

REV. LANCELOT EDWARD THRELKELD

The most difficult task when writing the life of Lancelot Edward Threlkeld is condensing it to within reasonably readable limits. He was an adamant, obstinate, dictatorial, fiery tempered, self righteous and bigoted man but he was brilliant, had the courage of his convictions and was never afraid to put pen to paper to take up a cause in which he believed.

Threlkeld was born in London 20 October, 1788, the son of Samuel, a brush maker, and Mary. He was baptised on 25 December, 1788, at St. Saviour's Church, Southwark (Southwark Cathedral). From the age of seven he was raised and educated by an aunt and on three occasions brushed with death; he was run over by a carriage when a child, struck ill with a violent fever in his youth and almost drowned in young adulthood. When aged fourteen he was expected to commence a naval career but instead was apprenticed for three years to a trade, it is thought to an apothecary; he then felt his vocation was in acting so he joined the Royal Circus and later the Royalty Theatre.

His ancestry is linked with village of Threlkeld, Cumbria, in the Lakes district of England and his name was derived from Sir Lancelot Threlkeld, who distinguished himself during the Wars of the Roses. The genealogy of John Threlkeld, son of Dr. Caleb Threlkeld, physician and botanist in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, who was the Congregational Minister at Huddlescough in Kirkoswald, Cumberland, and later Dublin, is significant as it includes "a Dissertation on the Genius and Temper of the Threlkelds", which remarkably anticipates the character of Rev. Lancelot Threlkeld:

"The Genius or Disposition of this Family is truly Heroick There never was one of that Family who would pocket up a personal abuse, Tho no virtue can be denied to them yet some of them are more degenerate than others; They can fight in their youth, & Council in old age; Generally lovers of learning, & knowledge converseable; Great lovers of some, but not lovers of many; Steady in their Resolution & true to their principalls, Not vainly popular; A Family that would be rather primus in Villa than Secundas in Roma; who would be rather Master of a Cottage than cringe to a great Man for a palace. Stout of Heart, Rather extenuating then magnifying their possessions; Good neighbours if you grant them their Rights, Men of a Self denied Humour, and will not put their strength unless urged thereunto, Much more might be said but this sufficient."

.His father died in 1820 and his mother in 1831. His aunt died shortly after leaving him property and an instruction to his Trustees that Threlkeld be apprenticed to any business he might choose.

The circus did not provide regular work so he returned to business and was only nineteen years old when, on 1 February, 1808, he married Martha Goss from Hatherleigh, Devonshire, at St. George the Martyr Church, Southwark. He lost much of his property due to inexperience so left Martha to attend to his remaining business while he returned to the summer theatre. He was forced to close his business and, still being under age, moved to Hatherleigh where they lived with Martha's family while awaiting full possession of his aunt's estate. The village Vicar, Rev. Cradock Glascott, visited them and, under his instruction, Threlkeld formed the pattern of his future. So fully did he accept his conversion by Rev. Glascott that he decided to become a missionary. He joined with Rev. G. Moase, an itinerant field preacher, and preached throughout Devon. He eventually talked of going to overseas mission fields but Martha objected to leaving England; when Martha became ill he was afraid that she was 'being removed so that there would be no obstacle to his being abroad'. Martha had been converted but did not share her husband's devout enthusiasm. Together they read several missionary publications and, after discussion and prayer, Martha consented in 1813.

Threlkeld wrote to the London Missionary Society and in October, 1814, went to London where he was examined to decide if it was necessary for him to attend the Academy for Missionaries and Dissenting Ministers at Gosport, near Portsmouth. The Society's committee decided he would be

better employed in London and to send him later to a dangerous Station at Theopolis in Africa as a schoolmaster.

With his wife he went to London, residing at 54 Britannia Row Islington, and attended a school at Moorefields to obtain knowledge of the British system of education while his wife went to the Lying-in-Hospital in City Road to learn midwifery. His education was conducted by Rev. Matthew Wilks of Whitefields' Tabernacle and he later recorded his indebtedness to Wilks for providing him with the grammatical knowledge to acquire other languages. Another candidate, William Ellis, was chosen to accompany the Threlkelds to Theopolis but the African plans were cancelled and it was decided to send Threlkeld, his wife and Mr. & Mrs. Ellis to Otaheiti. In April, 1815, Ellis was given instructions in printing and bookbinding in London and Threlkeld was instructed to attend Mr. Clutterbuck's lectures in 'the theory and practice of physic' and gain some knowledge of surgery at St. Bartholomew's Hospital. In July, 1815, the 'genius and temper' of his family began to show and he wrote to the Society's Directors expressing a wish to be informed of the accuracy of a report that it was intended that he should go to the south seas only with a view to benefit the natives medically and not for the purpose of their religious instructions. Reluctant to accept the appointment he requested the Directors to reconsider as he felt he could do more good elsewhere. Eventually he was called before the Board and agreed to comply with the Directors' instructions and accepted the island appointment; he signed an agreement accepting the authority of the Directors.

