took 147 days to reach Australia after leaving Liverpool in the United Kingdom in June.² A fellow passenger's



Bridge at Woorawryite (detail), albumen silver photographic print mounted on cardboard, c. 1859, photograph by Thomas Hannay, Pictures Collection, H2013.345/86

account recorded discord in the crew and the stresses and strains inevitable in a floating community of nearly 400 passengers and crew.³ Poor management of the *Ann Dashwood* was noted when she arrived in Melbourne: an immigration officer described the manifest as requiring a 'great deal of explanation'.⁴ The list recorded the Hannays as being aged 19 and 47 respectively, their occupations as farmers and their nationality (incorrectly) as English.

The Hannays were part of a large wave of Scottish migration to Australia in the 19th century. Their reason for making the journey was most likely for 'betterment emigration'.⁵ The British censuses list Charles as a tenant farmer on the Isle of Man in 1841, but for some reason by 1851 he had moved to a farm in Cheshire, western England.⁶

'Hannay' is not an uncommon family name in Wigtown, on the west coast of Scotland near Carlisle, where Charles was born. Fortunately, the use and reuse of family names over the generations make the family relatively easy to track in historical records. The census records show Charles was widowed early: his wife, Elizabeth Beath, died soon after the birth of their children, Eliza and Thomas. But Elizabeth's mother and younger sister continued to live with Charles and the children on the Isle of Man farm.⁷

Charles' daughter, Eliza, incorporated the family names (Beath and Hannay) into those of her own children, confirming she remained in Scotland and did not emigrate with her father and brother. Widowed with a son by the age of 25, Eliza then married Joseph Leckie, minister of Govan Church in Glasgow, and lived there until her death, in 1890.⁸

Travelling photographers

There are many contemporary newspaper reports documenting Charles and Thomas Hannay's lives in the Victorian goldfields township of Maldon after 1860. When Charles died, in 1883, the *Bendigo Advertiser* noted his passing, describing him as 'a resident of Maldon for nearly 25 years' and 'father of Mr T. Hannay the well-known station and news agent in Maldon'.⁹ An obituary for Thomas, in 1897, was even more fulsome and included confirmation of his work as a photographer:

He came to Victoria about the year 1854, and for a time travelled through the colony as a photographer.¹⁰

The Tarrangower guide, business directory and calendar for 1864 included an advertisement for 'T. Hannay ... Bookseller, Stationer, and News Agent':

Photographs taken on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays; to prevent disappointment one day's notice is desirable.¹¹

The aim of this article is to trace the work of the Hannays *before* they settled in Maldon. This has become easier to do using the digitised newspapers in the National Library of Australia's Trove database. However, there are numerous errors of transcription and typesetting in current publications about Australian colonial photographers which misspell their surname.¹²

The first references I can find to the name 'Hannay' as a photographer date from late 1857. In September of that year the following advertisement appeared in the *Kyneton Observer*:

G. Hannay begs to inform the inhabitants of Kyneton that he is now prepared to TAKE PORTRAITS by the Collodion Process AT MELBOURNE PRICES ... Orders taken for Views in the Country.¹³

An article in the *Mount Alexander Mail* in October described the portraits and scenery depicted in Hannay's 'sketches' and reported,

Mr Hannay the Daguerreotype artist has been and still is busily engaged in his vocation.¹⁴



Robertson's 'Iron Store', albumen silver photographic print mounted on cardboard, 1859, photograph by Thomas Hannay, Pictures Collection, H2013.345/2

None of this early work is currently identified, so it is impossible to know if the Hannays were taking daguerreotype *and* glass-plate photography; however, I believe it likely that the newspaper confused the style of photography the Hannays were undertaking. Wet plate collodion process was first introduced to Australia in 1854 and was widely preferred to the daguerreotype.¹⁵ The daguerreotype, in which the photographic image was captured on a sheet of sensitised metal, was expensive to produce and more suited to studio work.

