



The Port of Adelaide, South Australia c1865

## Thomas Fuller & Mary Ann Hobbs

Nestled in the beautiful valley of the Kennet River are two villages that have played a major role in my ancestral history. Such a beautiful setting but nearly half of one entire generation of a family chose to leave this for the unknown conditions of South Australia.

The name Fuller first appeared in Ramsbury when on 28 May 1788, Richard Fuller, a baker, married Mary Church, spinster, at the Holy Cross Church. Mary was a local girl, having been baptised at the same church on 23 December 1764, she was born on 17 December 1764, the sixth child of seven children to John and Dinah Church. Dinah had died on the 2 March 1774. John remarried to Mary Sayer on 4 October 1775 and fathered another three children. He died on 28 July 1797. Richard is thought to have been born in nearby Avington, Berkshire in 1757, the seventh of nine children to Thomas and Sarah (nee Lloyd) Fuller.

From the marriage of Richard and Mary grew a further two generations of Fuller's, all of whom worked as agricultural labourers in and around Ramsbury.

On 22 September 1851 Mary Ann Hobbs (born Froxfield) and Thomas Fuller married in the Holy Cross Church. Their first child, Ellen Sophia, was born in 1852 and a further daughter, Jane, in 1853. The formation of the colony of South Australia brought opportunity to the agricultural labourers of Wiltshire.

On the 12 November 1838 an advertisement appeared in Salisbury and Winchester Journal offering "Agricultural Labourers, Shepherds, Bakers, Blacksmiths, Braziers and Tinmen, Smiths, Shipwrights, Boat-builders, Butchers, Wheelwrights, Sawyers, Cabinet-makers, Coopers, Curriers, Farriers, Millwrights, Harness-makers, boot and Shoe-makers, Tailors, Tanners, Brick-makers, Lime-burners, and all persons engaged in the erection of buildings, of industrious habits and general good character, may have a FREE PASSAGE, including provisions and medical attendance, to the above thriving Colony, with a certainty of full employment, at high wages, upon arrival". The Ships employed in this service are of first-rate description, and possess superior accommodation".

A similar advertisement appeared in the Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette on 6 July 1848.

The first family member to take up this offer was Mary Ann Hobbs' younger sister Emily. Born in 1830, she had married George Hunter in 1848. On 5 Apr 1851 they boarded the sailing ship 'Omega' at Liverpool, Lancashire, England for the trip to South Australia. The ship finally arrived at Port Adelaide 28 Jul 1851. They were subsequently followed by:

Susannah (nee Hobbs) and Henry Talbot.  
Harriet (nee Moore) and George Hobbs.  
Jane (nee Hobbs) and Charles Faggotter.

All sailed on the ship 'Magdalena', departing Southampton, Hampshire on 23 May 1853, arriving Port Adelaide on 25 Aug 1853.

The possible glowing reports received from the afore-mentioned may have had some influence on Mary Ann and Thomas deciding to make the long, arduous, and sometimes treacherous journey to the other side of the world. The 4 May 1854 saw them and their two daughters standing on the Southampton dock waiting to board their ship, the 'Navarino'. The ship was a 464 ton, 3 mast barque, its dimensions being 123ft x 29ft x 4ft x 7ft (37.5m x 8.9m x 2.1m), mastered by Captain T. Storey.

Accompanying them were Mary Anns' brother William Hobbs and his bride of one month Mary Ann (nee Dance).

On 13 July 1854, two months after they set sail, disaster struck. Jane, who was only just twelve months old, suffered a bout of convulsions, died and was buried at sea. She was one of three infants on the ship to die of the same cause. It is likely that the 49 cases of measles reported during the journey led to these deaths. One can only imagine the distress this event caused the family. On 14 August 1854 they finally reached Port Adelaide.

Upon landing at Port Adelaide, Thomas would have presented himself to the Colonial Labour Office, which had been established in Adelaide, opposite the Post Office, in King William Street. Thomas was offered a position as shepherd at Wild Dog Creek. Wild Dog Creek was part of the Charlton station owned by Samuel White and lay just south of the now town of Melrose. In January 1858 Charles Brown Fisher took over the lease and in 1861 renamed the run 'Wirrabara'.

In all, Mary Ann and Thomas had 11 children, at least 9 of which were born at Wild Dog Creek. Around the time of their arrival the town of Melrose had not long been settled.

In 1846, a Special Survey of 20,000 acres was granted to the Mount Remarkable Mining Company for the purpose of mining copper. However, this venture was not successful, and the Company was dissolved in 1851. Old Melrose was surveyed by T. F. Nott in 1853 as part of his duties for the Mount Remarkable Mining Company's subdivision of the Special Survey.

What is now known as the township of Melrose is really the aggregation of the Police Paddock (1848), Old Melrose (1853) and New Melrose (1856). As pastoralists, miners and timber-getters moved into the area, so the tradesmen came to fill their needs. Melrose was the only established town in this area for more than twenty years and it developed as a supply for remote pastoral runs, mining camps and early settlers of goods, communication and transport.

One of the children, George died on 3 February 1862 and was buried in Paradise Square, an early burial ground across the road from what is now the National Trust Museum. The recoverable remains from this cemetery were later removed to the current cemetery. However, there is no record of George in the new cemetery so it probable that he is still interred in Paradise Square.

In March 1880 Thomas Fuller junior enrolled at the Melrose Public School being enrolment number 40. At the time of his enrolment his father Thomas was listed as being that of a labourer in Melrose living two miles from the school. The teacher was Walter Earl. On 7 September 1883 Thomas left the school so even in times of some affluence, schooling was minimal.

