

Melbourne and Mr M'cullough M'Callum few where I was introduced to a young lady. Got home and had supper at the which went up and sang all of Queen written out for the Guests. We have a book with some of the pleasure of reading. Up very early down. Some rain. Drove to town where I stopped at once. Deaf and dumb. Promised to return at 10 o'clock but he did not keep his appointment although I am one of his students. He told me he was to leave to the Ovens & Goldfields next morning early. That he had been to Gippsland where his partner John was died last Friday. His wife & child. Had the pleasure of seeing John mortised in the theatre in the box reserved for the Bacchus Minstrels. Saw Audley Candyman in the play of the Merchant of the Merchant. On the stage the cantorines of the Queen of Denmark &c. It was a very laughable and well got up affair. The scenery was superb and reflected splendour the talents of Captain Blomfield. But some bl. grottoes. Also a bust turned on. The weather today was very fine, although a good deal of dust was flying about.

Friday
28 Decr. Spent most of the day at the
Breakfast and a walk down by the
Swamp. Took my gun in preparation
a place for the engine the Grange
of which we're after for which it
has a salary of £50 per month.
Mr. Mr. Johnson I went down to town
called

Diary of a miner working on the Ballarat goldfields

Australian Manuscripts Collection MS 13681

Acquired 2009

This anonymous diary records in fascinating detail six months, from 8 July 1855 to 1 January 1856, in the life of a Ballarat gold miner. It is closely written in black ink in a ruled cash book bound in black leather. The cover is well worn, with tears on the spine and a broken brass clasp, and there are no stationer's labels or identifying marks. It opens with the following typical entry:

Got up about 9 o'clock. Had breakfast and accompanied John Adams, Dugie Weir, Jim Young & Bill Douglas out to Magpie Gully to assist in erecting their log hut. Engaged all day in getting up the logs and building chimney. Returned after sunset pretty tired and hungry. Supped on cold duff and beefsteak or mutton pie ... Weather very unsettled, occasional showers of rain and glimpses of sunshine today.

The diary was acquired from Melbourne antiquarian bookseller Kay Craddock, with funds raised by the State Library Victoria Foundation Ballarat Goldfields Diary Appeal. Kay and Muriel Craddock had created a transcript of and name index for the diary before offering it for sale. The Library prepared digital images of the entire diary, and, with the vital assistance of volunteers, proofread and formatted the transcript. These resources have become very useful for detailed analysis of the diary.¹

The diarist's identity is the subject of ongoing research. His handwriting, spelling, grammar and talent for description suggest a good education. From the diary, we know that he came from Dumbarton, north-west of Glasgow;² that his doctor felt that he was too delicate for the arduous life of a miner; that he enjoyed a good meal and a few drinks, or 'nobblers', as he called them; and that he could afford to lend money to friends.

On 23 December 1855, the diarist set off for town to visit friends and to celebrate Hogmanay, or New Year.³ He and fellow digger John Forbes stayed in North Melbourne with John's sister Catherine and her grocer husband, Alexander Morrison, and their children. The diarist bought a felt hat from tailor James McGaw, who had immigrated with the Morrison family on the *Aberfoyle* in 1852. These people and our diarist were all associated with Dumbarton and were part of a close-knit and patriotic Scottish immigrant community in Victoria. We hope our further research will reveal the identity of the author of this important goldfields diary.