

### **Robertson, William (1798-1874)**

Sponsored:     Jacob Clark (Suffolk, shepherd)  
                     Catherine Reeve (Suffolk, housemaid)  
                     Edward Ruffels (Suffolk, groom and labourer)



William Robertson was born on 7 October 1798 at Alvey, Inverness-shire, Scotland, where his father was a respectable sheep farmer. William was attracted by offers of land on easy terms, and the assistance of convict labour, made by the Colonial office to induce emigrants with capital to locate themselves in VDL and the result was, he and his brother, John, accepted those offers, and in 1822 arrived in Tasmania on the ship 'Regalia'. Their first step was to select 2,560 acres of land on the Elizabeth River, in the neighbourhood of Campbell Town, where they remained in partnership until 1831, when they decided to sell their property which they had made valuable

by growing crops, rearing sheep and cattle and improving their bush land. They then entered into the mercantile business in Hobart Town, by which they profited exceedingly varying their occupation by farming a small estate they had purchased near Melton Mowbray.

In 1834 William became fascinated by the stories told of the richness of Port Philip, and with a view to enterprise in that direction, bore on his own account half the expense of Batman's first expedition, the end of which was the latter landed at Indented Head, and journey to Station Peak, from whence he took his first real survey of the glories of what was to him a promised land. Robertson became the proprietor of very extensive estates in Victoria. He chiefly resided in Tasmania, but in about 1864, after a prolonged visit home, he decided to establish himself wholly in Victoria. This he did in good style by building a house on his estate at Colac, where in 1867, he had the honour of entertaining HRH the Duke of Edinburgh. Although he took no part in politics in Victoria he had much to do with political life in Tasmania and was among the leaders of the anti-transportation movement. He was brother to James Robertson Esq. of Hobart Town. (*Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 6, 1976))

The *Mercury* on Monday 26 January 1874, p1 (Summary for Europe) reported Mr Wm. Robertson, of Colac, Victoria, a squatter of considerable repute, and a gentleman well-known in Tasmania, in which he long resided, died on the 19<sup>th</sup> instant.

The *Hamilton Spectator* Sat 24 Jan 1874, p4 Obituary for William Robertson of Colac recorded he was a millionaire.

Picture of William Robertson copied from *ancestry.com* (Bruce Hull).

Although Robertson sponsored Catherine Reeve she was collected at the Quarantine Station by James Turnbull of New Norfolk where Catherine probably worked on his estate, 'Millbrook', as a housemaid. Edward Ruffels, too, was collected from Quarantine Station by William Amos (son of James) of Gala Mill, near Swansea.

William Robertson, Merchant, Hobart Town, applied for seven Immigrant Bounty Tickets on 30 June 1856.