

The Ballad of Samuel Hawkings

1816-1867

Anne L. McKenzie



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This is the story of Samuel Hawkings from his beginnings as a shoemaker in Cornwall, his enlistment in the 22nd and 28th Regiments of Foot and his subsequent journey to Australia as a convict guard. There are anecdotes of his time as officer in charge of the Mount Macedon Border Police through to his establishment of the infamous Porcupine Inn during the Victorian gold rush. It concludes with his settlement as a squatter in the Avoca district and overseer of Dalyenong Station.

The information has been gathered from official records, historical societies and extensive searches of old newspaper articles.

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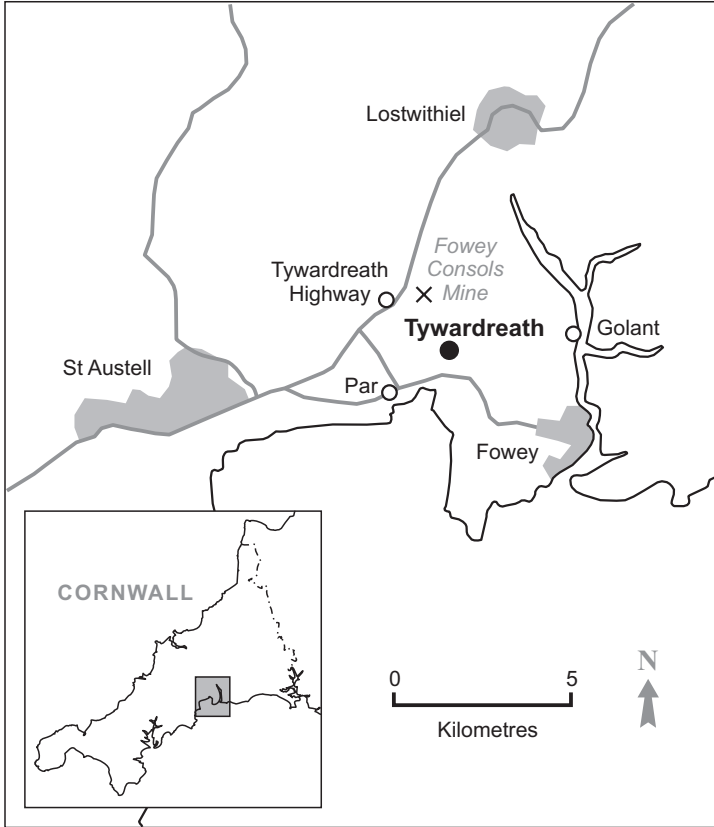
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Cover: 'The disputed claim', circa 1855

Lithographer: Cyrus Mason. Image: State Library of Victoria

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Location of Tywardreath in Cornwall, UK

Illustration © 2012 Anne McKenzie

From shoemaker to foot soldier



St Andrews parish church, Tywardreath

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Samuel Hawkings (or Hawkins as he was sometimes known) was born in the parish of Tywardreath, near the town of St Austell in Cornwall, England and baptised on the 10th of December 1816 (see Appendix). He was the youngest of nine children born to farmer Joseph Hawkings and Margery Daddow.

Tywardreath was predominantly a fishing village up until the 19th century ^[1] when rapid expansion of mining in the area saw the population increase from about 700 people in 1801 to over 3,000 in 1841 ^[2]. The industry was at its peak when Joseph Austin Treffry

consolidated the surrounding mines to form the new Fowey Consols Copper Mine in 1882 ^[3].

Samuel and his older brother, James, spent their youth training to become shoemakers. Whilst James continued in the trade ^[4], Samuel decided it wasn't for him and at the age of 18, he enlisted in the 22nd Cheshire Regiment of Foot ^[5].

Apart from the prospect of a regular income as a soldier, Samuel was probably attracted by the exploits of his oldest brother, Joseph. Joseph Hawkings was about 16 years older than Samuel and had enlisted in the 28th North Gloucestershire Regiment in 1816 – three months before Samuel was baptised ^[5].