To create wet collodion negatives the chemicals were mixed and poured onto the glass plates directly before exposure, then processed promptly afterwards, usually in a travelling darkroom. From these negatives multiple prints could be made. (Commercial dry plates were not widely available until 1880.¹⁶) The Hannays' photographic prints in the Library's collection are the size of contact prints from half-plate negatives, approximately 11 × 14 centimetres, and it is likely the Hannays created these in a travelling darkroom, which is possibly what is depicted in the photograph on page 65.

During the last part of 1857 the Hannays spent time in Daylesford, Castlemaine and the surrounding area in central Victoria. In May 1858, the following advertisement ran for three weeks on the front page of the *Ballarat Times*:

Charles Hannay, Artist, begs to inform the public that he will be in this vicinity for a few weeks taking views, &c, and will attend to any orders left at this office, where specimens can be seen.¹⁷

By September 1859 the Hannays were in Portland and advertising as ‘T Hannay photographer’.¹⁸

These newspaper reports name both Charles and Thomas, indicating they were travelling and working together. However, only Thomas was mentioned as a photographer after they settled in Maldon, which is why he is now credited as the creator of the photographs in the Library’s collection. The newspaper advertisements document the range of Charles and Thomas’s travels during the late 1850s. But attributing contemporary photographs to Thomas remains difficult without corroborating evidence.

An extraordinary example of such material was the publication in 2018 of a photograph showing historical graffiti clearly reading ‘T Hannay Photographer’ incised onto the rock of one of the Naracoorte Caves (formerly called the Mosquito Plains Caves).¹⁹ This confirmed Hannay had been at the caves and added weight to acknowledging him as the creator of photographs of the caves held by the State Library of South Australia. Prior to the discovery of this physical evidence the attribution of the photographs was made via a contemporary engraving of the caves published in the *Leader* in March 1862 and described as being ‘from a photograph by Thomas Hannay, Maldon’.²⁰

Contemporary newspaper reports also provide evidence to confirm attribution of a group of photographs held by State Library Victoria – relating to the Victorian Exhibition of 1861 – to Thomas Hannay. In preparation for the exhibition Sir Redmond Barry, exhibition commissioner and chairman of the Library trustees, wrote to all Victorian municipalities requesting photographs for display, with the aim of highlighting the progress of the colony. The *Tarrangower Times* noted the Maldon Municipal Council receiving this request and in October 1861 recorded,

Eleven views of the leading features of the district intended for the Exhibition have been taken ... by Mr. Hannay.²¹

Despite this report, no photographs from Maldon are listed in the official exhibition catalogue.²²

The photographs amassed for the 1861 Victorian Exhibition were sent to the London International Exhibition of 1862. And in 1929 a group of 170 photographs were sent back to Victoria via the Commonwealth government and donated to State Library Victoria. Among this material, known as the Cox & Luckin collection, were four photographs of Maldon. These were previously



Master Butterfly from an Oil Painting

Master Butterfly: from an oil painting, albumen silver photographic print mounted on cardboard, c. 1859, photograph by Thomas Hannay, painting by Samuel S Knights, Pictures Collection, H2013.345/61

catalogued as created by Jonathan Moon, who also ran a photography business in Maldon, but after 1865.²³

One of strangest photographs in the Hannay collection may confirm that 'HH Hannah', who exhibited 'Photographs, by an Amateur' at the 1857 Geelong Mechanics' Institute Exhibition, was actually Thomas Hannay.²⁴ This is the photograph of a painting titled *Master Butterfly: from an oil painting*, the subject of which is a large bull. The painting was among 15 animal portraits by painter Samuel S Knights shown at the exhibition. Knights painted two portraits of Master Butterfly: the one not shown at the exhibition was commissioned by his owner JG Ware in 1861, after the bull had died.²⁵ The current locations of the paintings are not known, but from the date of other photographs in this collection it would be reasonable to assume the photograph is of the portrait exhibited at the Geelong exhibition.