Mary Ann died of a Cerebral Haemorrhage on 7 June 1888 and is buried in the Melrose Cemetery. In 1886-87 South Australia celebrated its golden jubilee, but the satisfaction was tinged with gloom. By 1890 the colony had experienced several years of economic depression, which was to last until after 1900. It was relieved for some of the colonists by the success of South Australian investors and workers in the rich, new silver-lead mines at Broken Hill. This probably explains why a number of our ancestors moved away from Melrose and settled there.

Thomas kept in touch with his sister Hannah and niece Elizabeth by way of letters. Given that both Thomas and Mary Ann signed the Parish Register with a cross at the time of their marriage, it is presumed that one of the children must have read and written the letters for him. Typed copies of two of the letters from Elizabeth at the back of this story.

In reading the last letter, it would seem that in about 1892 Thomas was of ill health. This proved to be the case when on 8 May 1893 he died of a heart attack on the platform of the Laura Railway Station. He is buried in the Laura Cemetery. Alongside his grave is that of daughter Sarah Meatheringham (nee Fuller), who died 3 months later.

10 Union Square Islington London

Sept 20/91

Dear Uncle & Cousins

I now take the pleasure of answering your kind letter that we are all very pleased to receive and we were pleased to hear you were as well as you are, Mother I am glad to say is much better and looks better than she has done for a long time and seems quite jolly again. We have not heard anything of Father for some time now but we believe he is roaming about the country sometimes 1 part & sometimes another, but he goes into south Wales most of his time so we hear but we can do without him than with him. All our Family are pretty well just now it is just harvest time with us now & it is a very wet season but being in London we don't see much of the country we have to go 12 or 14 miles to see any corn growing now. London is got such a large place & we live about the middle of it we have got a lot of fruit this season apples & pears & plums are sold now 1 penny per pound, but it is very bad for Farmers now as they can't get their corn in for the wet weather. I am afraid you will think that don't tell you much news in my letter, but I expect you have forgotten nearly all about your old home & England.

Can you remember any of the people that used to live at Ramsbury years ago? I expect most of the people are dead that you knew before you went away. Mother hardly knows any of the people there. I should like you to tell us about how you live out there & if you live far away from a large Town. I have looked on the maps but can't find such a place as Melrose on it. We often talk about you & wonder if you farm your land as we do & if you have Workhouses for poor people & policeman & all such things the same as we have. But country work is much changed late years nearly all the corn is cut by machinery now & a lot of the land is ploughed by machinery & they have machines to cut corn and tie up so all they have to do is cart it to the Farm & build ricks; We have a lot of Australian mutton over here but it is not up to much when it gets here they sell it at about 5d or 6 pence a pound but if you buy a leg of home fed mutton we have to pay 11 pence or 1 shilling a pound. Last year's lambs are being sold at 35 shillings each & some Rams are sold at 70 or 80 pounds and a racehorse was sold last week here for 15 thousand pounds.

I am very sorry to say that I expect you have to pay extra postage for my last letter. I sent a man to post it and I found out afterwards that he only put a penny stamp on it, I hope you did not have to pay much. I would send you some stamps to pay you but I am afraid our stamps would be no good to you out there. I can't tell you much news about the rest of our family. Uncle William I have not heard from lately & the Kennedy's I have not seen much of the girl is going to be married very soon I hear.

[The remainder of the above letter is missing.]

10 Union Square Islington London

Nov 15th, 1892

Dear Uncle

I now take the pleasure of writing to you & let you know that we are still in the land of the living. I am sorry that I did not answer your letter before, but I have had such a lot of jobs to do that I have put it off but better late than never. We were very much grieved to hear that you were so bad, but we do hope that it is not cancer you are suffering from. It is such a terrible disease and at your age, I am afraid almost incurable, but we do hope to hear better news from you next for Mother is anxious to hear how you are. She says you are the only Brother that troubles to write to her and she is pleased to hear from you. I am sorry to tell you that she not as well. Both of her legs are very bad again and she can't get out of doors much, but she is very cheerful. She will never be strong in her legs she has suffered with these for 20 years.

Dear Uncle I hope you will get this by Christmas for I wished to send you our best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a happy new Year, and hopes your Family & all of you will be well and enjoy yourselves. We shall think of you, but your Christmas is so different to ours that I suppose you don't take much notice of it, you nearly forget what Holly & Mistletoe is like now.

I suppose it is forty years or more now since you left England and that is a long time. I should send you a paper very often but there is no news in them that would interest you as all our relations are left Ramsbury now except Uncle Dick's widow & one of Uncle Charles daughters is now married and living there but they never write to us. We have not seen or heard of Uncle William for a long time now, but he is still alive. I am sorry to tell you that trade is very bad and work very scarce in England now. They reckon there are 20 thousand men out of work now in London alone and in the country, they are sinking men's wages and plenty of Farmers can't find work for men this Winter they pay men 10 shillings a week now.

My Brother & Sister send their kind regards to you and Mother sends her best love to you and she would like to know if you can still any work and she hopes you will not want for anything as long as you live. Mother says she has forgot how old you are she would like to know next time you write. We have seen anything of the Kennedy for some time, but we heard that he is looking very old and his eyes are getting very weak and he can't hardly see to work now. I don't know what they will do if he goes blind his father did they say.

And now I must conclude with all our love & Best wishes to you & our cousins. I am yours truly. E.  
Pinnock 10 Union Square Islington London England