

The Alfred was 150 years old in March, 2021, an event almost totally eclipsed by COVID-19, so I thought I'd offer a brief retrospective of how it all came to be in 1871 or

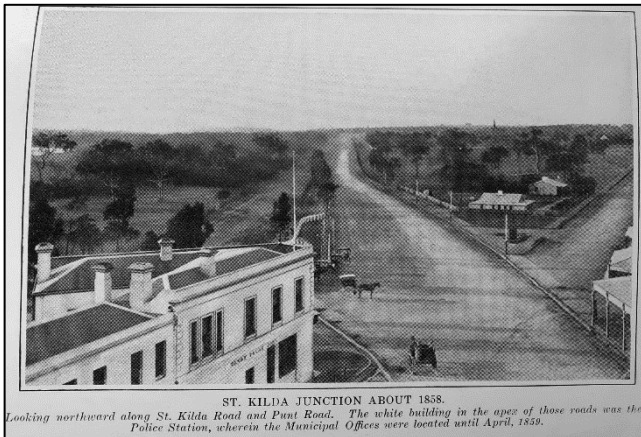
How the Alfred got its Name

By Pru Cox

Back in the early 1800s Melbourne wasn't the end of the earth but mighty close to it as far as the Northern Hemisphere was concerned. From no Europeans in early 1835, it was June 1835 when settlers from Van Diemen's Land, led by John Batman and John Pascoe Fawkner, (who had been at the failed Sorrento settlement of 1803 as a child), established Melbourne on the lower reaches of the Yarra River.

- By 1840 the European population was 10,000,
- in 1851, Separation occurred and LaTrobe became Governor – population 29,000
- by 1854 - 123,000.

The surge in numbers is very easily explained by the gold rush from the early 1850s through to the late 1860s. During this time Melbourne was the wealthiest city in the world. At the height of the gold rush roughly two tonnes of gold per week flowed into Melbourne's Treasury Building. The gold exported to Britain in the 1850s paid off all of Britain's foreign debts at that time – handy after the expense of the Crimean War.



The colonies closely aligned themselves with events northern hemispherical. Take a drive through Melbourne and count the number of Wellington Streets/Roads and Parades inspired largely by the Napoleonic Wars of the early 1800s. Go to Caulfield: Alma, Inkerman and Balaclava roads all named after battles in the Crimean War (1853-56), and, coincidentally, the beginning of the legend of Florence Nightingale. Florence returned to London from the Crimea frail and unwell. Despite this the Nightingale Training School for Nurses was established at St Thomas' Hospital in 1860 as part of Florence's campaign to transform nursing and health care.

The Nightingale school was the first non-religious institution to provide professional nurse training.

As Melbourne was building her reputation as Marvellous Melbourne, in New South Wales Sir Henry Parkes, Colonial Secretary, was turning his attention to things medical. In 1866, after some years of discussion about issues at the Sydney Infirmary (the Rum Hospital), the situation came to a head following the death of a young man at the infirmary admitted '...filthy and covered in vermin'. While not an uncommon situation for patients at the time this young man died and his death was attributed to '...the absence of efficient nursing'. Sir Henry and the head of Medicine, Dr Roberts, wrote to Florence Nightingale requesting some Nightingale trained nurses to come to Sydney to set up a training school at the infirmary. In the letter Dr Roberts suggested that the nurses would be under the direct supervision of the doctors. Florence was not impressed and made the significant change that the nurses were to be under the direct supervision of a Matron and that the Matron would manage the hospital, independent of medical control. Dr Roberts was not happy, but Sir Henry backed Nightingale all the way.

So it was on March 5, 1868, Lucy Osburn arrived in Sydney with five Nightingale trained nurses under her charge to set up at the Sydney Infirmary.

Enter Prince Alfred.