Master Butterfly was a Victorian celebrity. He had been imported with much fanfare in 1856, travelling to Australia in a special stall built on the ship's deck and fitted with mattresses and coir matting.²⁶ Thousands attended his public appearances, but in 1859 he died while being walked to an agricultural



Golf Hill, River Leigh, albumen silver photographic print mounted on cardboard, c. 1858, photograph by Thomas Hannay, Pictures Collection, H2013.345/77

show in Geelong, apparently of sunstroke. Fortunately, he had created a dynasty with the cows at JG Ware's properties, and his progeny carried on the 'Butterfly' name in the stock register.²⁷

The Hannay collection in State Library Victoria

The majority of the Hannay photographs in the Library's collection show buildings and views around Portland. The other images cover a range of locations, from Geelong through to south-western Victoria, providing an account of the Hannays' travels and a unique visual record of commercial businesses in the raw townships and the homesteads established by the first wave of colonial settlement.

The date for the photographs is taken from the advertisement published on 5 September 1859 in the *Portland Guardian* stating that T Hannay was in Portland for a few days for the purpose of taking 'Views of HOUSES, STORES, etc



George Buchanan, property of G. Russell Esq., albumen silver photographic print mounted on cardboard, c. 1858, photograph by Thomas Hannay, Pictures Collection, H2013.345/78

for which he may receive Orders'. The advertisement noted that photographic views 'in the best style on Glass or Paper' were available.²⁸

If Thomas and Charles Hannay were in Portland for only a few days, they must have been very busy. There are over 30 photographs in the collection documenting most of the town's major buildings and private residences, and a number of views of the harbour and township.

This collection provides the earliest and most comprehensive documentation of a Victorian township outside Melbourne and Geelong. It was exactly this style of record, showing regional 'civic progress', that Redmond Barry was seeking to display at the 1861 Victorian Exhibition.

The Hannays visit the Russells at Golf Hill

Despite being listed as 'English' on the manifest of the *Ann Dashwood*, the Hannays proudly identified with their Scottish heritage. Many authors have

commented on the strong influence of Scottish families in western Victoria,²⁹ and I imagine the Hannays would have felt a connection with pastoral establishments like that operated by George Russell at Golf Hill, River Leigh, near Geelong.

Two photographs in the Hannay collection are identified as having been taken at Golf Hill. These can be dated to September 1858, as payment for 'Hannay Portraits', of 10 pounds 10 shillings (or 10 guineas) is recorded in the Golf Hill account ledger.³⁰ This was a substantial cost, so perhaps more photographs were created and remained with the family. The ledger is contained in the Clyde Company papers, now part of the Australian Manuscripts Collection at State Library Victoria, a bequest of Mrs Janet Biddlecombe, the youngest child of George and Euphemia Russell and the final owner of Golf Hill before it was broken up for returned soldier settlement after World War II. The Clyde Company was a partnership of Scottish investors whose Victorian properties were managed in part by George Russell. Russell wrote, 'The year 1858 was rather an eventful one for me'.³¹ This was the year in which the Clyde Company was dissolved; Russell purchased Golf Hill outright and set up entirely under his own capital as a pastoralist.

The photograph on page 70 shows the Russell home as originally designed by Geelong architect Alexander John Skene. It was remodelled in the late 1860s into a larger, two-storey residence to house George and Euphemia Russell's expanded family of seven daughters and one son. The group of young children on the left of the photograph probably includes the older daughters, Christina, Annie, Millie and Leslie. (The only son, Phillip, and the youngest daughter, Janet, were not born until after 1865.)

In the photograph on page 71, George Russell, holding one of his young daughters, poses with his Clydesdale stallion George Buchanan, while a groom holds the reins.