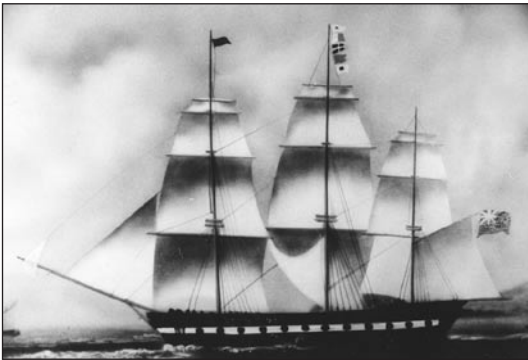
Joseph was an experienced foot soldier having served with the 28th from 1818 to 1830 putting down insurrections in Corfu and the Ionian Islands ^[5]. In 1832 he was based in the west of Ireland dealing with outbreaks of civil unrest and in the spring of 1833 he was engaged in the disagreeable protection of the tithe proctors. The forced collection of tithes during a time of great hardship in Ireland caused a lot of resentment and distress amongst the tenant farmers.

Samuel was initially based at Plymouth before being transferred to the 28th North Gloucestershire Regiment at Chatham where he joined Joseph. It was often the custom to have family members in the same regiment ^[6]. At enlistment, Samuel was described as being of fresh complexion, having grey eyes, brown hair and standing 5 feet, 9 ½ inches tall ^[5].

The journey to Australia

In 1835, the 28th Regiment began escorting convicts from England to Australia in several batches. Corporal Samuel Hawkings, along with his older brother Private Joseph Hawkings, was amongst the first to leave, embarking from Chatham on the 8th of April 1835. He was assigned to the convict ship *Mangles* which departed from Portsmouth about two weeks later escorting 310 male convicts to Van Diemen's Land.

Built and registered in Calcutta, the *Mangles* was a 595 ton, three-masted rigged ship built of teak and measuring about 123 feet in length and 33 feet in breadth. This was her seventh trip to Australia transporting convicts. The ship was captained by William Carr who was known as an intrepid sail-carrier due to his fast passages between England, Australia and China. In 1828, the *Mangles* ran out to Sydney from Dublin in 100 days ^[7].



The convict ship 'Mangles' circa 1858

Source: State Library of Victoria

This journey to Australia took just 102 days. The Surgeon Superintendent was Dr Suther, R. N. The guard consisted of one sergeant, two corporals and 25 privates of the 17th and 28th Regiments under the command of Ensign Cory of the 17th Regiment and Lieutenant Wardell and Assistant Surgeon McDonald of the 28th Regiment.

Other passengers included 8 women and 12 children. One soldier died during the voyage ^[8].

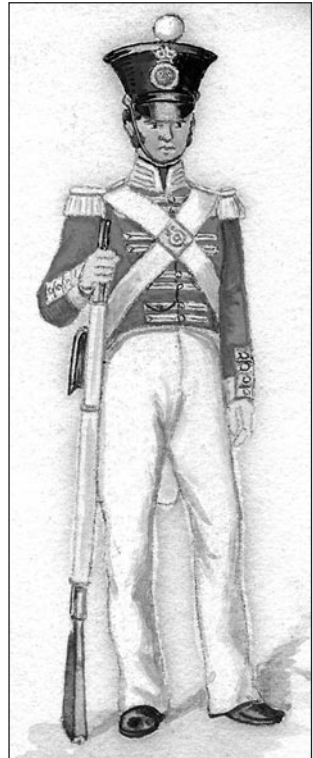
The ship arrived in Hobart Town on the first of August 1835. The local newspapers reported the *Mangles*' arrival and commented that half the convicts transported appeared to be no more than children consisting for the most part of 'poor decrepit chimney sweepers' who had been thrown out of employment by the introduction of the 1834 Chimney Sweeps Act ^[9] ^[10].

After off-loading its human cargo destined for the coal pits of Port Arthur ^[11], the *Mangles* proceeded to New South Wales where Corporal Hawkings disembarked on the 28th of August 1835. He was initially assigned to garrison guard duty before being posted to Maitland near Newcastle, in September.

A mercurial soldier

In August and September 1836, Hawkings was on guard duty having been promoted to Sergeant on the 10th of August. However, he did not last long in this rank. In November, while stationed at Pennant Hills, he was imprisoned for four days and reduced to the rank of Private as a result of an offence for which there are no records ^[5].

Over the next two years, Private Samuel Hawkings was posted to Parramatta, Pennant Hills, Emu Plains and back to Parramatta. During this time, another unrecorded offence saw him deprived of two day's pay by order of the Lieutenant-Colonel. Meanwhile, his brother Joseph had fared no better in the Colony, being sentenced to three weeks in solitary confinement for an undisclosed offence shortly after his arrival in New South Wales. Joseph, after several stints in the military hospital at Parramatta, was eventually invalided back to England in 1839 and discharged from the army on a pension of a shilling and a penny per day. He returned to Tywardreath and lived with his brother James and family.



