

# The First Land Sales

2 November 1868



## “Less than 240 pastoralists held all the pastoral licenses issued in Victoria”

After the explorations by Hume and Hovell in 1824 and Charles Sturt in 1830, European settlement on the Australian mainland was rapidly progressing. In 1834, permanent settlements were established in the "Port Phillip District" of the New South Wales colony, specifically at Portland, followed by Melbourne in 1835. This triggered an influx of squatters and land speculators, mainly from Van Diemen's Land, situated across Bass Strait. Melbourne swiftly blossomed into a thriving community and a hub for the wool export trade. However, this newfound wealth was not evenly distributed. By 1845, fewer than 240 wealthy pastoralists held all the pastoral licenses issued in

Victoria, and they became influential figures wielding significant political and economic power for generations to come. Among them were the McHaffie brothers, John David and William, who had arrived in Australia from Scotland around 1840 and took control of Phillip Island circa 1842. By 1850, they were leasing the entire island, covering approximately 32 square miles, and paying £1 per square mile annually. The land use permitted under their pastoral tenancy was limited to sheep or cattle grazing, with no cultivation allowed. By 1851, the population of this southern part of New South Wales had grown to 77,000, with 23,000 residing in Melbourne. The settlers of the Port Phillip District had been advocating for separation from New South Wales since 1844, leading to the formal creation of the colony of Victoria on July 1, 1851.

Around the same time, gold was discovered at Clunes, sparking a massive Gold Rush that attracted thousands of prospectors to Victoria from around the world. By 1861, the Victorian population had swelled to over half a million, intensifying the demand for land. Many called for the division of large pastoral leases and the sale of freehold land to prospective farmers, known as "selectors." This pressure to open up Phillip Island for sale faced opposition from the McHaffies, who fought to maintain their control of the island. The Acclimatisation Society of Victoria, founded in 1857, supported the McHaffies in their efforts to keep the island as it was.

# “John McHaffie was also staunchly against releasing the island for settlement”

The society, which had influential backing, aimed to introduce non-native flora and fauna to enrich the region, believing the indigenous species were inferior. Edward Wilson, the society's founder, was an enthusiast of this idea.

John McHaffie, a friend of Wilson and a fellow acclimatizer, was also staunchly against releasing the island for settlement.

Among those advocating to unlock Phillip Island for settlement and cultivation, none was more passionate than Dr. Louis Lawrence Smith. He arrived in Melbourne in 1852, as a medical practitioner and a somewhat entrepreneurial figure. Some argued that his entry into politics was motivated more by a desire for prestige and influence rather than strictly principled intentions. Dr. Smith earned the moniker of 'the people's candidate' during his tenure as the representative for South Bourke from 1859 to 1865, largely due to his charismatic personality.



Dr. Smith's (pictured above) unwavering commitment to having Phillip Island made available for selection began around 1857. In the late 1850s, you could often find him at the Eastern Market, perched on a wagon with a bag of Phillip Island soil, passionately addressing passers-by about the island's merits and decrying the government for not wresting the land from the grasp of squatters. His election victory in 1859 provided him with an even more significant platform to advocate for his cause, this time from within the hallowed halls of Parliament.

The campaign to open up Phillip Island continued into the 1860s, with growing pressure on the government to do so. In 1863, the Acclimatization Society argued that the island's suitability for acclimatization, lack of predators, and strategic defence importance were reasons not to sell it.

Rumours of the government's intention to sell the island began circulating in 1865, but it wasn't until March 1866 that the decision to survey and sell Phillip Island was officially announced. The Acclimatization Society protested, requesting a deputation with the Minister, but their request was denied.

The society enlisted the support of Mr. Peter Snodgrass, M.P. who secured backing from numerous parliamentarians and protested to Chief Secretary, James McCulloch. The debate centred on why the Acclimatization Society had chosen Phillip Island and who should have the authority to make such decisions.

Clement Hodgkinson, Assistant-Commissioner of Lands and Survey, played a pivotal role by composing a detailed report that countered the society's arguments. In September 1866, Hodgkinson's report led to the decision to subdivide the island, with the first sale of land taking place on November 2, 1868. Many hopeful settlers gathered for the lottery, and the term "selectors" emerged as those who chose the lots.

Township allotments at Rhyll and blocks at Cowes were auctioned in subsequent months. The Acclimatization Society shifted its focus to the Royal Melbourne Zoological Gardens in Parkville, known as the Melbourne Zoo.

With land sales completed, John McHaffie's holdings on the island were reduced to 640 acres. To accommodate his cattle, he purchased land at Yanakie on the Wilsons Promontory isthmus in 1869. Despite divesting themselves of their land interests on Phillip Island in the 1880s, the McHaffie family maintained a lasting connection to the island, with several generations living there.

## List of Settlers in the first ballot:

1. Thomas Mitchell Fellstead, farmer ;
2. James McIlwraith, farmer ;
3. Thomas Wilson, farmer ;
4. George Thorn, road constructor ;

cont.

