21 – Midland Highway

The Midland Highway linking Hobart and Launceston is reached from either side of the Derwent – the two north roads out of Hobart (the Brooker Highway and the East Derwent Highway) meeting at Bridgewater. In tourist literature it may be known as the Heritage Highway. You would not want to include all the sites in this itinerary in one visit, and some – for example, Chauncy Vale, Bothwell, Ross – could be separate day-trips from Hobart, and the northern places from Launceston. We visited most of them on different trips north and south.

Chauncy Vale (Bagdad)

As you approach Bagdad, about 40 kilometres from Hobart, look out on the right for Chauncy Vale Road which leads to the Chauncy Vale Wildlife Sanctuary. There is a little graveyard just before the turnoff and, if you pass a petrol station on the left, you have gone too far.

Nan Chauncy (Nancen Beryl, née Masterman, 1900–1970) was famous in her day as a children's writer, and her books survive well. She writes sensitively and engagingly about Aborigines and the environment wrapped up in childhood adventures. I quoted from *Mathinna's People* in the history section (pp118–19), but *Tangara* (1960), about a settler girl Lexie, who slips into the past to relive a friendship that her great-great-aunt had with Merrina, an Aborigine girl, also works as an introduction to children of controversial issues – Aborigines frequented Chauncy Vale for millennia before white settlement there. That is not to say that such stories have the imprimatur of today's Aboriginal descendants. Second-hand copies are not difficult to find.

The Masterman family – parents and six children – arrived in Tasmania in 1912. Nan's father was an engineer who had experienced financial bad luck in England. After two years' work as a council engineer on the Hobart Rivulet, he moved his family to Bagdad. There all eight of them worked at clearing the land for an apple orchard. The small stone and concrete cottage where Nan wrote her twelve children's novels was built between 1916 and 1918.

Nan's cultured mother **Lilla Masterman** (née Osmond, m1895), daughter of a prosperous London merchant, had attended the progressive school run by Frances Buss. How she coped with her new and unexpected life is suggested in Berenice Eastman's 'A Biography of Tasmanian Nan Chauncy' (1978) and the later *Nan Chauncy: A Writer's Life* (2000). Ida McAulay, later to make her mark campaigning for women's rights (pp215–16), whose family befriended the Mastermans, wrote:

> Mrs Masterman, who was one of those people who could not have a garden without a lychgate, a sun-dial, a lavender hedge and a rockery, was steeped in knowledge of all the more attractive customs and habits of the Mother Country. Her conversation was sprinkled with allusions to such things,

> and quotations from a wide background of reading. She always recognised possibilities for the picturesque in her surroundings and quickly set about achieving what she visualised from what was already there.

Leaving school at 16, Nan later spent some years working in Europe, and on the return journey to Tasmania in 1938, met a German refugee, Helmut Anton Rosenfeld. They married and moved into the Bagdad cottage given to them as a wedding present. During the war, to avoid anti-German prejudice, Nan's husband took the name Chauncy, the name of her maternal grandmother; they became Nan and Anton Chauncy.

Nan's first success came with *They Found a Cave* (1948), a children's adventure story set in the wild hills above Chauncy Vale where a bushranger was said, in earlier years, to have holed up in the caves. This became a film, the making of which is described in *Down Home: Revisiting Tasmania* (1988) by Peter Conrad who, as a 13-year-old boy, took part. Visiting Chauncy Vale today, and reading his account of the on-set construction of the cave, would make one view the film with new eyes! His first hand description of Nan, though not entirely flattering, gives the sort of impression that English women, particularly those retaining their English accent and habits, tend to leave on Tasmanians:

> Nan Chauncy was a tweedy lady who lived in a house without electricity on a nature preserve where a few dejected marsupials sought refuge, near Bagdad in the midlands. To my parents with their electrical appliances she seemed slightly loony, unplugged from the modern world, and my father referred to her as Nancy Chancy; to me, she was the sole available model of literary activity, scribbling beside an oil-lamp in a dilapidated cabin.

Chauncy Vale was gazetted in 1946 as a private wildlife sanctuary under the Animals and Birds Protection Act 1928, following an application made by Nan and Anton Chauncy. In 1988, some years after Nan's death, her widower and their daughter bequeathed the sanctuary to the local council. Today it is visited by bushwalkers, bird watchers, field naturalist groups, picnicking family groups and school parties. Nan Chauncy's cottage, Day Dawn – still without electricity – is open between 2pm and 4pm on the first Saturday of the month, but you can see well enough through the windows. The 380-hectare sanctuary itself is open from 9am to sunset. You might find yourself the only visitors, and it is as wild and unspoilt as no doubt it was in Nan's day. Berenice Eastman writes of Nan's girlhood working on Chauncy Vale:

> From this experience her identity as a Tasmanian grew. Love of bushland and creek soon extended to knowledge of mountain, rainforest and wilderness river. Nan became an experienced bushwalker with strong conservationist beliefs – convictions that gave her an inner strength which was to inspire her best writing.

Kempton

North of Bagdad, and just west of the Midland Highway, is what used to be called Green Ponds. Kempton – named after the husband of Elizabeth Kemp (p26) – is one of those towns on the Highway that deceives the unwary traveller, for you go in one way and come out of the other. The inn run by Mrs Ransom in the late 1820s, early 1830s, the Royal Oak, is now a white, two-storeyed private house set back on the left just before you rejoin the Highway, having entered Kempton and driven the length of Main Road. It was built in 1827 by Thomas Ransom in a township just beginning to develop as a coaching stop on the Highway. The Royal Oak was the main drop-off point for mail for Hobart.

Mrs Ransom is an enigma; she also seems to have been **Catherine Christiana McNally** (d1857). How she met up with Thomas Ransom, a convict sent to Norfolk Island, a freeman by the time he arrived in Tasmania in 1814, is still open to speculation (as an exhausting trawl through the roots exchanges on the internet shows). He retired as a boat builder in Hobart in 1817 and built the Carpenters' Arms (or Joiners' Arms) in Murray Street and was a respected publican. In spite of that, his licence was revoked in 1825 because, as his Australian biographical entry explains, quoting from another source,

> It was discovered that the faithful and valuable female, who had for years borne his name … was unhappily unable to enter into a legal state of matrimony, in consequence of circumstances … which she could neither alter nor recur to, and which, under the prying eye of some persecuting hypocrite ferreted out, were before generally unknown.

The Ransoms moved, therefore, to Green Ponds where he had been granted 400 acres by Governor Macquarie in 1817. As the Land Commissioners reported of the Royal Oak, 'Nothing can exceed the civility and attention the Traveller meets with here, an excellent larder, good beds, capital stabling.'

When Thomas died in 1829, he bequeathed his Green Ponds property (grown by another 600 acres granted by Governor Arthur) to 'his friend', Catherine Christiana McNally. She continued to be known as Mrs Thomas Ransom – in that name she attended a community meeting in April 1830 to discuss the need for a church in the general area of Green Ponds, Oatlands and Jericho (p95).

The Royal Oak was a staging post on the way to Bothwell, and Catherine was very much a feature. Henry Savery, convict and author, wrote in his 1829 column for the *Colonial Times*, entitled 'The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land':

> Upon finishing my ride from Bothwell, I found a comfortable resting place at a large and commodious brick residence, standing a little way off the main road. Justice to the excellent entertainment the good landlady's management afforded demands that I give a few particulars of the hostess herself, and of the manner in which I spent two or three days in her truly comfortable

> home. As I really feel much to be her due I will say that although she is not all she has been, she has still not yet so far o'erstepped the meridian of her days as to have lost possession of much for which doubtless she has heretofore been greatly admired.

In 1830, James Ross, quite likely travelling with his wife Susannah (p276) set the Royal Oak in its broader context when he wrote:

> After leaving Mrs Ransom's Royal Oak Inn, a comfortable two-storey brick building with good accommodation, the road extends for some miles over a level tract of country. Close to the inn is the Cross-marsh market-place on the left hand side of the road, conveniently and substantially fenced in for the reception of cattle and sheep.

Breakfast at the inn consisted of mutton chops, and home-made bread and butter, washed down with tea. There was also a nearby orchard growing apples, Kentish cherries, pears, apricots and strawberries.

It was Mrs Ransom for whom the bushranger Matthew Brady had worked as an assigned servant and to whose health, therefore, he drank when he turned up at the Royal Oak after a spree in the area (p95).

