

AUSTRALIAN JOINT COPYING PROJECT

JOHN BOND

Diary, 1853-55

Reel M724

**Misses Agnes and Emma Bond
Crossways
1 Higher Kingston
Yeovil, Somerset**

**National Library of Australia
State Library of New South Wales**

Filmed: 1969

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

John James Bond (1831-1922) sailed to Australia in 1852, apparently with the intention of visiting his uncle, who lived at Benalla in Victoria. He stayed for about two years and visited several of the goldfields, although as a tourist rather than a digger. He returned to England on the *Marco Polo* in 1855. In his later years he was a farmer in Somerset.

In 1897 Bond discovered the letters that he had written in Australia to his family and in 1915 he and his daughter-in-law transcribed parts of them to make a kind of diary of his time in Australia. In 1969 the original letters were still in the possession of his family, but were too fragile for microfilming by the Australian Joint Copying Project. They had, however, been filmed by Margaret Kiddle in 1954 and copies of this film are held in the State Library of New South Wales and the State Library of Victoria.

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Retrospective 'diary', based mainly on a few letters that John Bond wrote to his family, recording his visit to Australia in 1853-55. (89pp)

The first part of the manuscript (pp 1-36) records in some detail the voyage from London to Melbourne on the *Lady Flora*. It refers to the departure from Gravesend (17 April 1853), Bond's fellow-passengers, sea-sickness, rough seas in the Bay of Biscay, accidents suffered by passengers, the sighting of St Antonio (Cape Verde Islands), sightings of other ships, the ship's newspaper, the Crossing the Line ceremony, shipboard entertainment, sightings of whales, sharks, flying fish, birds and albatrosses, fights among passengers, the first sighting of the Australian coast, Port Phillip Bay, Bond's reflections on the voyage and the behaviour of the crew, and the disembarkation at Melbourne (17 August 1853).

The rest of the manuscript records Bond's travels and experiences in Victoria, including a few months in the Benalla region where he stayed with his uncle and his family. The letters record his first impressions of Melbourne, prices and wages, the sight of drays and horsemen setting off for the goldfields, and the desertions from ships. He visited Geelong and described a long walk from Melbourne to Kilmore and Benalla, referring to the state of the roads and the inns and encounters with convict gangs at work. Staying with his uncle (who had emigrated in 1840), he wrote of a visit to the Beechworth gold diggings, the drunkenness of both squatters and stockmen, bushrangers, visits to sheep and cattle stations, his work as a pound-keeper, rides in the country, church services, funerals, and the skills of Aborigines. The later pages mention a visit to Sydney, meetings with former convicts, visits to the Ballarat and Bendigo goldfields and his repeated falls from horses.

The last letter that Bond transcribed was dated July 1854 and the last section, which is rather digressive, seems to be based on his memories. He refers to letters that he received from Australia in 1868-74, and noted the growth of Benalla in the previous twenty years and the experiences of a few of his former Australian friends in that time. He apparently returned to England on the *Marco Polo* in 1855, but there are no details of the voyage.