

Mary Grierson (1827-1914) Gen 3

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THE FARMERS' CONVENTION, 1912.  
A TRIP TO THE WESTERN DISTRICT.  
(By Morang,)

[Lengthy report on the rail trip from Yan Yean to Warrnambool]

I arrived at my friend's place in due course, and found she had removed to an adjoining property that she had purchased, and on which she has built a nice comfortable home, surrounded by a very nice garden and a plantation of trees, in the midst of very good land. I got the old lady to tell me about her early life. She was the daughter of the late John Grierson, who was an officer in the British army, who, in the year 1810, was in charge of the guard to Sir John Franklin in Tasmania and Parramatta. Four years after this Major Grierson went to India, thence to England to assist in fighting Bonaparte, but he missed the battle of Waterloo, being on the road from England to Belgium, where the battle was fought. He then returned to India, from whence he was invalided. For a time he lived in the South of Scotland, part of the time visiting Mossjuel (the immortal Burns' farm), where several of his children were born. In 1839, he returned to the colonies, finally making his home in Simpson's road, Port Phillip, where he died. David Thomas, the husband of my relative, and brother of the late Moses Thomas, of Mayfield, Morang, arrived in Sydney in the year 1838, having left Scotland, where he saw no prospect of doing any good for himself. Arriving in Sydney in the year 1838, he stayed there two years, from whence he went to Port Phillip, where he established the first lime kiln, which, by the way, turned out a failure. The works were destroyed by fire. He then came to Port Fairy in 1843, establishing himself at Rosebrook, living continuously at the same place, where he died in 1885, leaving a widow and 12 children, all of whom are still alive. His widow (my relative) who now resides about 40 chains from where the first hut was built, in which she resided for about half a century, told me that when she first came to the district, a young wife, the blacks were very numerous, but they never attempted to molest her. In 1846, when David Thomas travelled to Melbourne, it took 11 days to do the journey in, and in the days when he first came to the Port Fairy district, he had to rely on his own resources to make anything approaching a comfortable livelihood. We, of a younger generation, I am afraid, do not realise what our forefathers went through in the early days of this fine State of ours. We have our lives cast in pleasant places, hence we do not realise what our forbears went through. The descendants of David and Mary Thomas are 6 sons and 6 daughters, 30 grandchildren and 35 great grand children. The first neighbours of the pioneers were W. Anderson's, of Rosemount, father, after which came the Steeles, Browns, M'Kinnons, Grahams, Powells, Forlans, Leishmans, Ross's, and later on the Ruthledges, Knight and Cox and Alkinson, each of whom succeeded Mr Thomas. Many of the above names are familiar to those who have studied the history of our State. My relative was a shipmate of the late John Bell, J.P, of Kangaroo Ground, and Mr Armstrong of the same place. I can assure you, Mr Editor, it is wonderfully interesting to hear this old lady talk of the days long since gone by and of people who are dead and forgotten. One cannot but admire the courage of the early pioneers in doing the work they did. Even now when so many of their descendants have to break up the estates so hardly

won by their forefathers, one cannot but feel sorry that such has to be the case. But it is only reasonable that the closer the country is settled the better for the State as a whole, and although the Federal Land Tax has been and will be the cause of many large estates being cut up and sold, one is troubled with the thought would it not have been better to have taken the land required by a system of arbitration, combined with fair compensation, than by a land tax that often seems harsh in its incidence and that in many cases seems to savour more, of confiscation than taxation. Whatever the injustice done to landowners and their forbears, there is not the slightest doubt but that the disintegration of large estates is now rapidly going on, and it will not pay landowners to hold land in large areas and pay the heavy tax demanded of them.