What is strange about the bar on the marriage of Catherine and Thomas is that, in 1830, the year after his death, in the name of Catherine Christiana McNally, she married Frederick Lewis von Stieglitz, one of several siblings who had arrived from Ireland the previous year. They all obtained property in the Fingal Valley, Frederick, after his marriage, building Killymoon at Fingal (p344). One record suggests that in 1831 he was the owner of the Royal Oak at Green Ponds.

One can only assume that a previous marriage of Catherine's was the impediment to her marriage to Thomas Ransom and that her earlier husband had, in the meantime, died. Alternatively, it was he who was married, his wife having been left in England when he was transported. Catherine had no children with Thomas but she was the mother of two children. Her son, known as Thomas Ransom, was to inherit (or buy) Killymoon when, after his mother's death, his stepfather left Tasmania. The property, though divided, remained in the Ransom family until the early 1990s. In 1840, Catherine's daughter, **Anne Ransom** (1817–1892), married Francis Walter von Stieglitz, her mother's brother-in-law. They lived at Lewis Hill, between Avoca and Fingal, and had six sons and two daughters.

Bothwell

Turn off the Midland Highway at Melton Mowbray and take the Highland Lakes Road (A5); Bothwell on the Clyde River is a third of the way along to the Great Lake. The drive there is special. You pass rolling hills sucked as sere by January sun as the plain through which the Midland Highway passes, relieved by green eucalypts and the Jordan River marshes. Then the road

climbs upwards and round until you think Bothwell must be on top of a hill. But it winds imperceptibly down until you reach a wide, dry plain. The journey direct from Hobart to Bothwell takes about an hour; from Launceston, two hours.

Ratho

If you are visiting Bothwell out of genuine interest in its history, you cannot do better than contact its generous historian Mary Ramsay in advance. Her email address is on the internet. She not only knows the area and its history better than anyone, but she also lives in the historic house Ratho, the nineteenth-century home of Mary Reid and her daughter Jane Reid Williams (p76).

Jane was later to write of that first journey in 1822, when they were accommodated at Dennistoun by Captain Wood until their own 'turf cottage' was erected at Ratho:

> The third day brought us to Dennistoun, and often my dear mother expressed her wonder that without any track, and having ridden to that part of the country only once, my father should have been able to drive us direct through the bush and over the formidable Den Hill, one of the most difficult barriers to cross in the colony. Those who drive over the road now made there, after more than forty years of improving it and so many thousands expended on it, can form only a faint idea of what it was then.

The first settlers had only arrived the previous year and it was not until 1823 that town planning began. Even before they were settled at Ratho, but with all their tempting possessions around them, there were bushrangers to contend with (pp92–3), but Mary Reid somehow managed.

Ratho is through the township of Bothwell itself, its drive a turning off the A5. But you would need Mary Ramsay's permission to see it – an intrusion up the drive would be unwelcome.

Just opposite the drive to the Ratho Golf Club are the remains of what was, until it burnt down, a potters' studio – but a stock-crossing road makes it a dangerous place to stop. It was here, from 1918, that **Maude Poynter** (1869–1945), recognised as Tasmania's first studio potter, built herself a cottage and wood-fired kiln on a parcel of land given to her by her brother-in-law Alexander Reid (Mary Reid's grandson who had married a Miss Poynter, a Meredith descendant (p317)).

Maude's pieces, in strong bright colours, often featuring Australian animals and plants, are inscribed 'Ratho'. Her work is described and illustrated in 'Pioneer Craftswomen from the Bothwell Area' (1994, Catherine Ackland and Colin Campbell).

In 1920, Maude's cousin **Violet Mace** (1890–1968), who had become almost unbalanced by the sale of the Meredith family home Cambria (p318), arrived to stay for a couple of weeks – a stay which extended to 20 years. Maude taught her the art of pottery and, in 1924, the two held their own

exhibition at the Hobart Town Hall (p242). Although Maude left Ratho in 1925, Violet continued there until 1940 and is said to have produced her best work as an independent craftswoman; her subdued colours and underglaze decoration became more stylised, and include geometric designs influenced by Aboriginal art.

Cluny

Further along the A5 and easy to see on the left from the road is Cluny, built by Captain William Clark and his wife in 1826. One of their daughters, **Jane Clark**, was governess to the children of Governor Arthur and his wife Eliza, which is probably why Arthur lent the colonial chaplain a carriage in 1826 to take him to Cluny to marry Jane's sister **Ann Clark** (d1868) to William Pritchard Weston (later anti-transportationist and, 1857, Premier). Eleven-year-old Jane Reid describes being a bridesmaid (in spite of the two fathers, Reid and Clark, being constantly at loggerheads) and arriving at Cluny in a bullock cart.

In 1849, the Clarks' son John fought a duel over **Mathilde Adelaide King**, daughter of the officer in charge of the military guard, and described by the Irish political prisoner John Mitchel to Jane Reid Williams as 'one of the most beautiful girls I have ever seen'. Their seconds filled the pistols with raspberry jam. Mathilde married neither of them, but Robert Adams in 1857.

On 1 May 1858, recently married **Mary Jane Brown** (née Meikle, b before 1841) and her husband John were at home at Cluny. He had their baby in his arms. Years later, when Mary had been widowed and had married John Edward Nicholas of Nant, she told the story of what happened when three bushrangers arrived, tied up her husband – knocking the baby to the ground – and ransacked the house. Her account is recorded in detail in both KR von Stieglitz's *The History of Bothwell* (1958?) and John Seymour Weeding's *A History of Bothwell Tasmania* (nd) – though both are mistaken in the date of the raid and which husband Mary was then married to.

Mary wrote of the leading bushranger Sydney Jim who had escaped from Port Arthur, 'The moment I looked at him I thought of the description I had read of a brigand of the old days.' He was, however, no ruffian. 'Flowers strode across the room,' she later remembered,

> and caught hold of me so roughly that I thought my last hour had come. And I believe it would have come if it had not been for Sydney Jim. When he saw the man trying to force his hand down my dress, he called out,
>
> 'Take your hands of her. She will give you all the money and jewellery she has if you leave her alone.'

He also put her baby gently into her arms. 'In the end,' Mary wrote, 'they were betrayed by **Mrs Bradley**, a shepherd's wife at the Great Lake.'

The Browns went on to have four children. The 1866 list of Bothwell residents shows Mary Jane Brown as landowner of Cluny, so she obviously

managed the property following her husband's death and until her marriage to Nicholas in 1873. Mary had two more children.

Since 1912, Cluny has been in the hands of the Bothwell pioneer Bowden family. Kate Bowden is the sister of Jane Shoobridge of Fenton Forest (p310).

Nant

Come a little way back along the A5 and on the left (east) is the turnoff to Nant – a road which links to Dennistoun Road, running north parallel to the A5. Nant was the property of John Edward Nicholas' grandfather, Edward Nicholas, who arrived in 1821, either with, or followed by, his wife **Susannah Nicholas** (c1767–1850) and four children. They were the first settlers in the area and built Nant cottage.

Sources do not agree on whether or not this cottage was on the site of the 1857 Nant homestead, which can be seen from the road, or if it is another cottage, with four chimneys and surrounded by barbed wire on the left before you reach the homestead. This, in any case, is where John Mitchel lived in exile after his wife Jenny and children joined him in June 1851 until his escape in June 1853. The cottage is privately owned, although there are dreams that it should be a historic site open to the public.

Jenny Mitchel (Jane, née Verner, 1821–1899) has been rather overshadowed by her famous husband, his Irish Nationalist activities and his *Jail Journal* (1913), the Tasmanian section of which is in *The Gardens of Hell: John Mitchel in Van Diemen's Land 1850–1853* (edited by Peter O'Shaughnessy). Although Jenny was brought up in the Verner household in Ireland, her mother may have been Mary Ward, the unmarried daughter of the estate's coachman, and her father a Verner brother. Whatever her parentage, she was sent to the Misses Brydens' School for young ladies.

Law student John Mitchel spotted her when she was 16, but both families disapproved of their marrying. They had to elope twice before succeeding in 1837. John started his political activities in 1843 and Jenny, too, under the pseudonym Mary, contributed articles to the Nationalist newspaper *The Nation*. In 1848, when Mitchel was arrested and charged with sedition, Jenny organised his defence campaign. Nevertheless, he and several confreres were sentenced to 14 years' penal servitude in Tasmania.