List of Settlers in the first ballot: continued

- 5 Wm. M'Kay, farmer;
- 6 James Chambers, ironmonger;
- 7 Frederic Poole, farmer ;
- 8 Joseph Cleeland, farmer;
- 9 John West, market-gardener;
- 10 Robert Byrne,jun., objected to and disallowed, only 17 years of age ;
- 11 Robert Fletcher, wood carter;
- 12 Charles Newport, butcher;
- 13 John Cheque, farmer ;
- 14 David Reed, sailor ;
- 15 E. C. Amsinck, gentleman ;
- 16 W.M. Mackenzie, storekeeper;
- 17 John Houston, gentleman;
- 18 George Beard, farmer;
- 19 Thomas Kanine, farmer;
- 20 Daniel Adams, commercial traveller ;
- 21 Anthony Scott, farm labourer;
- 22 R. C. Miller, spirit merchant;
- 23 George C. Scott, accountant;
- 24 Geo. Cox, Fisherman ;
- 25 Joseph Richardson, farmer ;
- 26 William Pearson, hotelkeeper ;
- 27 W. S. F. Murray, auctioneer, not allowed, owned 1,400 acres already ;
- 28 Chas. Graydon, fisherman ;
- 29 Fredk. Peatling, maltster ;
- 30 William Cochrane, gardener;
- 31 Richard Graydon, fisherman :
- 32 Thomas Rennison, hotelkeeper;
- 33 Edward Phillips, carpenter;
- 34 John Barrett, storekeeper;
- 35 C. E. Verdon, cattledealer ;
- 36 James Wilson, farmer ;
- 37 Edley North, contractor;
- 38 William Barter Oat, hotelkeeper;
- 39 William S. Potts, clerk;
- 40 Frederick Hollier, marketgardener ;
- 41 Richard Bowman, saddler ;
- 42 John Rogers, farmer;
- 43 George Morgan, carter :
- 44 Joseph Taafe, miner ;
- 45 James H. M'Gregor, gardener;
- 46 Michael Fox, farm labourer ;
- 47 John Whitney, ironmonger ;
- 48 William Turnbull ;
- 49 George Pool ;
- 50 Benjamin Bagster, storekeeper ;
- 51 David Burton, sheep farmer ;
- 52 Alfred Jones, farmer ;
- 53 Murdoch Macdonald, farmer ;
- 54 James Scott, teacher ;
- 55 John Love, farmer ;

- 56 Charles Chapman, farmer ;
- 57 P. Hugo M'Hugh, surveyor ;
- 58 Francis Cleeland, farmer ;
- 59 Malcolm M'Donald, farmer;
- 60 William Love, farmer;
- 61 Jas. D. Anderson, mining agent;
- 62 Samuel F. Bury, quartz miner;
- 63 John M.Watson, ironmonger;
- 64 Alexander Ross, farmer ;
- 65 Robert Byrne, auctioneer ;
- 66 Horatio Beauchamp, auctioneer ;
- 67 Samuel Hall ;
- 68 John Sharples, schoolmaster ;
- 69 B. Arundell Hill, farm labourer ;
- 70 Francis Stephens, solicitor ;
- 71 Thomas Smith, bootmaker;
- 72 W. A. Hunt, farmer;
- 73 Michael Jas. O'Connor, grazing farmer;
- 74 Robert Dunn, maltster ;
- 75 Alexander Watt Bowman; grazier ;
- 76 William Woolley, surveyor ;
- 77 Thomas Warr, farmer;
- 78 Wm. Smith, bootmaker;
- 79 Jas. Chas. Hann ;
- 80 Wm. White;
- 81 Michael Molony, farm labourer ;
- 82 Wm. Power, gentleman;
- 83 Jamas Broadrick, labourer;
- 84 Wm. Henry Hobson, boardinghouse-keeper ;
- 85 David Mairs, farmer;
- 86 Samuel Mann, hotelkeeper ;
- 87 Chas. Young Skinner, fisherman ;
- 88 Jonas Watson, storekeeper ;
- 89 John L. L. Campbell, miner ;
- 90 Preston Parsons, butcher ;
- 91 John B. Lock, farmer ;
- 92 James Murray, carpenter ;
- 93 William Hutchinson, bootmaker ;
- 94 E. J. B. Nunn, solicitor;
- 95 Alfred Cooper, auctioneer;
- 96 John Lett, maltster;
- 97 Henry J. Smith, gentleman :
- 98 H. S. Skinner, fisherman ;
- 99 Frederic Williams, salesman ;
- 100 H. J. M. Skinner, fisherman;
- 101 F. A. Jellett, gentleman,;
- 102 Matthew Lang, spirit merchant ;
- 103 Angus Love, farmer ;
- 104 John Maclennan, miner.

W.S.F. Murray - allowed (refer 27)