1844 summer uniform of a Private in the 28th Regiment

© 2011 Soldiers of Gloucestershire Military Museum (www.glost.org.uk)

Samuel's fortunes changed for the better however, and on the first of July 1838, whilst stationed at Parramatta, he was promoted back to Corporal after Corporal Roe had been reduced to the ranks. The following year Corporal Samuel Hawkings was posted to Port Phillip and in 1840 he held the position of Overseer of Prisoners under the Clerk of Works, James Rattenbury Esq., with an annual wage of 18 pounds and 5 shillings ^[12].

A bounty immigrant

By May 1841, Samuel had met and married Mary Kelly – a 21 year old bounty immigrant from Roscrea in County Tipperary, Ireland. Mary had arrived in the Colony the year before on the bounty ship *China* (probably with her step-sister Anne) to work as a housemaid.

In contrast to her husband's journey, Mary's voyage was much more arduous. Captained by Alexander Roberston, under the superintendence of Dr David Stolworthy, the 658-ton *China* was engaged to ship 240 bounty immigrants and about 30 passengers to Port Phillip and New South Wales ^[13]. Under the Bounty Scheme, government agents were paid an incentive (or bounty) to recruit skilled workers and ship them to the new Colony ^[14]. As in the case of the *China*, some unscrupulous agents treated the immigrants like cattle, cramming as many people as possible onto the ships and skimping on the necessities of life – such as food and water ^[15].

Many Irish immigrants at that time, however, were facing poverty or the prospect of eviction from their tenant farms ^[16]. Free passage and a guarantee of employment may have seemed the only way out. A detailed account of the voyage of the *China* survives in the form of a diary by a 22 year old immigrant from Dorset, William Parker Snow. Snow notes the boarding of the Irish immigrants and describes them as 'a regular motley group of rough looking people, dressed in the true characteristic of their country' ^[17].

Snow was also damning of the promises made by shipping agent John Marshall. 'From what I have seen and the uncomfortable manner in which passengers are here, I should advise no person, ever to proceed a voyage of this description in one of the vessels under the superintendence of Mr Marshall!'. He goes on to describe the appalling conditions for the women travelling in steerage who were locked up every night in stifling conditions.

‘Six or seven of the women fainted away owing to the confined state below’. In February 1840 he records that a woman named Kelly fell very ill with fainting fits ^[17].

The passage of the *China* took over five months. Most passengers disembarked in Melbourne with the remainder sailing on to Sydney. Eager to receive the full bounty of £2,470, the official report by the Supervising Surgeon to the immigration authorities on arrival in Melbourne was favourable and listed the deaths of only two infants ^[18]. Snow’s account however recorded the additional deaths of at least two adults and numerous instances of injury and sickness ^[17].

On arrival in Melbourne Mary would have quickly found work as a domestic servant. A year later she married Samuel at St James Church in Melbourne on the 29th of May 1841 (see Appendix). The following month Corporal Samuel Hawkings purchased his discharge from the 28th North Gloucestershire Regiment on payment of £20 ^[5].

Up came the trooper

After leaving the Regiment, Samuel Hawkings joined the Border Police at Mount Macedon under the command of the District Commissioner of Crown Lands, Frederick A. Powlett. Powlett also happened to be the first recorded president of the Melbourne Cricket Club from 1841 to 1843 ^[19].

The border police barracks were located at Gisborne where now Sergeant-Major Hawkings was in charge of a squad of troopers (usually made up of convicts or ex-convicts) during Powlett’s absence ^[20].

Corporal Oxley was his second in command and lived at the barracks with his family. A squad of Native Police troopers was also based at the Gisborne barracks for a short time in 1842 before they were withdrawn to serve further north on the Murray River, then



Crown Commissioner, Frederick A. Powlett

*Photographer: T. F. Chuck
Source: State Library of Victoria*



Mounted police, gold escort guard, Mt Alexander, 1852

Creator: Samuel Thomas Gill. Source: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

the frontier of the settlement. The duties of the border police in these early days of the Colony ranged from settling claim disputes to rounding-up bushrangers and murderers. The high numbers of gold diggers in the area, combined with a limited police presence and lack of social cohesion would have kept Hawkings and his troopers busy. The sly grog trade was also a constant cause of concern.