Jenny made a home of Nant Cottage and, in 1852, added another daughter to their five children. Mitchel farmed the 200 acres opposite the cottage and the family were well received by Bothwell's settlers, particularly the Reids at Ratho. Mitchel wrote of Mary Reid and Jane Reid Williams before Jenny's arrival:

> It gave me a sort of home-feeling, when I found myself, for the first time in two years, seated in the pleasant parlour of Ratho, the home of a most amiable and accomplished Edinburgh family; the social tea-table presided over by one of the most graceful and elegant of old ladies, the books, music, flowers and the gentle converse of high-bred women, could not fail to soothe and soften an exasperated soul in any but its darkest hour …

Mitchel used to hunt with Mary's husband and he and Jenny dined with the Reids. Following his escape, he corresponded with Jane and sent her a copy of his *Jail Journal*. Von Stieglitz also suggests that Mitchel turned to **Margaret Nicholas** (née Espie, 1818–1893; m1838) of Nant homestead for 'understanding and good-humoured advice during his term at Nant Cottage'. Another woman Mitchel admired was long-established Irish settler Margaret Connell (pp94, 104).

Mitchel's fellow exile, John Martin – who had been involved in the couple's elopement – lived with him before Jenny's arrival and until the family further expanded, when he felt de trop. He also kept a diary which shows that he, too, was persona grata at Ratho. On one visit he took translations of German poets to Elizabeth Hudspeth of Bowsden (p334) who was spending the night there; her sister Alice was married to William Patterson of Bothwell.

Mitchel set out to escape from Bothwell in June 1853, but it took him a good month of toing and froing to board a ship, coincidentally the one caught by Jenny and the family. Mitchel wrote to Jane Reid Williams from Sydney on 24 July 1853:

> My poor Jenny tells me you have been very kind to her since I left but that does not surprise me either. She is almost sorry to quit Bothwell. Those three years of my life seem to me now like a detached bit of a landscape, or a cabinet picture framed and finished and to be hung up on the walls of my house forever.

Jenny herself wrote to a childhood friend from Nant Cottage, 'I am now perhaps happier than I would have been had I never known trouble.' The Mitchels' life after Tasmania continued turbulent.

Dennistoun

This is private property; the original 1820s house was replaced after a fire in 1912, though perhaps not on the same site. If you have good reason to visit the family cemetery, Mary Ramsay could perhaps arrange it with the owners. Jacobina Burn (p74) is one of those buried under the pines and eucalypts not far from the house. To get there, continue from the Mitchel Cottage, on the Nant turnoff, past Nant homestead on the right and turn left onto the road to Interlaken; and so to Dennistoun

On the *Castle Forbes* which arrived in Hobart in 1822 were the Reid family (Ratho), Captain Patrick Wood and Myles Patterson and his family. In 1828, Wood, established at Dennistoun, married **Jane Patterson** (d1837). Her mother, **Katharina Patterson** (née Hunter, c1773–1852) was Jacobina's sister. Jacobina had arrived a year earlier with Katharina's son. She often visited her family in Bothwell and was not happy with relations in the township. Her solution is best glimpsed in a letter of 24 June 1834 from Alexander Reid to his daughter Jane's husband in India:

> Old Square Toes [Captain Clark of Cluny] took me by a Coup de Main in the Police Office. With one of his *winning smiles* & an unexpected hold out of his paw, which I had not time to think of resisting – so far so well, you will say: and yet more – old Mrs Burn(s) on a visit at Ratho actually lugged me over to call on Garratt [Garrett, resident church minister], to whom I had not spoken for 18 mos; she said she was *determined to see every one on speaking terms*, & I yielded of course to the old Lady.

Bankrupt in 1844, Jacobina left her estate Ellangowan and came to Bothwell to live with Katharina, eventually moving to Clyde Villa, later demolished. The house now on the nearby site is 'Bendeveron'; privately owned, it is just off Logan Road in the centre of Bothwell and can be seen from the road. John Martin visited Jacobina at Clyde Villa and wrote on 22 September 1850:

> [Mrs Burn] was up and at her knitting or crochet as usual, but looking pale and sick. She had been suffering from pain last night. Miss Patterson showed me pencilled drawings of herself and by Mrs Blackwood, and other members of the Officer family – all very respectable.

Jemima Officer (1804–1881) was Jacobina's niece and, since 1823, wife of colonial surgeon Robert Officer with properties in New Norfolk and on the Clyde.

Jacobina died the year after that visit, aged 88. Her granddaughter, Jemima Frances Irvine (p102) says that she was buried 'beside her faithful aboriginal maid' but Mary Ramsay has not been able to confirm that. Nearby in the cemetery is the grave of Jane Patterson Wood, who died giving birth to twin daughters, and that of **Mary Daniells** and her two children, murdered by Aborigines on the Woods' property, the Den, in 1831.

St Luke's Uniting Church

Leaving Dennistoun, heading back into town, and turning left, the first site you come to is St Luke's, completed in 1831. Then it was for the joint use of Protestant denominations, the predominant Scottish Presbyterian community and Anglicans, until the Anglican St Michael and all Angels was built in 1891. The sculptures over the doorway are attributed to Mary Herbert's husband, Daniel, famous for the bridge at Ross (p337). The female head is either a Celtic goddess or Queen Adelaide. Inside is a Reid family memorial plaque; it particularly extols the virtues of Mary Reid. Margaret Espie Nicholas of Nant is buried in the graveyard. And it is here that the duel held on account of Mathilde King took place.

The Castle Inn

Before settlement, the Clyde River area was home to the Big River nation, the remnants of which Robinson rounded up in 1831, accompanied by Trukanini

and other Aborigines of his team (p114). The plaque beside the entrance to the hotel tells how, before being taken to Hobart, 'George Augustus Robinson brought the few remaining members of the Big River and Oyster Bay people through Bothwell and they performed a corroboree here on January 5, 1832.' The famous Duterrau painting, 'The Conciliation' (in the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery), depicts the scene. Contrary to supposition, Trukanini is not next to Robinson but on the far left.

Sarah Jane Duterreau (mBogle 1838; d1885), the artist's daughter, arrived with him in 1832, hoping to teach music at Ellinthorp (p336). When that fell through, she became governess to the Arthurs' children.

Beth Roberts (1924–2001), a fifth-generation Tasmanian who lived in Birch Cottage, Elizabeth Street, writes of the Big River people in her children's novel *Manganinnie: A Story of Old Tasmania* (1977), about an old Aboriginal woman who has lost her people, without realising why, and kidnaps a toddler from a Bothwell settler property to pass on the 'Common Knowledge' and keep her company. It was made into a film in 1980.

The Priory

Back on the A5, as if going to Ratho, turn left into Wentworth Street and right into Frances Street. The Priory is now a luxury hotel, the Priory Country Lodge. When we visited it, it was an empty two-storey Tudor gothic house built in 1847–48. Its significance is that in her later years Maria Lord lived there and, indeed, died there (pp33, 80–3). After the tribulations of a failed marriage, and her glory years in trade in Hobart, she ran a general store in Bothwell.

She acquired the Priory by default. Alexander Reid of Ratho had it as a town allotment; then in 1847, the Reverend Robert Wilson started building. Bishop Nixon had not approved; nor would the government provide funds. Since Wilson owed Maria £1,000, she took the Priory instead. She kept three rooms herself and leased the rest of the house. I'm not sure how easy it is to sense the ghost of Maria there; the rather sad, empty house was a better bet. At least you can appreciate the fine view, as she must have done, from the terrace.

Return now, the way you came, to the Midland Highway.

Oatlands

In 1811, on their first visit to Tasmania (pp49–53), Governor Macquarie and his wife Elizabeth travelled through the area that he did not name Oatlands until their second visit to the island in 1821. And until 1827 it was just a site with a name board. Many buildings erected soon thereafter still stand.