In these two images the Hannays have captured important features in Victorian pastoralists' lives: pride in their new wealth, as demonstrated by the homesteads they built for their families, and stud animals, a source of their fortunes. As Margaret Kiddle wrote in her history *Men of Yesterday*, 'In the Western Districts stock breeding was the basis of all prosperity'. Horses were of course incredibly important for station work, and draught horses 'were always essential' for transport.³² The services of two stallions photographed by the Hannays, George Buchanan and Colonel, were advertised in October 1855 to the people of Geelong. The charge for servicing mares by George Buchanan at Shelford was 7 guineas, twice the cost for JG Ware's Colonel, who was stabled in Geelong every Thursday for mares to visit.³³



Mr Hannay's house, Maldon, Museum and Archives, Hannay collection VMLD-4531

George Russell had purchased George Buchanan during a voyage home to Scotland in 1853, when he 'looked out for a Clydesdale horse to send out to Golf Hill'.³⁴ Near Glasgow he found 'one that [he] liked best', named by the breeder after a Scottish intellectual figure of the 16th-century Protestant Reformation.³⁵ The previous stallion at Golf Hill had been a Clydesdale called William Wallace, honouring the famous Scottish warrior.³⁶ The long sea voyage was dangerous enough for humans; it was perilous for livestock. But the Clyde Company's papers reported the safe arrival of George Buchanan in December 1853:

The Horse had a long passage out, and, though much reduced in flesh on landing, we are pleased to find he is fast getting into condition again.³⁷

For the voyage he was insured for £500, and when he was sold in 1861, for £310, it was rated a 'good sale ... Especially for the old horse, "Geo. Buchanan" then 12 years old'. As Russell reflected many years later, his choice,

turned out to be a fine animal & was successful as a speculation. All the cart horses at Gold Hill at the present time, are descended from George Buchanan.³⁸

Portraits of homesteads remained an enduring subject for 19th-century colonial artists, and later for photographers. And as seen in the portrait of Master Butterfly, there was also a strong tradition of European artists creating portraits of prize-winning and notable livestock. With their photographs of George Buchanan, Colonel and other bloodstock the Hannays were using the new technology of photography to tap in to a market for animal portraits. As the entry in the Gold Hill ledger makes clear, the Hannays might have been travelling photographers, but they were not amateurs, and they expected payment for their photographs.

The later life of Thomas Hannay

In 1860 the Hannays settled in Maldon, both Charles and Thomas becoming active members of the community. Thomas was appointed to a number of official posts, including that of board member of the Maldon cemetery and government municipal auditor. In 1885 he was appointed a magistrate and presided over cases at the Maldon Court House.³⁹ He was also an active member of the Maldon volunteer rifle brigade.⁴⁰

The Hannays lived in Templeton Street, Maldon. Their house is shown in the photograph on page 73, which is held in the collection of the Maldon Museum and Archives. The people posing on the verandah and garden probably include Charles, Thomas and his wife, Elizabeth, and Elizabeth's mother, all resident at the address.

In 1864 Thomas had married Elizabeth Smith, also born in Scotland and daughter of a Maldon miner.⁴¹ They had no children of their own but appear to have adopted at least one daughter, Louisa. Adoption was not a formal process in the 18th century, and while Thomas' will of 1869 made reference to his 'adopted daughter Louisa', she was not named on his death certificate.⁴² Louisa was one of three children born to Benjamin and Sarah Scott.⁴³ The children were orphaned by 1875, when Louisa was five. It is unclear exactly when Louisa went to live with the Hannays, but it must have been a happy experience, as she went on to give the Hannay name to the son from her marriage to Norman Kaines in 1899. She also continued the family tradition of providing a home for her elders, as her adoptive mother, Elizabeth Hannay, moved to Adelaide with the couple and 'died at the home of her son in law' in 1923.⁴⁴

Thomas Hannay died in 1897 at the age of 63. At the time of his death he was the superintendent of the Immigrants' Aid Society in Brunswick, Melbourne. He had taken up this position in 1892, leaving Maldon with Elizabeth and Louisa to live on the premises of the society.⁴⁵



The acquisition of this collection in 2013 opened public access to a unique visual record of western Victoria in the late 1850s and a fascinating insight into the work of travelling photographers at that time. Unlike photographers working in studios, using printed cards to advertise their locations and services, itinerant photographers took to the road seeking out commercial opportunities and left scant records for attribution of their works. It has become easier to trace the works of these photographers as colonial newspapers and journals have been digitised and made available online. I hope further research will provide more information on the travels of the Hannays in Victoria and will allow other photographs to be credited to this intrepid pair of Scottish migrants.