The mission party left London on 8 December, 1815, and first embarked on the convict transport, ATLAS, at Gosport on 19 December, eventually sailing on 23 January, 1816. With Mr. Ellis he preached to the convicts when the weather permitted and the Threlkeld's first child, William was born at sea on Sunday, 17 March, 1816. The ATLAS arrived at Rio de Janeiro on 21 March; Martha, Threlkeld and baby William were ill at the time of its departure on 28 April and Threlkeld refused to leave. William died on 29 April, 1816, and was interred in the English burial ground at Rio de Janeiro. His adamant action crossed the Directors in London who viewed it with less sympathy than one would have expected - "You should have gone with the ship. The illness of the babe was a flimsy pretext for staying. I believe the child was not then at all likely to live and whether it died on shore or on board was a matter of very little moment compared with the souls of the men on account of which you were sent".

While remaining in Brazil he was highly respected by the English community and commenced the first Protestant Church, quite prepared to remain there. The strong idolatry Catholic religion in Rio de Janeiro was to give him a bigoted preoccupation with the 'evils of Catholicism' which remained throughout his life. While he was carried away by the sense of his own individual mission, the Directors in London interpreted Threlkeld's justification of himself as contrariness and he was, from their experience, a difficult man.

When the HARRIET arrived in Rio de Janeiro in January, 1817, the instructions from the Directors were that he was to leave Brazil; his friends took up a collection on his behalf and he sailed with his wife on the HARRIET on 21 January, 1817. They arrived at Hobart Town on 20 March, where he met Thomas Hassall, who informed him of the mass conversion at Otaheiti. He proceeded to Sydney, arriving on 11 May, 1817, and was welcomed by the London Missionary Society's Agent, Rev. Samuel Marsden. Threlkeld and his wife, together with other missionaries who arrived on the HARRIET, sailed on the ACTIVE in September, 1817, and arrived at Mo'orea on 17 November, 1817. They were disgusted and disappointed with the complete control which the Tahitian King exercised over mission affairs and his antinomian approach to Christian morality. A public meeting was held in January, 1818, when the 'old' missionaries strongly disagreed with the 'new' arrivals. Threlkeld firmly opposed being told what he should do by missionaries who had been there for some years and relations were strained. He was appalled when he learned that the senior missionary had lain with Tahitian women in his bed and taken improper liberties with them. Threlkeld and John Williams, while both stubborn men, became firm friends at that time.

On 7 March, 1824, Martha Threlkeld died at Raiatea, leaving a son, Joseph Thomas, born 9 July, 1817, at Parramatta, and three daughters, Martha, born 4 November, 1819, at Raiatea, Tabitha, born 17 July, 1821, at Raiatea, and Mary Williams, born 23 September, 1823, at Raiatea (who later married GEORGE Alfred Lloyd, M.P., and a Founder of the Australian Mutual Provident Society).

Threlkeld, wanting to continue his missionary career, decided to return to London to find a suitable partner and provide a home for his young family. He took his son, Joseph Thomas, aged seven, and left his daughters, Martha and Tabitha with Mrs. Williams at Raiatea, and the baby, Mary with the Platts at Bora Bora. He arrived at Sydney on 19 August, 1824, and took part in the itinerant ministry in the country. Most of the country preaching stations had become part of the Wesleyan Plan but one station at Ebenezer Chapel at Cattai, near Windsor, was of Calvinistic Dissent. At the time he arrived this chapel was constituted as a Presbyterian Church by John Dunmore Lang.

One of the founders of the little stone church was Thomas Arndell, whose family was respected for its Godliness and social eminence in the Windsor district. When preaching at the Ebenezer Church, Threlkeld was invited to the home of Thomas Arndell, CADDIE; he possibly met the family during the first visit to Sydney in 1817, as his son, Joseph Thomas, was born at nearby Parramatta that year. Sarah Arndell, the third daughter of Thomas Arndell and Elizabeth Burley, was married to Rev. Lancelot Threlkeld on the morning of 20 October, 1824, at St. John's Church, Parramatta, by Rev. Samuel Marsden. He wrote in his journal - "This day brings me to the 36th year of my life and unites me to another partner trusting that the blessing of the Most High may be upon us making us help to each other in our missionary employment.