I have a soft spot for Oatlands, though it is another of those places where you have to keep your wits about you because of two ways in and out. One day we turned off the Campania road onto the Midland Highway after visiting Bowsden, formerly the home of the Hudspeths, Mary (p90) and her seven surviving children, including the artist **Elizabeth Hudspeth** (1820–1858), and,

from 1928, owned by the Burburys. It was the family home of Mary Ramsay, Bothwell's historian, and her brother Charles Burbury, now that of him and his wife Stephanie. The research visit had left us in good spirits but then we felt and heard something wrong with our hire car. We had an itinerary-laden drive north ahead and disaster loomed. We limped into Oatlands and found a garage where, immediately, without fuss or requiring payment, the branch that was fouling a wheel was removed.

But we already used Oatlands – half-way between Hobart and Launceston – as a pit stop because at 44 High Street is Casaveen, a cafe with cakes worth getting fat for. In addition, it is the work-and-showroom of the knitwear designed and made using locally produced wool by Clare McShane whose husband and business partner is the great nephew of women's activist Alicia O'Shea Petersen (p216).

Oatlands, as much as any other place in Tasmania, shows that there is no evading family history and that it is often circles within circles. This is where the historian Alison Alexander – who has been so generous to me at both the research and writing stage of this book – spent some childhood years after her father became the local vet. In 'Childhood in Paradise' in *A Writer's Tasmania* (2000), she writes of revisiting Oatlands and finding much changed, including 'My old House of Horrors, the preschool, now sells beautiful locally-made jumpers'.

The circle was even wider for Alison: a branch of her convict ancestors – on both sides – not only settled in the area but became respectable, something her parents only discovered when, arriving from New South Wales, they mentioned their family name. One of those ancestors was **Sophia Peters** (1814–1892) who, with her sister Anne, was speared during an attack by Aborigines on their home in Bagdad (p24). Anne died but Sophia's stout stays deflected the spear and she lived to marry James Pillinger in 1836. Their son became warden of Oatlands and the local MP, rising to minister. Although James amassed a considerable landholding to the north of Oatlands, as Alison records, 'By the end of the century the property was sold – clogs to clogs in three generations …'

In 1864 James Pillinger's brother George married Mary, daughter of convict **Jane Hadden** (née Baird, 1797–1867). Jane left a husband and two children behind in Scotland when she was transported but was eventually pardoned and set up as a laundress in Kempton (p327). 'There', as Alison recounts, 'she had an affair with a local ex-convict landowner, whose wife was found one morning dead, with her head in the fireplace. There appeared to be no inquest; 13 days later the widower married Jane and they lived in some style …' Jane sent for her children, but not her first husband. **Mary Hadden** (1839–1932) and George Pillinger were Alison's great grandparents.

In Dulverton Lake, the nearby wildlife sanctuary, is Mary Isle, granted by Governor Arthur to Mary Anstey (pp73, 90) who lived with her family at Anstey Barton which once existed by what is now the Dulverton Rivulet, a tributary of the Jordan River.

Midland Highway

This two-lane highway dissects Tasmania like a zip from north to south. When we travel on it in January or February, the landscape is dun-coloured, as are the sheep sprinkled either side, and the sparse, skeleton shrubs. There is usually little traffic. It was different in the nineteenth century. GB Lancaster writes in *Pageant*, as one of her characters speeds south in a tandem changing horses from time to time: '[They were] swinging along the Main Road that was swarming still with beggars, with farmers driving flocks of sheep, with carts of hay and wool; swinging across bridges, clattering through small townships in the twilight.'

In *Exile*, Kathleen Graves (p346) describes a voyage north at much the same date:

> They made good time from Hobart Town. Thirty miles the first day up through passes out of the Derwent valley, then over forty the second day across the plains. There were culverts all the way now and bridges over the creeks and rivers, but the track was still rutted – the rains had laid the dust, but in another month it would be a quagmire.

Ellenthorpe (Ellinthorp) Hall

Just after the southernmost entrance to Ross on the right is Auburn road on the left, easy to miss. Several miles along – through an empty plain with the Western Tiers in the distance – is a drive on the left to Ellenthorpe Hall (as it is now spelt). The two-storey Georgian house built in 1826/27 was once Hannah Clark's school for girls (pp136–9).

Today, Ellenthorpe is private property – comfortably viewed in *Country Houses in Tasmania* – but if you want to get an impression of the environs, it is worth a drive along Auburn Road. It is easy to imagine what it must have been like when, in 1838, bushrangers came out of the plain onto this isolated establishment for young ladies 18 kilometres from the nearest township.

In the barracks, which still stand near the house, were marines who had guarded the 20 convicts building the house and remained to protect the school from bushrangers and Aborigines. One account says that they had been lured away. In any case, there was enough time for the girls and women teachers to block up the windows with mattresses, pillows and cushions, leaving only apertures for the gun barrels; and to pile heavy furniture against the doors. There were also enough men around and enough luck to ensure that the raid was unsuccessful. The most accurate account is in GT Stillwell's 'Mr and Mrs George Carr Clark of "Ellinthorp Hall"'.

Hannah Clark had four surviving children (two had died) at the time, and her health had begun to deteriorate, leading to the school suffering a similar fate. She closed it in 1840 and, ironically, took her own children home to England to complete their education. There she died in 1847. Her

husband remained in Tasmania which suggests that their marriage, too, was unsteady; it appears he regretted leaving his life in Hobart as a merchant to become a grazier.

Ross

The Bridge

Ross – 120 kilometres from Hobart and 80 from Launceston – is one of the oldest of Tasmania's townships, proclaimed by Macquarie during his visit with Elizabeth of 1821, though it was first settled in 1812. From the south, you come to Australia's third-oldest bridge; completed in 1836, its 186 carvings by convict mason Daniel Herbert are, not surprisingly, renowned. They are riots of animals, birds, insects, plants, Celtic goddesses and gods and the heads of friends and foes. The most significant for us are those of Herbert's convict wife, **Mary Herbert** (née Witherington), and rambunctious convict Norah Corbett (pp61, 304). In *Ross Bridge and the Sculptures of Daniel Herbert* (1971), Leslie Greener writes of Mary Herbert,

> A photograph taken somewhat later in life – in her middle thirties I should think – strikingly resembles the female mask on [the bridge]. It shows a strong face with high cheek bones, large luminous eyes, firm full lips and a decisive jaw-line. It is not the face of a conventional beauty, but rather handsome, vital and attractive. There is still one more reason for believing that this icon cannot be anyone other than Herbert's wife. It is the only human personification on the bridge which is perfectly serene and untouched by pain or mockery.

The couple are said to have married at the low-slung Barracks just beyond the bridge in 1835. My notes say, 'Don't peer through the window; too many do it.' That suggestion must, I think, have originated from a helpful staff member at the Tasmanian Wool Centre (which doubles as an information centre) on the western side of Church Street. The Herberts were said to have lived at the Macquarie River end of Badajos Street, their white-washed cottage marked on the map available at the Wool Centre. He was promised a pardon for his ornamentation of the bridge and they continued to live in Ross and have three children.

The mask of Norah Corbett, who moved to Ross with her husband Jorgen Jorgenson, is popularly known as 'the Queen', and his 'the King'. He had been sent to Ross by Arthur in 1833 to find out why the bridge was not yet built. Greener writes of Norah,

> Herbert was entirely successful in capturing the sickness of this woman, and I cannot help thinking that the sculptor was profoundly moved by the utter sadness of her human condition. In his own way, he struck fiercely into the stone the symbols that might free her from the troubles that were her demons.

Norah and Jorgenson stayed at the Man O'Ross Inn on the eastern corner of Bridge and Church Streets, and made the place infamous by their drunken brawls.

42. Mary Herbert, courtesy of the Tasmanian Wool Centre, Ross

Catherine Bennett Meagher

The cottage of Catherine and Thomas Meagher, also marked on the map, is over the road, on the eastern corner of High and Bond Streets. Meagher met Catherine Bennett when she worked as governess to the six children of **Mary Hall** (née Latham, 1807–1887) and the progressive Dr Edward Hall who, a couple of years later, was to campaign against the heavy infant mortality at the Cascades female factory (p62). In *A Short History of Ross* (c1949), KR von Stieglitz tells the charming story of their accidental meeting – as the wheel came off the family carriage, landing her in the mud almost at his feet. For a while, they were happy but the cottage they moved to on Lake Sorell was very isolated and he chose to escape his Tasmanian exile when she was three months pregnant (p275).

