



TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

SIR,—During the present alarming state of the weather the attention of persons is naturally directed to the preservation of the crops, which, in the early part of the season, appeared very promising and abundant, but which, for want of precaution, may now be destroyed. Among many plans that have been suggested to preserve them, perhaps the following may be found worthy of adoption, as there can be no doubt of its proving successful:—To cut the ears of the corn short off, and carry them into barns or other rooms, where they might be spread on the floors, admitting as much air as possible, and, if practicable, artificial heat; and to turn them constantly as the surface becomes dry, until the whole is in a proper state to be laid by for being thrashed. The straw in the mean time might be left standing, or in the sheaf, and at a convenient and seasonable opportunity either mowed or removed to be stacked. By these means the wheat would be preserved, and the straw would receive little or no injury. The trouble and expense of cutting a second time is no object compared with the great advantages to be derived from this plan; and with many excellent farmers it is now the practice to mow the stubble after the harvest is over, merely to lay it down in the yard for manure.

If but a few quarters can be preserved in this manner, it will well reward the writer for his trouble, and you for the space which may be allotted to it.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your most obedient servant,
A. B.

THE AUSTRALIAN GOLD FIELDS.

The following is an extract from a letter, dated "Melbourne, January 5, 1852":—

"The first excitement caused here was the discovery of gold at Ballarat, about 50 miles from Geelong. The whole of the population in Melbourne immediately flocked there, and many of them did extremely well; the majority of them, however, got nothing, and returned to their several occupations. These 'diggins' have been totally eclipsed by the new ones discovered at Mount Alexander, about 75 miles from Melbourne and 20 from Mount Macedon; there everybody is doing well, and I could fill a quire of paper with instances of success. Men are coming down daily with pounds weight of the precious metal, and, like fools, many of them are throwing their money away and killing themselves with drink. You cannot imagine the state of things here. Men who have been servants all their lives are now, after a few weeks' work at the 'diggins,' independent. Society is completely upset, and it is a common thing to be stopped in the street by drunken diggers and offered 5s. a-week to go and work for them at the 'diggins.' This is a sad state of things; but there is no doubt that diggers

'Letters to the Editor' were a daily feature of the *Times*, right from its inception in 1785. *Times*, 27 August 1817, p. 3

Personal accounts of life in Victoria can be found in the *Times*, as well as many articles, notices and commentaries. *Times*, 27 April 1852, p. 8

The *Times* Digital Archive

Newspapers Collections EM 072 T48T

Acquired 2011

The Times has had a reputation for being *the* newspaper read by industry leaders and decision makers. It was first published on 1 January 1785 as the *Daily Universal Register*, and founder John Walter was conscious of what he was up against:

To bring out a New Paper at the present day; when so many others are already established and confirmed in the public opinion, is certainly an arduous undertaking; and no one can be more fully aware of its difficulties than I am ...

This newspaper archive is significant. Like the presence of the long S [f] in this quote, newspapers reflect the language of the day. The immediacy of reports and opinion capture the atmosphere of life as it was, rather than how it might be remembered.

With the advent of this digital archive, the often-fragile original papers suddenly became accessible and, just as importantly, searchable. Family historians were able to find elusive missing links, and students and researchers had access to articles and editorials that proved (or refuted) their theses. Information had been released; knowledge had been enhanced.

The archive spans more than 200 years, reflecting British life, everyday news, court reports and theatre reviews, as well as accounts posted from mainland Europe and the rest of the world. The paper played witness to major events in history, such as the death of Napoleon in 1821: ‘the most extraordinary life yet known to political history’.¹

The Times also provides many articles, notices and commentaries on European settlement of Terra Australis such as the following:

The first excitement caused here was the discovery of gold at Ballarat ... The whole of the population in Melbourne immediately flocked there, and many of them did extremely well; the majority of them, however, got nothing, and returned to their several occupations.²

Perhaps timeless, ‘Letters to the Editor’ presents us with concerns still pertinent today: ‘Sir – During the present alarming state of the weather the attention of persons is naturally directed to the preservation of the crops ...’.³

Acquired through the 2011 State Library Victoria Foundation Appeal, the *Times* Digital Archive is updated annually and has been very popular.

PAUL DEE