Alfred Ernest Albert, the fourth child and second son of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. Prince Alfred joined the Royal Navy as a midshipman aged 14. He proved to be a competent sailor and by age 22 in 1866, he was a Captain in command of HMS *Galatea*, a steam-powered sail frigate, and that year he was made Duke of Edinburgh. In January 1867 HMS *Galatea* set sail from Plymouth on an around the world voyage. The ship toured the Mediterranean before making a state visit to the emperor of Brazil. This was followed by two months in the Cape Colony in South Africa before crossing the Indian Ocean to Australia.

Australia's First Royal Visit.

It all sounds good, but it was a bit of a visit to the wild west.

Adelaide - was Prince Alfred's first port of call, anchoring off Glenelg on October 31, 1867. Massive crowds greeted him and lined the roads on the way into the city. That night, 40,000 gas lights lit up all of Adelaide's public offices, huge portraits of the prince adorned many of the buildings. Alfred spent three weeks in South Australia and the people thronged to greet him.

Melbourne - his second port of call was a bit different. Arriving on November 24, 1867 again huge crowds welcomed him. Religious tensions were running high at this time and boiled over during his visit. The Protestant community hall was decorated for his visit with an image of William of Orange, the 17th-century English King, defeating Catholic armies at the Battle of the Boyne in Ireland. This was a hugely provocative gesture and on the night of his reception there crowds of Irish Catholics gathered outside, singing republican Irish songs and throwing stones. As the group began to disperse the windows of the hall were opened and shots were fired into the mob, tragically a young Catholic boy was killed and inevitably a riot ensued. This was just the beginning.

November 27, a free public banquet was planned for the Prince to attend along with an expected crowd of up to 10,000 people. It is unclear where they held this amazing event, feeding 10,000 people must have been quite a logistical exercise. Not very surprisingly, out of Melbourne's then population of 200,000 people, 40,000 turned up looking for a free feed. Melbourne's *Punch*, quoting a crowd of 80,000, published the following at the time:

*80,000 loafers all jammed together.
At a Melbourne Banquet, in very hot weather.
80,000 hungry souls, gnashing their teeth.
Eager to drink the wine, and gorge the roast beef.
80,000 savages, dirty and greasy.
Dr Louis Smith, clean but uneasy.*

*80,000 drunken louts roaring for wine.
A thin line of troopers drawn up in line.
Many pretty little girls and spectators huddled.
80,000 Melburnians stupid and fuddled.
Wasn't this a picture to make Melbourne wince?
Wasn't this a dainty dish to set before the Prince.*

Sensibly the Prince decided not to attend the event, fearing he might get mobbed. When this was announced the angry crowd charged the barriers and another riot took place as thousands fought over the food on the tables and the wine that was to be dispensed from fountains. He did come out again later and on November 29 he laid the foundation stone for the town hall which was completed in 1870.

Geelong - had planned another free banquet, again more people turned up than planned and the organizing committee fled the event.

Bendigo - was really tragic. A massive fireworks display was planned including an image of the *Galatea*, three boys climbed into the model and set off the fireworks. They were trapped inside and burned to death.

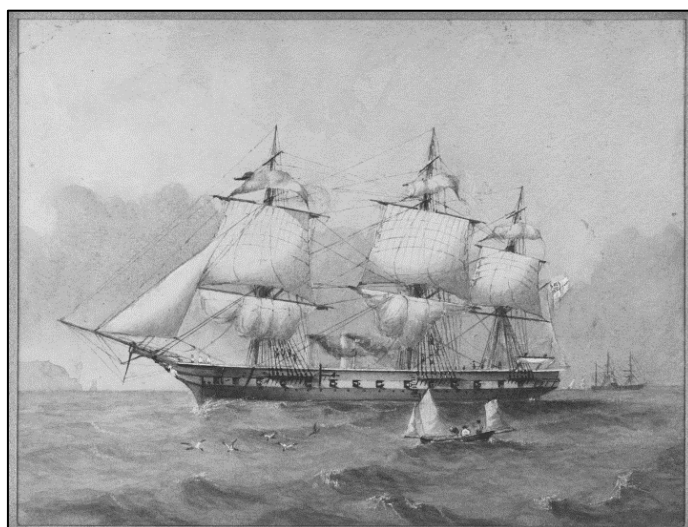
Two days later in Melbourne, a ball was planned at the newly built and appropriately named Alfred Hall. A timber building, lit with gas lamps, some of the calico sheeting hung inside the building caught fire and the hall burned to the ground.