In *The Life and Times of Thomas Francis Meagher* (2001), Reg Watson, through Meagher and John Mitchel's accounts, evokes his Ross landlady, **Mrs Henry Anderson,** 'of stupendous proportions and commensurate loquacity'.

43. Catherine Bennett Meagher, c1851, from an unnamed internet site

The Female Factory

The Ross Female Factory site is on the 'Heritage Walkway' which runs from the bridge to the original burial ground, and can also be approached from Bond Street. The factory, one of four in Tasmania, dates from 1847 when what had been a male probation station was expanded to include a chapel, dining room, hospital, nursery, twelve solitary cells, dormitories and outer courtyard. The women, to be reformed under the new probation system (pp157–61), were trained for domestic service. But it is clear from the archaeological dig that started under Eleanor Casella in 1995 that not all the women were biddable. Excavations have revealed that, against regulations, the women imported tobacco, alcohol and increased food rations. There is evidence of arson in 1851 – a not uncommon form of rebellion. And they were said to indulge in 'unnatural practices'. **Mary Ann Elliot**, for example, there in 1850, was described as a 'pseudo male individual'.

Eleanor Casella's findings are published in *Archaeology of the Ross Female Factory: Female Incarceration in Van Diemen's Land, Australia* (2002). But the scholarly book is more than that: it includes what is called 'The Historic Landscape', sketching the history of female incarceration in Tasmania and

the Australian mainland. The overseer's cottage, the only substantial remains of any of the female factories, is a museum.

Eliza Forlong (Kenilworth)

It was at the Tasmanian Wool Centre in Ross that I first heard of **Eliza Forlong** (Forlonge, Betty, née Jack, 1784–1859) (p72) – not surprising given her contribution to the colony's wool industry, one that continues today.

In 1804 Eliza married John Forlong, a Scottish wine merchant with a French émigré forebear – a man with big ideas but not much earning capacity. Happily for them, John's indulgent sister, **Janet Templeton** (1785–1857), was married to a Scottish banker who financed the Forlongs' scheme to purchase a particularly fine breed of Spanish merino sheep from Saxony and take them to New South Wales. They hoped by the move to save the lives of their two remaining children after four had died from tuberculosis.

To advance the project, Eliza set off on foot in 1827 on an inspection and learning tour of the merinos in Saxony with her sons, leaving the younger one at school in Leipzig and the elder, William, attached to a wool sorting house to learn the trade. She returned the following two summers and, with a pouch of gold sovereigns sewn into her stays, walked with the boys through the countryside purchasing the best sheep she could find, sealing them with a lockable tag bearing the initial 'F' and finally, long staff in hand, driving them before her down the Elbe to Hamburg – a journey full of incident.

William was sent off to New South Wales first but in transit in Hobart in 1829 was, he claimed, persuaded by Governor Arthur to stay in Tasmania. He was given a land grant near Campbell Town, between the Macquarie and South Esk Rivers. The rest of the family left for Australia in a vessel chartered by recently-widowed Janet Templeton; the party included Janet's nine children, more sheep from Saxony and experienced shepherds. The Forlongs were committed to Tasmania, arriving there in 1831 when John was granted land next to William's; it became Kenilworth. Janet proceeded to New South Wales.

The novel *Saxon Sheep: How a Famous Merino Flock came to Victoria* (1961) tells the story from the beginning in Glasgow to the end of everyone's life. Unfortunately for Eliza's reputation, it is written by a descendant of Janet's, Nancy Adams, and, as the two families apparently fell out, Eliza does not come out of it well; she was a strong, and determined woman, perhaps sometimes overbearing, and with a tendency to flout convention. As Mary Ramsay explains in the rather more scholarly 'Eliza Forlong and the Saxon Merino Industry' (2004): 'Unfortunately this novel is often perceived to be factual and caused immense hurt to some members of the Forlonge family.'

Eliza often managed Kenilworth alone, while John went about his schemes. In 1844, however, widowed since 1835, she decided that the Kenilworth property was too unsatisfactory – there was no river access – and moved to Victoria. Kenilworth and half its sheep were sold to David Taylor of the Taylor family who had farmed Valleyfield since 1823 (p96). He had moved to Winton in 1832 and the Saxon merinos he bought from the Forlongs became

the basis of the pure-bred Winton Merino stud flock continuing to produce wool clips of superfine quality. Vera Taylor tells the Taylor story in *Winton Merino Stud, 1835–1985* (1985).

Kenilworth today is owned by another David Taylor and his wife Tina Taylor. In the garden is a sundial, erected by the Dilston Country Women's Association and unveiled in 1940 by the governor's wife, Lady Clark, celebrating Eliza's contribution to the wool industry of Australia. Although the Wool Industry Eliza Forlonge Medal, established in 1991, was short-lived, Eliza's contribution continues to be appreciated.

If you have a serious interest in Eliza Forlong, the Taylors are likely to grant you access to the sundial; it has been visited by least one history group. Tina drove me to the remains of Eliza's original house. According to the records drawn on by Mary Ramsay, 'There once stood a farmhouse, buildings designed in the same style as sheep houses in Saxony, wells and the usual outbuildings required in those days such as stabling.' All that remains are a few piles of bricks almost lost in the long grass, but with a splendid view, and something about the air – Eliza Forlong's scent? We had approached Kenilworth from the north, got lost and were rescued by a knight errant in a Land Rover (who is in the acknowledgements); if invited, you will need direction.

44. Eliza Forlong, (assumed to be) from 'Eliza Forlong: The Unsung Woman Behind Our Wool' (*40° South*)

Avoca

We drove to Avoca off the main roads from the east coast (p321) but an easier and quicker way from the Midland Highway is to take the Esk Highway (A4) towards St Helen's, St Mary's and Bicheno from just north of Campbell Town – Elizabeth Macquarie's maiden name; through it flows the Elizabeth

River, also a remnant of the Macquaries' 1821 visit. It is where, too, the poet Helen Power was brought up (p255).

In the mid nineteenth century, Avoca must have been a vibrant centre, with several families of lively and artistic daughters. It wasn't really on the day we visited, though Shirley Freeman at the post office was an invaluable informant. She is in a fine tradition: **Charlotte Adams**, wife of a sheep farmer, and mother of six children, was post mistress and telegraphist there from 1876 to 1912. She was 'justly esteemed by all' and her work was 'not only rapid but exceedingly accurate'.

By 1900, Avoca seems to have changed. Marie Bjelke Petersen and her long-term companion **Sylvia Mills** (1869–1927, younger sister of Caroline Morton (p214)) went there for a holiday. It started badly: Marie described the Midlands as 'burned up, brown … most uninteresting to say the least'. Then, as Alison Alexander puts it in her biography of Marie, 'Avoca turned out to be dreadful. They wanted to stay in a quiet country retreat where they could rest, but the boarding house where they had booked a room was nothing but a third-rate cottage, smelling of stale beer and ancient dinners.' Marie describes their room in detail, starting, 'How am I to begin to describe it!'

Should you decide not to make a special visit to Avoca – 'meeting of the waters' – if you are driving through, stop at St Thomas's Church on a hill overlooking where the South Esk and St Paul's Rivers meet. Standing there is to begin to recapture something of those original families who lived on their extensive sheep-rearing estates and created a community around the church which they had built (completed 1842). Trying to marry the boundaries of today's properties with those of the past is enough to make you light headed.

Catherine Grey and her husband, Humphrey, arrived in 1828 and two of their daughters, Henrietta and Elizabeth, went to Ellinthorp Hall, school for young ladies (p138). **Henrietta Grey** (Henny) went first, in 1831, and was there for about seven years. Kate Hamilton Dougharty describes how Maria Clark's advertisement added that 'On a certain date, two bullock drays would attend Avoca for intending pupils from the surrounding districts.' They had an armed escort to protect the girls from bushrangers and Aborigines. Because of transport difficulties, Henny only came home twice a year. Lysbeth, who followed her three years later, then married well and at one stage lived at Newlands in Hobart (p269). The eldest daughter, **Margaret Grey**, married in 1830 and later died from the sting of a poisonous spider. Her brother, Humphrey, was thrown from his horse in 1834 and killed instantly. In 1837, the family attended a ball at Launceston to welcome the Franklins and later a dinner party at the Cornwall Hotel (p368) for their successors, the Denisons. The Greys were a large Irish family with several sons, so they had several properties, a couple of which are incorporated in today's Benham which stretches for miles along the road south to Royal George.