In September 1841, a Campaspe squatter named Henry Monro sent two of his assigned convicts to Melbourne with a dray and a team of eight bullocks ^[21]. On their return journey, the two men, Govid and Jarvis, had managed to obtain a keg of rum and foolishly camped quite close to the police barracks at Gisborne to enjoy a few drinks. As the evening progressed, probably buoyed by other travellers, they became quite rowdy and attracted the attention of Hawkings and his troopers who promptly arrested the men for sly grog selling.

Hawkings and three of his mounted troopers escorted the prisoners (along with the seized keg of rum) to Melbourne for trial. Govid and Jarvis were subsequently found guilty and returned to government service. Govid, who was thought to be the instigator, was also put in irons for 12 months.

The incident didn't end there however. The Bench of Magistrates, presided over by Major F. B. St John, was unimpressed with the apparent lack of discipline at Monro's station and allowing his convicts to 'roam around the country' ^[21]. By order of the Governor, Monro's remaining assigned convicts were withdrawn. In addition, his dray and eight bullocks were forfeited to the government. Although it was illegal for convicts to have spirits, it was thought that the police had been overly officious and that the Bench had exaggerated the gravity of the offence.

In December of that same year, a trooper named John Lawler got very drunk at the Barracks and made an unprovoked, savage attack on a fellow trooper. Hawkings and some other troopers arrested Lawler who was subsequently tried for assault and sentenced to two years goal ^[20].

A further disturbance occurred at the Barracks in the summer of 1844-1845 when three troopers were charged with conspiring to murder the officer in charge – presumably Sergeant-Major Hawkings. The case was heard in great secrecy by Crown Lands Commissioner, Major F. B. St John, and Frederick A. Powlett – both of whom were magistrates. The charge was subsequently reduced to simple disobedience and the instigator, Trooper George Bartlam, was sentenced to four months imprisonment. The other two troopers received 14 days solitary confinement ^[20].

The Porcupine Inn

By 1846 Samuel had fathered three children by his wife Mary and in December 1846 he resigned the sword and commenced business as an innkeeper, opening the ‘Porcupine Inn’, at Mount Alexander.

The following article appeared in the Melbourne Argus:

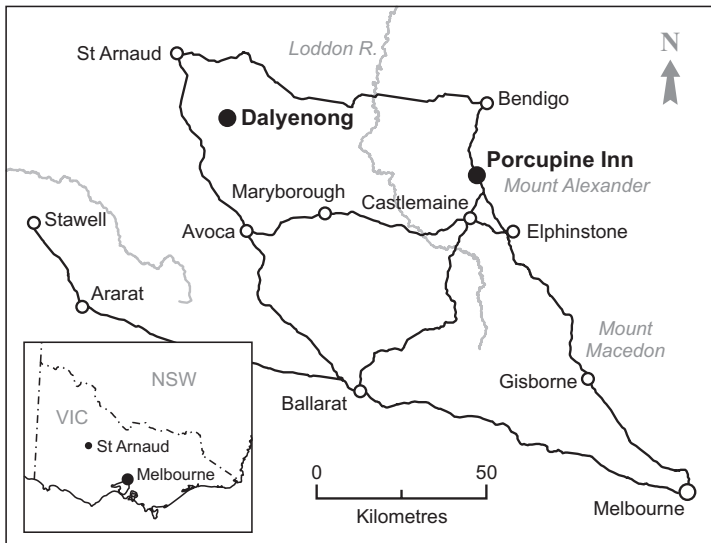
PORCUPINE INN.– Mr. Hawkins, who was for three years a Serjeant of the 22nd Regt.; for five years a Serjeant in the 28th Regt., and subsequently for four years Serjeant Major of the Border Police under Mr. Powlett, has resigned the sword and commenced business as an innkeeper, having opened the Porcupine Inn, at Mount Alexander. From the well-known civility of Mr. Hawkins, in his military capacity, combined with the convenience of his establishment, there can be no doubt he will receive a due share of public patronage and support ^[22].

Hawkings’ chosen name for the Inn may have been derived from the nearby home-station at Mount Alexander which was sometimes known as the Porcupine Mount ^[23]. Alternatively the name may have been inspired by the Porcupine Inn of his birthplace which was a prominent landmark at Tywardreath Highway. The Porcupine Inn at Tywardreath held monthly meetings of the magistrates’ court. The Inn was named after one of the magistrates called Rundle, who was nick-named ‘Old Pricklyback’ ^[24].

