

# LETTER from BATMAN

Locked for 40 Years  
in Office Safe



TER having been locked for more than 40 years in a pawnbroker's safe, a copy of an interesting letter from John Batman, the founder of Melbourne, has been discovered. The letter was written from Kingston (T.) by Batman to his friend John Helder Wedge, one of the shareholders in the Port Phillip Association, which Batman organised. As the date on the letter is June 18, 1835, it must have been the first written by Batman on his return to Tasmania from making



Drawing of Batman

a treaty with the aborigines of Port Phillip. The centenary of his landing in Melbourne will be celebrated on June 9 this year.

The members of the historical committee of the Centenary Council, which published an official history of Victoria, were aware

of other letters written by Batman from Kingston, but none bore a date as early as June 18. Batman did not make his official report to Governor Arthur on his voyage to the future site of Melbourne till June 25. According to this report, Batman left Port Phillip on June 14, and arrived in Launceston on June 16. He must have travelled direct to Kingston, where the letter was written. It refers to his interview with John Pascoe Fawcner in Launceston. Batman's ship, the Rebecca, left on its second voyage to Port Phillip on July 20, a day before Fawcner's ship, the Enterprise.

Although the paper is faded and worn, and bears every appearance of being 100 years old, the letter is not the original, and only close examination reveals that it is an expert lithograph. Experts in handwriting, however, are certain that it

handwriting, however, are certain that it is a true and accurate lithograph of a Batman letter. The letter has passed into the possession of Mr. Bruce Small, of Elizabeth street. Mr. Small's great-grandfather, Sergeant John Small, of the Black Watch, came to Australia in the Charlotte, one of the ships of Governor Phillip's fleet, in 1788. Sergeant Small's two brothers, William and Thomas, arrived before 1800, and settled in the Ryde district, in New South Wales. They were the pioneers of the cedar industry there. A daughter who was born to Sergeant Small and his wife in September, 1789, was among the first white children born in Australia. She died at the age of 94 years at Parramatta (N.S.W.).

The letter reads as follows:—

Dear Wedge. When in Launceston I had the honour of a call from John Fawcner Esq. who said he was only waiting the return of his ship from Sydney, which he expected hourly, and a great deal more. After hearing all he had to say, I asked him what part he was going to. He said the place which was formerly settled on the point Nepean, and that he wished to be on good terms with us, and that he would not in any way interfere with us, and hope we should act in the same way toward him, that was, that we would not encourage his servants to. He intends to purchase the land from the natives, and said he did not want a large tract, that he would have some difficulty in treating with them unless I would allow him one of my natives, and if I would not, the only thing he could do after settling there would be to send to Sydney for some. The answer I made respecting my natives was that I should or would see about it. He offered to take anything I wished down there or any person. He takes 2000 trees. He further told me he had 14 families altogether going down with him, and the rules, &c., &c., all drawn up and signed by them all, that each party would take about 5 or 200 pounds worth them. What think you of all this? For my part as he goes to the opposite side I think it all the better for us, the more the better. All the parties I have seen in Launceston, that are connected with us, are sanguine, and will meet by appointment on my return from Hobart Town. Think I shall leave on Saturday, Sunday certain, if you write me to Hobart, direct—Free Mason's Tavern—I am sure you could get a passage in J.P.'s vessel. Try and get leave for one month, nothing in Launceston, but the New Country. Lots of people will go, I am certain. This evening, reading over the "Courier" I saw the enclosed respecting the natives at Great Island Ross recommends their being sent on the coast of New Holland. What say you? Shall I mention this to the Governor? Would it not be to our interest to give up the neck of 400,000 acres to them? Write me particularly on this head. Of course, I should wish to take Gellibrand's advice. Do you not recollect the Governor mentioning this to us when on the coast with him, and that Darling should go over with them? With respects to your family

P.S.—I quite forgot myself in signing this, but I shall get over it in time. I will write to you after my interview with the little man.

Batman had apparently earned himself a nickname, Dutigalla, after one of the aboriginal chiefs who signed the treaty for a grant of land, as he apologises to Wedge in the postscript for having signed his own name. The correct name is crossed out, but it is quite decipherable, and the nickname is written below.