Sarah Birch (1814–1892), daughter of Sarah and Thomas Birch of Birch Castle, later the Macquarie Hotel (p245) married, in 1831, Simeon Lord, son of a convict of the same name who made good in New South Wales and the woman who eventually became his wife, proto-feminist Mary Hyde. The

young couple settled on the Avoca property given him by his father; there they built Bona Vista, started in 1831, completed in 1848 when it had 43 residents, 25 of them free. Martin Cash was said to have worked there as a groom and, indeed, surprised young **Catherine Grey** and a friend in his later manifestation as a bushranger when they were out walking unescorted. But he merely asked them their names and destination; the Greys were reputed to treat their assigned servants well, and Cash was renowned as a gentleman (p96).

In 1853, however, absconding Lords' servants who had become bushrangers did attack Bona Vista, murdered Constable Buckmaster, called to assist, and robbed the house. The story is told of how Miss Isobel had to hand over the jewellery she had been wearing but had quickly sat upon. Unfortunately, the Lords do not appear to have had a daughter of that name (of their ten children); perhaps it was **Louisa Lord** (b1833).

Bona Vista is along Story's Creek Road, running north past St Thomas's, alongside St Paul's River and crossing the South Esk just beyond where the two rivers meet – a picturesque route. Soon on the left is a walled estate containing a single-storey old Colonial Regency house with walled courtyards, barns, paddocks for young stock and gardens. Under the ballroom in the east wing are dungeons where convict servants were confined at night. Although it is privately owned, you might be able to arrange, at least, to drive around the internal road which allows you a good view of the house. Another Grey property is now part of Bona Vista.

Pulling the Greys, Bona Vista, Benham and, indeed, Avoca, together is **Maria Raake** (née Lambert, 1832–1932). She was born on one of the Grey estates and baptised with a Grey granddaughter, and then confirmed with her 18 years later. In 1852, she married the music master to the Lords' children. Maria remembered the end of transportation in 1853 and took part in the celebrations (p172). She was witness to the murder of the constable at Bona Vista. As a maternity nurse she attended, often on horseback, the births of 1,000 or so babies over 50 years – the last in her 90th year was at Bona Vista; meanwhile, she had six daughters of her own. She saw five generations of the O'Connor family at Benham where she lived for 73 years. Not only did she watch St Thomas's being built, her father was one of the carpenters; the sandstone came from Bona Vista. To celebrate her 100th birthday she donated a splendid Bible to it.

In 1839 **Emma von Stieglitz** (1807–1880) sketched Brookstead, reproduced in *Early Van Diemen's Land 1835–1860: Sketches by Emma von Stieglitz* (1963, edited by KR von Stieglitz). The house is dwarfed by Ben Lomond rising behind it. Brookstead, ten miles southeast of Avoca on the Royal George road, was Emma's home before her marriage. Her brother, Robert Cowie, arrived in 1828 and was granted the land. Their mother, **Rachel Cowie** (née Buxton, c1770–1846) and the rest of the family arrived to join him in 1834. (The father, left behind, died the year of their arrival.) Georgiana, who tells the nice story about Salome Pitt Bateman in 1834 (p44), was Emma's sister.

Two years later, Emma married John Lewis von Stieglitz of a neighbouring estate, and thus became the sister-in-law of both Catherine McNally Ransom and her daughter Ann (p328). (And Emma's brother, John, married **Charlotte Christina von Stieglitz**).

Robert had, in 1832, married **Julia Luthman**, the Irish-Swedish governess of a Longford family, and two of their daughters are known as Tasmanian artists; indeed, **Emily Bowring** (née Cowie, 1835–c1912; m1854) produced the sketches of Mount Wellington, the new Government House and Queen's Orphanage. Julia Cowie is known for an 1855 sketch of Brookstead, and watercolours and sketches of buildings and plants. It is fair to assume that Aunts Emma and Georgiana (who also sketched) influenced them. Julia was an early proponent of the Methodist Ladies' College, Launceston (p380).

The story of some of these extraordinarily linked Fingal Valley families is told in *An Early Tasmanian Story: With Oakdens, Cowies, Parramores, Tullochs and Hoggs* (2004) by Anne and Robin Bailey. It contains extracts from Georgiana's diary, though it began to peter out after arrival at Brookstead. Not surprisingly, some pages were torn out; writing of her sister **Mary Cowie** (1800–1874), she noted that '[She] has just returned from a visit to the "Goths"' – to Mr and Mrs Henry von Stieglitz. The extended 'Goth' family had gone from Pomerania to Bohemia (in the fourteenth century), then to Saxony, and finally to Ireland, in 1802, before emigrating to Tasmania, in the charge of widowed baroness **Charlotte von Stieglitz** (née Atkinson), starting in 1829.

The Cowie family letters continued, within Tasmania as well as home. Emma, writing to Georgiana about the latter's wish to become a governess because she was unhappy at Brookstead, then captures poor **Mrs Henry von Stieglitz** (to whom Emma was soon to become a sister-in-law), and Avoca more generally. **Jane Cowie** (1802–1884) is another sister of the older generation; several of the Grey male cousins, as well as Humphrey, held army rank, so it is not possible to identify their wives in what follows:

> Jane and I agree to saying we never enjoyed society so much before as we did at the Greys. We felt that we really formed part of it and both Captain and Mrs G are so polite and agreeable. Mrs Major Grey called when we were there and said the visit was expressly for us. She is a very pleasant lady like woman and reminded me strongly of Lady Mordaunt, though she is not quite so pretty … You will hear, we shall have a new neighbour, Mrs H. Stieglitz in a few months. She is very lovely, friendly but not very polished, nor in the least accomplished, still she is a lady and will be a very kind and pleasant neighbour. We have scarcely been a day quite alone for the last fortnight.

Lady Mordaunt must have been a relative or close family friend because Georgiana, married to Phillip Oakden in 1839, named her last child Mordaunt Oakden.

Nile

Kingston and Ben Lomond – Eliza Callaghan, John Batman and the Camerons

Back on the Midland Highway, you are almost immediately at the old railway junction Conara. Just past it, on the right, is the turnoff to Nile, a minor road running parallel to the Highway which leads eventually to the 'Historic Clarendon Homestead'. But this road has more than that to offer: Kingston, where Eliza Callaghan, absconder (p58) lived with John Batman. Cross the beautiful South Esk River and, in January, there should be poppy fields shimmering pale green in the distance. Just before the turnoff to Kingston is a house on the road providing lovely fresh eggs and information. Thereafter, there is a sign for Nile and Evandale that turns left, but instead go straight on. Kingston Road does not advertise itself obviously and, although it is a public road, it is not tarmacked. The final 150 yards to Kingston homestead is private; please do not venture there unless you have made arrangements with the owner, Simon Cameron, to do so. A branch of the extended Cameron family has owned Kingston since 1905, and 'The Rise and Fall of Eliza Batman' (1985), a scholarly chapter by Max Cameron, shows their continuing interest in its past.

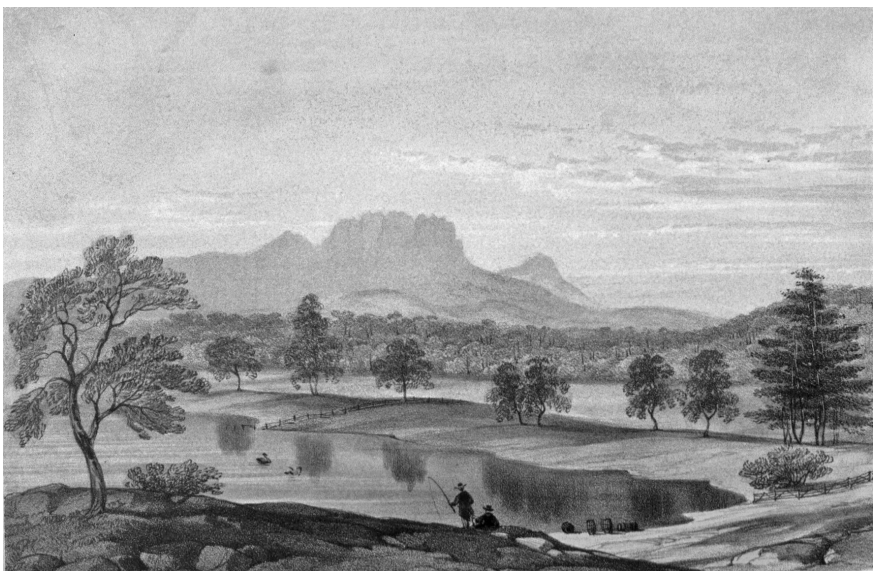
Kingston's original cottage, reconstructed, is there; 2 kilometres walk away are rubble remains of the house where Eliza and Batman lived with their growing family – what Simon Cameron calls 'a pleasant walk to a pile of bricks'. A 1920s photograph shows a roofless and tumbling but substantial two-storey house. When it was abandoned, and why, remain uncertain. Caressa Crouch explores the history of the various buildings on the property, as well as Eliza's place there in 'Kingston – The Residence of John Batman, Van Diemen's Land' (1995).