Hawkings' Porcupine Inn was initially a simple wattle and daub shack, one of the first in the area [25]. Being the only inn between Elphinstone and the Bendigo goldfields, it became a popular rest stop for travellers seeking drink, food and accommodation on the track from Melbourne to the squatters' stations and the goldfields in the Mount Alexander area.

In these early days of the Colony, the law did not always go hand in hand with justice. In November 1848, Hawkings was brought before the Bench for allowing cards to be played upon his licensed premises. Although he knew nothing of the card game going on in the kitchen, on hearing (from another person) that cards were being played, Hawkings promptly took the cards from the parties and threw them in the fire.

Although this account was supported by several witnesses, not least of which was a Mount Macedon constable who happened to be one of the parties playing, the magistrates inexplicably inflicted a penalty of forty shillings with costs. Hawkings could not appeal as the Act prevented any penalty under five pounds to be appealed against [26].



Location of the Porcupine Inn, near Mt Alexander, Victoria

Illustration © 2012 Anne McKenzie

A more sombre event took place in September of that year when a shepherd named John Walsh committed suicide at the Inn by cutting his own throat. Although Walsh had been employed in Loddon River for some time and had saved a handsome sum, he had been suffering from some general debility that was supposed to have been praying on his mind.



A clay pipe excavated from the site of the old Porcupine Inn

Harcourt Heritage Centre Museum
Photo: © 2011 Anne McKenzie

Hawkings and his wife, Mary, had used every means in their power to restore the man to health during his short stay with them and believed they were making progress when the unhappy event took place ^[27].

In January 1850, after just three years as a publican, Hawkings transferred the licence for the Porcupine Inn to Alexander Walker. Whilst any remittance for the transfer is unknown, it seems an unfortunate business decision. By the spring of 1851, gold had been discovered at Mount Alexander and, at the height of the rush in 1852, the Porcupine Inn was reputed to have made an annual profit of £40,000. The Inn was dubbed 'one of the richest claims in the county' ^[28]. To rub salt into the wound, news that payable gold was to be had at Bendigo Creek was let slip by a local shepherd at the Inn ^[29].

It was about this time, the Porcupine Inn developed a reputation for drunkenness, murder and mayhem. With no other licensed house within 25 miles, and with a surrounding population variously estimated from fifty to seventy thousand, it became the haunt of all types of unsavoury characters. The resident commissioner at the time, Mr J. A. Panton, recalls:

It was in 1851 that, with two or three others, I travelled from the Goulburn towards Mount Alexander, then the centre of northern mining activity. We crossed the range near Mount Alexander and dropped down towards the Porcupine Inn, where a remarkable spectacle was before us. The track was absolutely littered with drays, carts, and teams of every description,

all labouring feverishly northward. The rush to Bendigo had begun. Round about the Porcupine Inn the scene beggared description. Diggers were drinking liquor from utensils of every kind, drunken fights were in progress on every side, and hundreds fought and clamoured to get to the bar ^[30].



Alexander Walker

Photographer: T. F. Chuck

Source: State Library of Victoria

Down came the squatter

About nine months after he had acquired the Porcupine Inn, Alexander Walker also acquired Dailinyong Station (later known as Dalyenong) – a 35,000 acre pastoral run near Avoca. There was probably a business arrangement between Hawkings and Walker as Hawkings was subsequently installed to manage the station. At the age of 34, and with a young family, Samuel became a squatter and turned his hand to sheep farming.

By 1855 however, thousands of diggers were winding their way through Dalyenong to the latest goldrush at New Bendigo (now St Arnaud). Not to miss an

opportunity, the enterprising Hawkings established another public house on the station to capture the passing trade ^[31].

Robbery under arms

In about 1852, Samuel's widowed sister, Mary Lee, along with her two teenage sons, left Cornwall to join her brother in Avoca. Three years later, her younger son, Stephen Hawkings Lee, was to experience one of the many hazards of the early goldfields.

At the age of 15 Stephen was working as a digger and, one Sunday morning in April 1855, he was carting from the New Bendigo diggings to Avoca. About four or five miles from his uncle's station he was confronted by five bushrangers ^[32]. Two of the robbers wore red handkerchiefs over their faces with holes cut out for the eyes and mouth while the other men had covered their faces

with blanket. The bushrangers demanded money from Samuel's young nephew but he refused; replying that he had none. The robbers then took his lead horse, an oilskin coat, a whip and three shillings – but returned the money ^[33].

