

# Lonely Grave - Thomas Whyte - Letter 5

6 Collins Street  
Melbourne

June 12th, 1851  
(Received 13th November 1851)

Dear Robert,

I wrote to you May 30th which I hope you received and embrace the opportunity of the Overland Mail tomorrow to drop a few lines about the “diggings”

Since I last wrote we have been visited by the gold fever and made this place a painful ferment. I send you all the papers so you can have full particulars. Bathurst, a small village 130 miles from Sydney has been found to be the centre of a regular gold field in far greater abundance than was ever heard or dreamt of in California; lumps of two and three pounds weight have been brought down and already thousands of pounds of value has been dug up; the immediate consequence was a rush of every one in Sydney who could cut away to Bathurst, men deserted ships in the harbour, passengers who had paid their passage to the States forfeited their money, policemen left their beats, shop men their counters and all were off in a few days. Flour rose to £32 the ton, the loaf to 1s.3d, spirits and all the groceries, all sorts of eatables double the price they were formerly and could not be had even at that. When the news reached Melbourne things got the same here, everyone talked of it and all the Vandemonians whom we could very well spare were off at once. For a few days things were anything but pleasant, the same rise in provisions, etc. etc., and nothing but Bathurst was the talk. Hundres started off to walk it, which is 600 miles from Melbourne, but they feared nothing; furnishing themselves with a pick and shovel and their necessary traps off they went in little bands of eight and ten.

The town is now cooled down greatly and people are disposed to wait until they see what is to be done here. A public meeting has been held and a reward of £200 offered to the discoverer of a gold field in the Melbourne district; whole mobs are away up the Yarra Yarra, the Plenty, and all the parts about there to find the precious metal and within the last few days, some have returned bringing with them the samples of gold found within 50 miles of Melbourne. We are now in daily expectation of discovering within Melbourne a field of gold equal to that of Bathurst. Magistrates, doctors, lawyers and our first merchants have all gone off exploring, for the safety of the place in a great measure depends upon it. You will see by the papers what took place at our meetings and that the first men are confident of its existence here. In the meantime, as you may suppose business is almost at a standstill, no one cares for doing any business except for what he is in absolute want of. But we all have good hopes that in a week or two we will be in a better position than ever we could have anticipated. This being the winter time here, and the rainy season, prevents getting better until the change comes. But never mind, I will be well again soon and be able to walk about.

Let me now give you the amounts of our exports from Port Phillip for the year ending this day, from which you will see that independent of the gold diggings we are the most prosperous Colony of the British Dominions. Just look at the proportion of our exports to our population and you will find it unexampled.

## Exports of wool, tallow, etc. to Britain from this district of Port Phillip, 26th June 1850 to June 1851

64,029 bales wool, say 17,607,425lb @ 1/11/2lb.	£990448.11.101/2d
10,062 casks tallow, 9cwt. each £27.10.0d ton	£124511.5.0d
5,584 hides, 8s each	£1834.8.0d
Other Produce	£4624.0.0d

## Abstract from the Returns of Population of Melbourne for 1851

	Males	Females
Under 2 years	961	971
2 and under 7	1794	1718
7 and under 14	1461	1475
14 and under 21	953	1534
21 and under 45	6164	4340
45 and under 60	740	469
60 and upwards	111	71
Total	12184	10578

## Social Condition

	Males	Females
Married	4026	4174
Single	8158	6404
Church of England		10695
Church of Scotland		2955
Wesleyans		1630
Roman Catholic		5500

I intended to have written you at greater length but the mail is just about closing so I will write you more fully in a day or two. In the meantime give my kindest love to Agnes, Anne, and the wee ones, the same to Jessie and my dear children. I will send you a box by the “Honduras” which will sail in a day or two.

With best thanks I am,

Your affectionate brother

Thomas