You really don't need to go beyond the gate into the Cameron property to get the full impact of where Eliza lived for more than ten years. It is an enchanting setting along the Ben Lomond Rivulet, with the frilly, pleated mountain range dominating the horizon. Emily Bowring's 1859 sketch 'Ben Lomond' gives a fine impression, though lacks the refreshing green that marks the rocky passage of the rivulet. Elizabeth Hudspeth's 1855 western face version from a more watery angle can now be seen as a coloured lithograph, while Louisa Anne Meredith's 1852 view from St Paul's Plains is a wood engraving. They are in the Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts and can be seen on line. A water colour and pencil sketch by Eliza Cox (p355), viewed from near Ross, is in the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery.

It is not known how Eliza Callaghan, or Thompson as she also called herself, and John Batman met. Close's fictional stab – a chance meeting on the road – is as good as any. Batman was the son of a convict transported to New South Wales, and a mother who paid her fare. He arrived in Tasmania from there in 1821, the same year that Eliza was transported directly to Tasmania. By 1824, he had the land grant at Kingston and the following year Eliza gave

birth to their first child, **Maria Batman**; they were to have seven daughters and, in 1837, a last child, John.

Tales are told of how, when rumours of Eliza's presence brought the authorities to the house in 1825 in search of the absconder while Batman was absent, she hid in the cellar while their staff fended them off. They did, however, note a woman's effects about the place. She was presumably then pregnant; it would have been harder to hide evidence of a baby in the house.



45. Ben Lomond from Greenhill, by Elizabeth Hudspeth, courtesy of the Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office

Batman, meanwhile, was responsible for the capturing of the bushranger, Matthew Brady (p90), and took part in the 'conciliation' of the Aborigines (p117). It was these activities that led the governor not only to increase Batman's land grant but also to look kindly on his plea to marry absconder Eliza Thompson; they did so in 1828 (p376). Her pardon was gazetted in 1833. CP Billot in *John Batman: The Story of John Batman and the Founding of Melbourne* (1979) suggests that liaisons like theirs 'were not that uncommon, and involved no ostracism'.

Kathleen Graves (née Priest, 1901–1974) takes a different line in *Exile* (1947) in which the irresistible Kinnaird – married to his assigned servant and ostracised – is quite clearly based on Batman, and his property on Kingston. The story starts in 1826 and is ostensibly about Kinnaird's neighbours, Clair and Richard Thursby, drawing on the diaries of Kathleen's grandfather of Devonport. But Kinnaird dominates the story of the problems and society of settlers and the uncertain and harassed lives of convict servants and Aborigines. It is not at all a bad read. (Kathleen Graves made her name with *Tasmanian*

Pastoral (1953), an account of the first year of making something of their property Woodlands at Lemana, to the west of Launceston – a 'year-long battle against weather, soil and disease', but keenly appreciative of the environment, and harking back to the lives of settlers since their arrival. The house still stands and Kathleen is buried in Deloraine Cemetery.)

Views on Batman's relations with Aborigines are mixed. Bonwick devotes a whole chapter to them and includes several quotations of praise for his efforts. Batman's biographical entry by LP Brown provides a useful paraphrase: he notes his 'persevering leadership in the first conciliation campaign amongst the Tasmanian Aboriginals. He wrote of "that much injured and most unfortunate race", and [Governor] Arthur called him "one of the few who supposed that they might be influenced by kindness".'

Alistair H Campbell, in *John Batman and the Aborigines* (1987), has a more hostile view. In reviewing it, Plomley writes: 'It is a pleasure to read an account of Batman's activities that does not find them praiseworthy.' That, of course, includes those on the mainland where Batman 'bought' from the Aborigines the land that became Melbourne.

Bonwick writes that Batman was the first (before Robinson) to use Aboriginal women to help in his task of 'conciliation', that is, finding Aborigines and rounding them up, supposedly for their own good. Several Aborigines lived at Kingston during this time, briefly or for longer periods. On one occasion, the women emissaries to their people, one of them named **Luggenemenener** (1800–1837), persuaded nine men there, causing some alarm to Eliza and her daughters because they were armed, curious about everything around them, and 'hungry as hunters'. Batman himself, finally arriving home, wrote:

> Their appetite is enormous, devouring everything they meet. They are particularly fond of half-roasted eggs of every description, geese, ducks, and hens; it is all one – so much so, that Mrs Batman's poultry yard will cut but a sorry figure after the company.

Luggenemenener ended up at Wybalenna, called Queen Charlotte by Robinson, and there, like so many others, she died (p116).

Batman also wrote of Aboriginal women at Kingston: 'The women here all day. The evening, the young child, belonging to one of the women, that sucked at the breast, died. I put it in a box and buried it at the top of the garden. She seemed much affected at the loss of the child, and cried much.' The following day, he added: 'This morning I found the woman … over the grave, and crying much.' What was intended as sympathy, or simply a record of fact, could also be seen as surprise that Aborigines had feelings. Writing of life in the bush, there are several entries: 'The black women could not walk well.' 'Caught a kangaroo for the women.' 'The women much tired: made them some tea, and gave them bread and mutton.' Now that really was a suggestion of equality, gender, at least! Campbell gives a full context for these entries.

Batman, with the permission of Arthur with whom he got on well – one of the reasons for Robinson's hostility – had brought some male trackers over

from the mainland. But the one who, in 1830, married a Tasmanian woman whose European name was **Catherine Kennedy** – brought up by a settler a Christian and 'a good house servant' – was also local (p376). Batman wrote to Arthur asking for land for the couple, as a reward for the tracker's services, and to encourage others, adding: 'the black women who left my place are well aware that he and his wife are their country people. They seemed to be well pleased to see them clothed and comfortable. They are both now living at my farm.' Although Arthur agreed, the land does not seem to have been allocated. And, of course, it traditionally belonged to the man's people anyway – and ochre had been procured from the area for millennia – even if the land had not been farmed in the European way.

Although by 1835 Kingston consisted of more than 7,000 acres, the terrain was too rugged to be satisfactorily productive. Batman had, since 1827, had his eye on the Mainland; now he determinedly set out. What followed, including the creation, with John Fawkner, of Melbourne, is not a story for here, except that by April 1836, he had built a house there and Eliza, their seven daughters and governess **Caroline Newcomb** (1812–1874) joined him. By then, he was already walking with difficulty. Two years later, he was totally disabled, probably from syphilis, affecting their relationship. Eliza left for England early in 1839, perhaps to further their interests, but heard of his death on her return to Australia. His financial affairs were left in disarray.

Eliza married his former clerk, William Willoughby in 1841 but the marriage does not appear to have lasted. Eliza, now called Sarah, took to drink and became a 'somewhat abandoned character'. The drowning of her son John in 1845 cannot have helped; in a letter to one of her daughters about his death – the only piece of her writing that survives – she wrote: 'all my happiness in this world is buried in the grave with him'. She died at Geelong on 29 March 1852 after being violently attacked, probably by three drinking companions. Documents concerning Eliza's life, from her trial to her murder, are contained in *Callaghan and Batman: Van Diemen's Land in 1825* ('EF', 1978).

As Max Cameron points out, 'Eliza held positions in society that were closely linked with her marital status and wealth'; without them, survival of women in her situation was a not always successful struggle. A year after Eliza's death, one of her daughters, for reasons of her own, described her mother as 'Elizabeth Callan, governess'. She might have tried her hand at it, she had become literate and was obviously intelligent; and it provided a better memory of her.