Sarah was the daughter of Assistant Surgeon Thomas Arndell and his convict partner, Elizabeth Burley (alias Dalton), (my 3 x great grandparents) both of whom arrived in the colony on the First Fleet, 26 January, 1788. She was born on 7 January, 1796, and baptised on 17 May, 1796, at St. John's Church, Parramatta. Three daughters and two sons were born to them -

Elizabeth Sophia, born 16 September, 1825, at Newcastle (later married 10 February, 1852, to John Fairfax of the SYDNEY MORNING HERALD family).

Lancelot Edward, born 31 January, 1827, at Bahtahbah (Belmont) (later married Esther Jones Lloyd, sister of George Alfred Lloyd, who married Mary Williams Threlkeld, daughter of Rev. Lancelot Threlkeld and his first wife, Martha)

Frances Hannah, born 11 April, 1829, at Bahtahbah (later married Joseph Richard Siddins on 6 October, 1847, by her father at the Mariners' Church, Sydney) - Frances Hannah and Joseph Richard are my Great Grandparents

Sarah, born 30 July, 1830, at Bahtahbah (Unmarried)

Thomas Samuel, born 29 June, 1834, at Ebenezer (Toronto) married Elizabeth Harris.

Sarah Threlkeld, wife of Rev. Lancelot Threlkeld, died on 20 December, 1853, and was buried at the Devonshire Street Cemetery; when he died in 1859 Threlkeld was buried with his wife; their remains were removed in April, 1901, to Rookwood Cemetery (Grave 1672/4) Independent Section, on the authority of their daughter-in-law, Esther, widow of Lancelot Jnr.

The plans for his Aboriginal Mission began with his marriage to Sarah.

In 1825 Sarah and Lancelot Threlkeld (my 2 x great grandparents) moved to Newcastle while a cottage was being built and in 1826 they moved to Bahtahbah (Belmont). From the beginning Marsden and most of the colonial society were pessimistic about the new experiment. Attempts to civilise the Aborigines had failed and no doubt many saw this new initiative would follow the same pattern. From the outset Threlkeld's Bahtahbah Mission faced opposition and to his friends in Otaheiti he wrote - "In some parts of this colony there is quite a hostile feeling against the blacks. And those who ought to be their champions are silent on this subject. A Gentleman of large property recommended at a public meeting in this colony that the best measure towards the Blacks would be to 'shoot them all and manure the ground with them'." He decided to deal directly with the London Missionary Society and bypass Marsden.

His first task was to understand the natives' language. The tribe he lived with was the Awabakal and the learning of the Awabakal language was assisted by Biraban, who had been taken from his people

at an early age. A friendship developed and Biraban was Threlkeld's interpreter and principal informant. He received quite a welcome on his arrival and music and dancing were provided. The maximum number of Aborigines gathered at the mission was sixty and this was a matter of concern upon which he later reflected. The large number with which he had assumed he would be brought into contact never eventuated. The Awaba language was spoken by a number of tribes over an extensive area but, due to the lack of knowledge of tribal districts, the site chosen for the mission was located in the territory of a sub-tribe of the larger tribe of 'Worimi people; being a pioneer in an unknown area caused this miscalculation.

One misconception which took Threlkeld many years to fully appreciate was his assumption that he could repeat amongst the Aborigines what had proved successful in the south seas. His aim was to build a self-supporting mission and clear land to encourage the Aborigines to take up agricultural pursuits. With other missionaries who followed him, he found it difficult to comprehend that a nomadic life could not be compatible with a Christian lifestyle. He learnt the beliefs of the Awabakal people by moving about with them, attending their religious ceremonies and sacred places; however, he never quite gained the trust required to be invited to observe some of the ceremonies which were only for the initiated males. Aboriginal people retained the sense of coherence of their own religion and after fifteen years' contact with them Threlkeld did not succeed in gaining one convert. He failed to feel true respect for the tradition of Aboriginal people but was impressed with the beauty and grace of the aboriginal hunters, the pleasant sight of the aboriginal canoes on the lake, the playfulness and affection in the way they related to each other and the warm glow and pleasant atmosphere of the aboriginal camps at night with the sound of their happy chatter. He was surprised that more reprisals had not been carried out by them in view of the atrocities that had been committed against them.