The boy had a lucky escape. The bushrangers had been working the road at the time, robbing several other unfortunate travellers. Only three hours later the bushrangers held up a group of five men and a woman who were camped not far away. One of the bushrangers, Samuel Weir (alias Philip Hart), subsequently shot the woman (Margaret Doran Wade) who was the wife of one of the campers. She was taken to Hawkings' Inn at Dalynong but died eight hours later.

Due to a question of identity, Weir and two of his company, were convicted on two informations for robbery in company and sentenced to ten years hard labour on the roads for each offence; to be served consecutively. The Attorney-General stated for the crown that, although there were other charges against the prisoners, he did not think it was necessary for the ends of justice that they should be proceeded with ^[34].

A squatter's wife

By 1857 Samuel Hawkings had another three children by his wife Mary (see Appendix), but life was about to take a turn for the worse. On the 8th of February 1857 Mary died under wretched circumstances at the age of 38.

An inquest was held and, according to Samuel, who was the only witness to the event, his wife met her death by falling on a knife while in a state of intoxication. According to the evidence given by Samuel, his wife was in the frequent habit of getting drunk and on the day of the occurrence he had destroyed all the brandy in the house. This had so infuriated his wife that she picked up a knife and threatened to stab him with it.

In the ensuing quarrel it was alleged that Mary fell on the sofa and had somehow managed to stab herself in the neck causing her to bleed to death in a very short time. The coroner stated that from the depth and angle of the wound he did not conceive it was likely she could have inflicted the wound herself but admitted the 'possibility'. The jury returned a qualified verdict of 'accidental death' ^[35].

It was noted that Hawkings was greatly respected in the district and his evidence was supported by two servants who confirmed the quarrelsome disposition of their mistress on the day in question and, that whilst in a state of excitement from the liquor, she had threatened to throw boiling water over and stab them.

The general feeling however was that a further investigation was needed and Hawkings was apprehended for a re-hearing at the police court in Maryborough on the 3rd of August. The case occupied two days and, on further evidence from the surgeon who examined the wound after death, was decidedly in favour of the supposition that she had wounded herself in the fall. The case was dismissed and Samuel was exonerated ^[36].

Mary was buried at Dalyenong but her remains were later removed to the Avoca Cemetery in 1867 ^[37]. Samuel was left to raise his six children. The oldest, a girl, was aged 15 years and the youngest, a boy, just two years old. Samuel's sister Mary had died the year before.

And his ghost may be heard

The next few years of Samuel's life at Dalyenong are sketchy but in February 1861, he was declared insolvent owing £60 to a creditor and only possessing £22 in assets ^[38].

The cause for his insolvency is unknown but, in the preceding years, the pastoral areas of Victoria had been suffering extended periods of drought. The numerous gold rushes in the vicinity also saw fierce competition between miners and graziers for the available water. But most significantly, a new Land Act was introduced in 1860 that would break the monopoly of the squatters holding large pastoral lands. 'Free selection before survey' allowed selectors to purchase allotments within occupied pastoral leases for more intensive agriculture, such as wheat-growing, rather than wool production ^[39]. Not surprisingly this practice impacted the profitability of the squatting stations. By 1866, the size of Dalyenong Station had reduced one third from 35,000 acres to 24,000 acres.

Any, or all, of these factors may have contributed to Samuel Hawkings' insolvency.

In December 1866, Dalyenong Station was advertised for sale. It was described as 'good, sound country with open plains and lightly timbered low hills'. The stock consisted of over 6,000 sheep, 23 cattle and 9 horses. The buildings included a brick house containing eight rooms, a stable, coachhouse, barn, woolshed, huts and drafting yards. There was also a garden of about one and a half acres ^[40].



Dalyenong homestead in 1985

*Image: J.T. Collins Collection, La Trobe Picture Collection.
Source: State Library of Victoria*