Tasmania - was next and everything there seems to have been unremarkable.

Sydney - the Prince arrived on January 21, 1868. He stayed for a month before heading to Queensland for a week. He returned to Sydney in early March and requested a less hectic schedule.

March 12, 1868 - one event the Prince had agreed to attend was a picnic to raise funds for a sailors' home.

The picnic was at Clontarf on Sydney's north shore and again, larger than expected crowds gathered. The Prince sailed up from Sydney Harbour in his steam launch and landed in time



for lunch. After lunch the Prince and one of the patrons of the event went for a walk. A man approached, pulled a double-barrelled pistol from his jacket and shot Prince Alfred in the back at close range. Alfred fell calling, 'Good God, I am shot ... My back is broken'. The assailant, Henry James O'Farrell, a Catholic Irishman, was immediately tackled and the weapon seized as he tried to fire a second round.

Remember Lucy Osborn? She and her five nurses had been in town for a week. Lucy was charged with looking after the Prince – she selected Haldane Turriff and Annie Miller to care for him between them. Osborn apparently chose them as they were less likely to gossip about their work, not for their superior nursing skills. The Prince recovered well and sailed for England on April 4, 1868. Before he left he gave Annie Miller a gold watch, made by Christie's, sold by the royal jeweller



Annie Miller's watch above and Annie Miller
 Courtesy: Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital Nurses' Museum

Garrards and engraved: *HRH The Duke of Edinburgh to Sister Annie 6th April, 1868. Sydney, New South Wales.* Also before he left, he asked for clemency for his attacker, his request was ignored and O'Farrell was hanged in Darlinghurst Gaol on April 21, 1868.

The Colonies collectively were eager to show their loyalty to the Crown. In Sydney they decided the new hospital they were planning would be the *Royal Prince Alfred* but from what I can find out it took a few more years to come to fruition. In Melbourne planning was underway for the new, yet to be named, hospital south of the river. Early documentation shows the thought was there to name it the Prince Alfred but somehow it devolved to simply the *Alfred*. About a year after he was shot, Prince Alfred sailed back to Melbourne in HMS *Galatea* to lay the foundation stone for Melbourne's *Alfred Hospital* on March 6, 1869.

Commemorative medallions were made by T. Stokes of Melbourne and distributed locally. This medallion, (from the AHNL Nursing Archive), was one of those presented to Punt

Road State School pupils who attended the ceremony.



Subsequently Haldane Turriff (below) was appointed as the Alfred's first matron taking up the position on December 21, 1870. Annie Miller in the meantime was appointed as the first matron of the Brisbane Hospital in February 1871. Unlike Haldane, Annie found the battle for recognition with medical staff too hard and despite support from the Board she resigned after only a month in the position and travelled to Melbourne and worked at the Alfred for some time.

Turriff's time as matron was quite a journey, before the hospital opened she was in dispute with the Board. Several senior staff were living and working at the hospital preparing to open up, Haldane spoke up requesting they be paid during this time. The Board felt providing food and lodging was sufficient until the hospital opened... So it began, but that's another story.



References.

- National Museum of Australia: *First royal visit 1867: Australia's first royal visit – by Prince Alfred, son of Queen Victoria*
- The Henry Parkes Oration 2015 - From Nightingale Nurses to a Modern Profession: The Journey of Nursing in Australia Presented by Dr Georgina Willetts.*