During the early years of the mission the people could be absent for long periods and his hope was to establish a settled village style mission but it was only in the latter years of the mission did he come to fully appreciate the distinctiveness of Aboriginal culture and realise that what had worked in one place would not necessarily work in another. He accepted their talents for fishing and hunting but providing employment for them was his major concern. He wanted them to be encouraged to remain at the mission so he could teach Christianity to them but no livelihood was available and this was his great frustration.

In establishing the mission he exceeded the budget endeavouring to provide employment and this brought him into dispute with the London Missionary Society's Directors, who felt that he had been extravagant. In March, 1826, the Directors resolved that Marsden should countersign all Bills and only sanction those absolutely necessary, so Threlkeld decided not to have any further correspondence with Marsden. In November, 1836, Marsden rejected Threlkeld's ultimatum that it was impossible to conduct the mission on less than 500 pounds per annum. The breach over financial matters widened when the Directors informed him that he must allow the mission to be under the authority of Marsden and in April, 1828, matters were brought to a head when the Directors dismissed Threlkeld, offering only to pay for his passage to England.

He had battled against the prejudiced views of the white population and now with the withdrawal of the support from the London Missionary Society, was bitterly disappointed but determined not to abandon the Aboriginal people. The dogged determination to continue to minister to Aborigines and his financial disgrace, including the dishonouring of Bills, resulted in his arrest on 15 November, 1827. Although his letters to Marsden abound in personal abuse and disrespect, Marsden was generally sympathetic and on 26 March, 1828, he personally cleared the mission debt thereby preventing a term of imprisonment for Threlkeld. This brought public derision from some quarters, including the Presbyterian Church leader, Dr. John Dunmore Lang, whom Threlkeld took to court for libel and was awarded just one farthing damages.

On 21 April, 1828, the Directors decided to close the mission and dismiss Threlkeld and on 29 April, with his wife and family, he arrived in Newcastle.

Threlkeld discovered some true and firm supporters and on 18 August, 1829, was granted by Governor Darling a personal Land Grant on the opposite side of the lake at Ebenezer (Toronto) of 1,000 acres, upon which to feed his cattle and raise his food - "he may provide well for his family and,

having no one to quarrel with, he may be quiet". The family home was built on this Grant; it was a weather board building with plaster lining and consisted of twelve rooms. This house was demolished and in 1887 the Toronto Hotel was built on the site, where it still remains with its magnificent view.

Under the patronage of some influential people such as the Anglican Archbishop Broughton, the mission was able to continue on the presently known site of Toronto; the new mission was named by Threlkeld "Ebenezer". The annual government salary of only 200 pounds was severely limiting and meant that he lacked the means of supporting any aborigines on the mission and he was forced to focus more attention on the grazing of stock and developing the coal deposits which he discovered on the Land Grant to secure a livelihood for his large family. On 18 April, 1838, he requested a further Land Grant; this was declined but on 30 October, 1838, he re-applied on the basis that his eldest son was now of age and eligible to obtain a Grant. He complained that the Deeds of land stated "Coals, Copper, etc., have been reserved to the Crown..." and requested that another Deed be issued deleting this condition; on 9 February, 1841, he received notification that this would be executed.

Threlkeld fought the Australian Agricultural Company's rights to the Newcastle Coal Mine on the basis that his Land Grant included in that area was granted to him in 1829, one year prior to that Company's mining commenced. A minor but significant technicality cleverly overcame the problem and in 1840 he developed his coal mine and was shipping coal to Sydney.

His ships were:

Schooner,	LANCELOT	about 50 tons
Schooner,	SARAH	about 50 tons
Barge	HOPE	about 30 tons
Schooner,	HENRY	16 tons
Boat,	TIGER	10tons
Boat	CALCUTTA	10 tons

The financial failure of his eldest son, Joseph Thomas, and friends and relatives (including Thomas Arndell Jnr.) forced Threlkeld to sell the Ebenezer Coal Estate. The SYDNEY MORNING HERALD of 19 December, 1844, estimated its value at 34,416 pounds thirteen shillings and four pence. It was sold by the Trustees at auction to the mortgagee in December, 1844 - 'including the farms on which improvements had been made in buildings etc., to the amount of 1,132 pounds together with five acres of land at the Heads of the Lake, implements of husbandry, carpenters', smiths' an shipwrights' tools, farm horses, cows and bullocks. Also, three horses two drays, one cart, one gig, etc., in Sydney; likewise, two schooners fifty tons each, one schooner sixteen tons, one barge thirty tons, two ten ton boats, besides other articles,all in one lump sum of 3,450 pounds.'

