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## **NEWSLETTER**

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*John Dickson and Alice Dalrymple.*  
*Of*  
*Dumfriesshire, Gulf Station and Caroonboon Station, N.S.W.*

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When I first came to live in Yarra Glen, 10 years ago, I soon became interested in the history of Gulf Station. In particular, John Dickson who took up the original squatting lease in the 1840s.

It concerned me that nobody seemed to know where he came from or what happened to him. About the only information I could get was that he had returned to Britain about 1854/55. Andrew Ross, the first school teacher at Kangaroo Ground mentions in his "Reminiscences" under a date of January 1852 that he visited the Dicksons who were located three miles from the Yarra. Later he speaks of them selling out to Bell and Armstrong and moving to Kangaroo Ground for about a year. This was in April 1854. Nowhere does he actually state that the Dickson returned to Britain, though it was rumoured that this had happened.

Late last year I decided that the only way to solve the mystery was to purchase some birth certificates of their children and see what information they might reveal. I had long suspected that an 1843 marriage of a John Dickson and Alice Dalrymple might be the couple from Gulf station. The Victorian Birth Index showed three children registered to John and Alice. Two of these were records of baptisms and the third was for a birth registration under the newly introduced Civil Registration Act. I first viewed the marriage entry of John Dickson and Alice Dalrymple which was celebrated at the Presbyterian Church, Melbourne, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1843. It was a pleasant surprise to see that John gave his abode as Upper Yarra Yarra. Alice stated that she had newly arrived from Scotland.

While discussing this with John Waghorn, he informed me that he had checked the early newspaper, "Port Phillip Herald" and found two important entries. The first stated that Miss Dalrymple arrived Melbourne per "Francis" 17<sup>th</sup> August 1843. Under the date of 25<sup>th</sup> August. Married 23<sup>rd</sup> August, John Dickson and Alice Dalrymple, 3<sup>rd</sup> daughter of Charles Dalrymple. So it seemed that Alice arrived 17<sup>th</sup> August and married John the 23<sup>rd</sup>, perhaps indicating that this was a long planned event.

My next move was to order the birth certificate of James Dickson, born 25<sup>th</sup> July 1853. This very useful document arrived within the week and provided valuable information. It gave the age of John, making him born 1815/16 in Scotland, it confirmed that his spouse was Alice Dalrymple and they married 1843. The biggest bonus was it gave the names of all the previous children, including two who were not recorded on the Birth Index. These were William age 9, Agnes 7, Thomas 5 and John 3, making five children in all. The certificate gave John's place of abode as Gulf station, Gulf Creek. Next I ordered a copy of the baptism of William, 1844. He was born 12<sup>th</sup> September 1844, Upper Yarra and baptised in Melbourne.

Armed with the names of all the children I checked the 1881 Census for England and Scotland and searched for any Dickson born in Australia. This gave a "no result" which seemed very strange as I assumed that some of the boys would have lived to be adults and they would have to state place of birth. This then prompted me to check the inward shipping lists and found that the family returned to Melbourne November 1860 on the "Lord Raglan".

Searching the Victorian BDMs indexes didn't turn up anything useful but at John Waghorn's suggestion I looked at the death of a John Dickson at Deniliquin, N.S.W in 1878. I then discovered that the State Library has copy of the monuments in the Deniliquin Cemetery. All was revealed. There was John, died 1<sup>st</sup> June 1878, age 56, Alice, his wife, died 27<sup>th</sup> December 1900, aged 84. and most important of all, James Dickson, born 26<sup>th</sup> July 1853, died 18<sup>th</sup> August 1917. The same James who was born at Gulf Station.

Part of the mystery has been solved. Further investigation has led me to the descendants of John and Alice who still live on the property "Caroonboon" which John bought in August 1861. "Caroonboon" is on Billabong Creek near Wanganella, north of Deniliquin. Hopefully the family will forward more information on the background of John and Alice.

At this stage it is unclear where John Dickson came from before settling at "Gulf". It is highly probable that he is the same Dr. John or James Dickson who overlanded from N.S.W. in 1838 and settled on the Rubicon Creek, on the upper Goulburn. However the early records are not very helpful and I have no idea when John first arrived in Australia.

From information already provided by Mr John Dickson of Deniliquin it seems that Alice Dalrymple was born at Glencaple, Dumfriesshire, which is about six miles south of Dumfries. It is interesting to speculate about the feelings of Alice who spent three and a half months at sea, and five days after landing married John. Then she probably moved into a bark hut at Gulf where her first child was born one year later. Having checked the Birth Indexes thoroughly I am fairly confident that William Dickson was the second white child born in this district. It is recorded that Joseph Furphy was born the previous year at Yering. There may have been others but the records do not show them.

I have now concluded that John Dickson was established in the Yarra Valley by mid 1843, a year earlier than formerly believed.

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**REMINISCENCES**  
**Of**  
**ANDREW ROSS**  
**Of**  
**KANGAROO GROUND.**

January 1852.

An opportunity occurred early in January of visiting Yarra Flats (Yarra Glen), which I had not yet done. I started early one morning, mounting an empty bullock dray which was returning from the town after delivering the bales of wool. There were three squatting stations at this time on the Flats, viz, Messrs Ryrie who had possessed two homesteads, one recently purchased and occupied by Mr Castella, and the Gulf Station, belonging to Mr Dickson. It was the last named that I intended paying my devours, he having a young family.

Dray travelling is proverbially slow, it took six hours to get over the dozen miles, when early after noon, we reached the summit of the Big Hill, over the summit of which the track lay in those days.

When at length I set off and hastened my steps down the long steep declivity of neary one mile ( The Breakneck ), I was soon far ahead of the dray, and in ten minutes found myself on the low flat and following a track which brought me to a shepherds hut, near the river bank. The keeper came forward to meet me, and , as my inquiring the way to the Gulf Station, he showed me politely into the hut, and hastened to make ready the never failing damper, and put on the billy to prepare tea.

Proceeding to my destination, I enjoyed the walk through the clear forest pasture land for three miles, when some fencing showed signs of occupation; passing through which I soon discerned before me, on rising ground, a small collection of bark huts guarded by a ring of burnt grass and charred timber wisely rendered in order to prevent the spread of bush-fires reaching the homestead. Mr Dickson I observed seated outside his dwelling, and having introduced myself, I was immediately ushered into the neat abode. Mrs Dickson and family made me a welcome visitor, and I was expected to make a longer stay than was convenient to myself.

Mrs Dickson held her usual lessons for the children, and it was pleasing to see that they had made fair progress under her tuition, although they were young.

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1854 ?

Mr Ryrie's residence at Yarra Flats was soon occupied by Mr Symons as a cattle station, and Mr Dickson parted with the Gulf Station to Messrs. Bell and Armstrong, the latter of whom exchanged residences with Mr Dickson, and he with his family, became therefore (for about one year ), a resident on the (Kangaroo ) Ground. This took place in April.

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