Continuing towards Launceston/Evandale, just before the little village of Nile, you pass the original grant to the first Cameron in the district. Dr Donald Cameron and his wife **Margaret Cameron** (née Still, m1803; d1860) arrived in 1822 and, by 1823, had built Fordon (now known as Old Fordon). Margaret, who favoured country life in spite of the obvious difficulties of the time and place, was largely responsible for the creation of the water race – a hand-dug channel of three or so miles to carry water from the Nile River to Fordon to make it viable.

Of the Cameron's four children, young Donald's wife from 1847 was **Mary Isabella Cameron** (née Morrison, d1913). She introduced Jersey cattle into Tasmania. She is also the Mrs Cameron who travelled with and described the writer Caroline Leakey in 1848 (p167). Before their marriage, her husband was called in to arbitrate when the Taylors acquired Kenilworth from Eliza Forlong (p340).

Of Mary and Donald's four children, two require mention here. **Adeline Stourton** (née Cameron, b1856; m1875) established the Tasmanian Branch of the Victoria League which encouraged patriotism at the time of the Boer War. Her brother, Cyril St Clair Cameron, had taken part in the war as a captain in the Tasmanian Mounted Infantry. He returned home a hero and advanced in military and civil activities and standing. All this is relevant to the account by Meriel Talbot of her 1909/10 tour of the Antipodes, including Tasmania, as secretary of the original Victoria League from its foundation in 1901–16. Julia Bush, in *Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power* (2000), writes of two Tasmanian functions she attended:

> Meriel … continued to benefit from the deference which her own social status inspired among many 'colonials'. In Tasmania … she noted, 'I'm getting quite to take the "first lady" place as a matter of course and to find all doors opening before me!' On the same day she attended a Victoria League reception at the Masonic Hall.
>
> 'I was brought in late by Colonel Cameron, the sort of Kitchener of Tasmania, and led to a carpet where each guest was brought up and introduced – "presented" to me – some of the dear dim little people almost curtsied! It was all very nicely done – the Hall decorated with red, white and blue flowers and hangings and a great Union Jack behind the little dais place.'

Both Adeline Stourton and her mother, Mary Cameron, who was the first President of the League (1904) – established settlers of substance – were undoubtedly there. Any comment from me is probably superfluous!

Although you now come to Clarendon further along Nile Road, that homestead, within easy driving distance of Launceston, is for the next itinerary. This one assumes that you did not turn right at Conara, but continued up the Midland Highway. But, before you leave this area, with Avoca to the south – where Humphrey Grey and Simeon Lord were friends of Batman (I don't know about the women) – Fingal to the east and Mathinna to the north east, you may wish to explore the Ben Lomond National Park. From two points just north and just south of Nile, or from Evandale, you can drive all the way round, on a sometimes rough road, coming out at Fingal; (we started at Fingal).

It was common, and probably still is, to climb Ben Lomond to watch the sunrise. Eliza Batman certainly did. Annie Baxter even went on a camping expedition there in March 1837 with the *jeunesse dorée* among whom she

mixed, riding without a saddle (pp266, 358). They dined, danced and sang the evening away before the climb, about which she wrote:

> Had it been possible I would have undergone twice the difficulty to have seen so beautiful a scene – when we reached the foot we had something to eat and drink & we then went up to the summit – Elizabeth & Mr Cox [of Clarendon p?] remained at the foot – what heart, what soul in this party did not feel the presence of one Great immortal being – the very rocks seemed to confess that altho' high – there was yet a more exalted place – We came down faster than most of us had ever intended I'm sure – for to tell the truth we slipped all the way nearly …

Today, people also go to Ben Lomond to ski.

GB Lancaster (Edith Lyttleton)

Clyne Vale (Epping Forest)

Back on the Midland Highway and coming into Epping Forest, Belle Vue Road is on the right. Some miles along and past Glasslough on the left is Clyne Vale, also on the left. (If you reach Belle Vue at the end of the road, you have gone too far.)

Unfortunately, I don't know who now owns Clyne Vale, only that the latest purchasers sold all but 80 of the 1,345 acres. Down a lovely avenue of trees is an attractive white Georgian house, with its later (1890) verandah on stilts, overlooking the South Esk River.

The land was granted in 1822 to Captain James Crear RN. When he left the sea in 1831, by which time Clyne Vale was built, he and his wife **Joan Crear** (née Clyne) and their four children settled there. His two daughters were artistic. The atmospheric water colours 'South Esk at Clyneville', 'Ben Lomond, near Tullochgorum' and 'Valley of the South Esk', all dated c1855, held in the Rex Nan Kivell Collection, National Library of Australia, and viewable online, are by **Johannah Clyne Crear** (1824–1884). Although an amateur and disabled, she exhibited twice. **Helen Maxwell Crear** (1827–1860) died young, leaving only a small collection of works. A pencil and wash view of Clyne Vale by Johannah's friend **Sarah Ann Fogg** (1829–1922), dated 1868, is in the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston.

When James Crear died in 1859, Johannah inherited Clyne Vale. By 1873, her cousin Westcott (Westcote) McNab Lyttleton was managing the property for her, living there with his new wife, **Emily Lyttleton** (b1848), granddaughter of Captain William and Marie Wood of Hawkridge (p88). The Lyttletons stayed at Clyne Vale for six years and it was there in 1873 that their daughter Edith, better known as GB Lancaster, author of *Pageant* (p88), was born. A short biographical entry is one of many of Tasmania's women writers in *Tasmanian Literary Landmarks* (Margaret Giordano). *An Unsettled Spirit: The Life and Frontier Fiction of Edith Lyttleton (GB Lancaster)* (Terry Sturm,

2003) includes her life and writing beyond Tasmania. *Pageant*, her most highly-regarded novel, is the only one about the island. By its inception, she had long left (she lived for 30 years in New Zealand and died in London just before the end of the Second World War) but returned for a year to do research and write, living with cousins in Pakenham Street, Longford.

Hawkridge (Powranna)

If you are particularly interested in GB Lancaster's *Pageant* and its setting, you will want to pursue her to Hawkridge, the home of her great grandparents (p88). The property was the model for *Pageant's* Clent Hall, and her great-grandparents for the Comyns. The Woods had met in Guadaloupe where he was an officer during the Napoleonic Wars and her French ship had been captured and taken there. They married in 1810, after a courtship of ten days, when Marie de Gouges was 16. Marie's aunt had been lady-in-waiting to Marie Antoinette and guillotined the same day. It was not surprising that Tasmania of 1829 presented a change in environs and lifestyle – even though Hawkridge, like Clent Hall, had plenty of assigned servants and convict labourers. A portrait of Marie Wood is on p88.

Hawkridge is not easy to find, and not what you expect when you get there. As Joan Prevost explains in *From the Epping Banks to the Esk* (1988):

> The original house built by Captain Wood had been burnt down long ago. Another house built to replace that one was also burnt down, so that the four roomed weatherboard house with some additions, was the third house to be built at Hawkridge.

We had to be very persistent in finding Powranna; though marked on the map, there is no sign either side of the Midland Highway. This may well be because of what goes on there. If you get as far as the racecourse at Symmons Plain on the right, you have gone too far. Have the courage of your convictions and take the only turning before then to the right. Soon you come across a sign, 'Feedalot'. The Japanese owners of this cattle estate don't want to be obvious. Go past the company's office, past miserable, crowded pens full of thousands of sad, dull, dusty cattle, on a track going back parallel to the Highway, but hidden from it, and towards a clump of pine trees. There you will come to a modern bungalow called Hawkridge. We turned up unannounced and must have looked disappointed – we expected Clent Hall – but the owner was courtesy itself and allowed us to walk around and take photographs, for which I thank her here. The view is as it was in Marie Wood and Mme Comyn's day; as Joan Prevost puts it:

> The house at Hawkridge has a magnificent view of the river flats and low hills crowned by the Ben Lomond range. It stands in a commanding position on a high bank, as all the houses do which lie on the 'Banks' of

the ridge, which extends for many miles from The Corners at Conara to Snake Banks at Powranna.

Back on the Midland Highway, take the road to Evandale and then backtrack down Nile Road to Clarendon, which starts the next itinerary. Or, if you want to leave GB Lancaster for your return journey south, continue on Nile Road after Kingston.