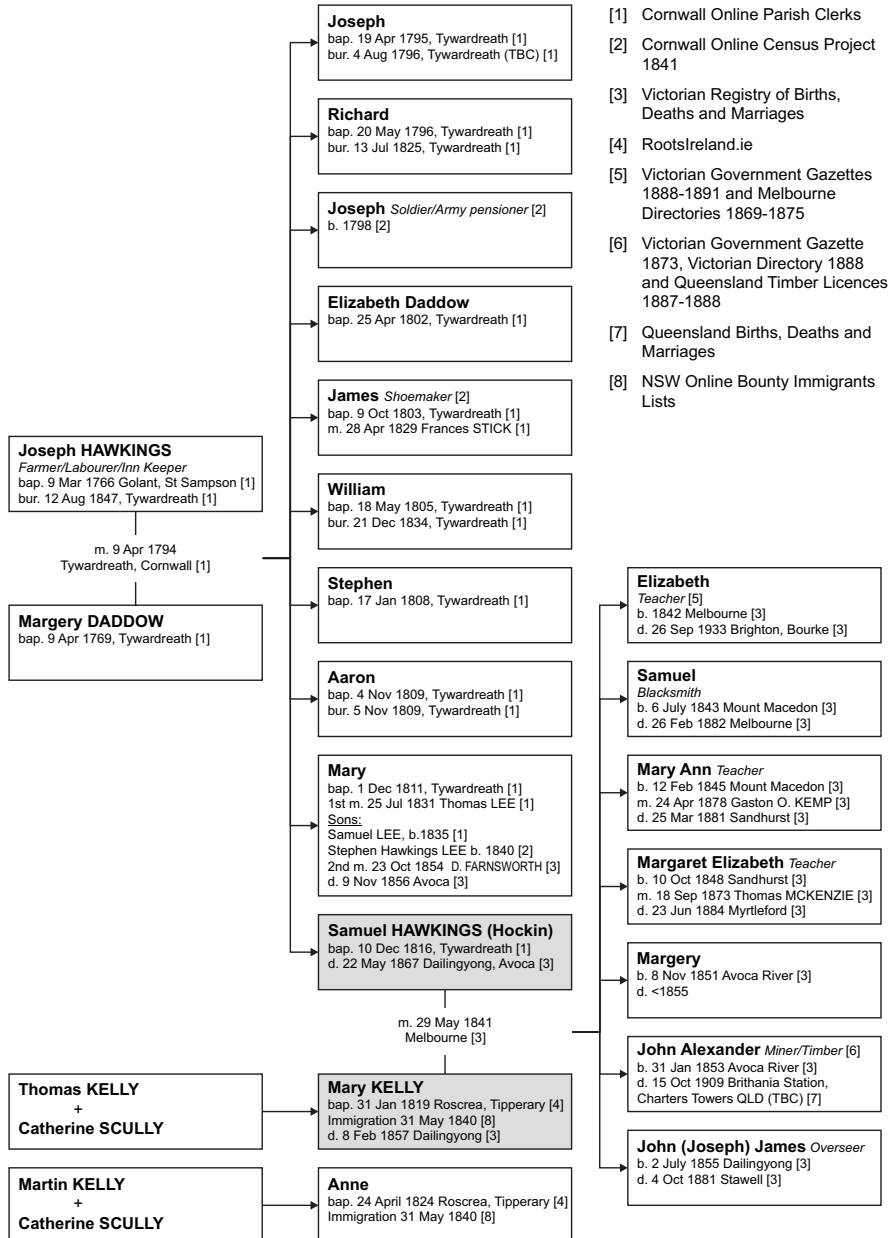
Samuel Hawkings resided at Dalyenong until his death on the 22nd of May 1867 aged 52 years (see Appendix). The informant was his nephew, Stephen Hawkings Lee, who was now working as a blacksmith. The cause of death was 'dilation of the heart with bronchitis and haemoptysis' (or tuberculosis) – a not surprising diagnosis given the harsh conditions endured by the early pioneers.

Samuel's oldest son, also named Samuel, became a blacksmith but died at the aged of 38 without having married. His youngest son, John 'Joseph' James, died accidentally at Stawell, aged 26, when he fell from a horse and suffered a fatal spine injury. It is not known what happen to Samuel's other son, John Alexander, but records indicate that he may have worked as a miner in Rushworth, Victoria or a timber cutter in Charters Towers, Queensland.

Samuel's three surviving daughters all went on to become school teachers. Mary Ann married another school teacher, Gaston Kemp, but died just three years later after the birth of their second child. His youngest daughter, Margaret Elizabeth, married a miner, Thomas McKenzie, but also died young at the age of 35. They had three children. Samuel's eldest child, Elizabeth, never married and taught at ladies schools in Fitzroy and Carlton for 18 years. She died in 1933 at the age of 91 years.

Samuel Hawkings is buried in the Avoca Cemetery.

Appendix: Hawkings family tree records



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