During the decade at Ebenezer Threlkeld maintained his language study and translation work. In 1834 his first principal work, AN AUSTRALIAN GRAMMAR, COMPREHENDING THE PRINCIPLES AND NATURAL RULES OF THE LANGUAGE AS SPOKEN BY THE ABORIGINES IN THE VICINITY OF HUNTER'S RIVER, LAKE MACQUARIE, ETC., NEW SOUTH WALES, and several other works followed.

Threlkeld described his missionary work as many roles - as evangelist, protector and mediator/interpreter, often being summoned to interpret for Aborigines at the Supreme Court. He also taught Aborigines practical skills and it was the miscarriage of justice for the Aboriginal people which became his passion over the next ten years. He was disheartened to watch as they were losing their land and seeking a livelihood; they were being drawn to Newcastle where even the children were being involved in prostitution and drunkenness. He strongly argued for them to be allowed as witnesses in Court, a right denied them which meant that whites could not be charged for any offence against a black unless there were whites willing to be witnesses. Year after year his annual reports cited this as a major injustice to the Aborigines.

Two Quaker missionaries visited Ebenezer in 1846 and their detailed report outlined the history of the mission and showed a true appreciation of Threlkeld's efforts; they were impressed with his perseverance and proficiency in the language. This report was later studied by the London

Missionary Society and in 1836 John Williams, Threlkeld's former colleague and friend from Raiatea, visited Sydney and brought a letter from the Directors of the London Missionary Society commending Threlkeld on his work and his Christian forbearance and expressing regret for the misunderstandings of the past. This was a great encouragement and vindication for him but his Annual Reports showed an increasing sense of despair. "Under the present circumstances the guilty escape and human justice can only announce the Law as it exists, which bars the doors of equity against the blacks and leaves them to public vengeance or to the private revenge of injured Europeans which steadily to its purpose, will surely, secretly and speedily annihilate the Aborigines from the face of the land".

In his Annual Report of 1840 he suggested that the mission where it was then located was serving no purpose and recommended that it be moved to Newcastle where most of the Aborigines of the region were residing. He submitted an innovative programme of providing accommodation and boats so that they could develop a fishing industry and an independent livelihood. He suggested that the auction of the land of the original mission would cover the annual running expenses but, to his disappointment, Governor Gipps did not agree to this proposal and decided to terminate the mission. Threlkeld felt that after fifteen years of constant endeavours there was no fruit from his labour.

In 1841, with his wife and family, he moved to Sydney where they lived at No.4 Prince's Street, on the west side of Circular Quay, or, as it is now known George Street North. In 1842 he was offered and accepted the pastorate of the South Head Congregational Church at Watson's Bay; this was known as the Old South Head Church, near the Signal Station. It was unusual in that instead of a steeple it had a chimney as it was also used as a dwelling. During a tremendous hurricane, when the spray came over The Gap almost in waves, on 19 July, 1910, the church was demolished. The land on which the church was built was donated by William Charles Wentworth.

His wife, Sarah (nee Arndell), applied in the Government Gazette to sell her land known as MACQUARIE RETREAT, which was granted to her father, by Governor Macquarie on 16 January, 1818, and it was with the proceeds of this sale that Threlkeld acquired land where he started a school at South Head.

Threlkeld appears to have entered upon a life of comparative tranquility at Watson's Bay among friends and his family growing up and the last eighteen years of his life mellowed him considerably.

He relinquished the pastorate at South Head in 1845 and was appointed to the oversight of the Sydney Bethel Union Chapel in Erskine Street, Darling Harbour. The Union was to afford religious instruction to seamen of all nations visiting the Port of Sydney. It was not long before he was in charge, ministering to his congregation, conducting services regularly at the chapel, visiting the hospitals, attending the Police Courts on behalf of the Aboriginal defendants and visiting ships in port to distribute tracts and portions of scriptures. In 1851 the Government decided the Union was to be relocated on the eastern side of Circular Quay to be nearer the shipping and crews. A temporary chapel was erected at Campbell's Wharf and the land and buildings at Darling Harbour were sold for 3,343 pounds which was used for the erection of the new building.

On 10 April, 1857, he wrote to Sir George Grey, heading his letter with the address - 8 Premier Terrace, William Street, Sydney.

The new Mariners' Church was opened in 1859 at a cost of 6,000 pounds. Threlkeld was in charge and Revs. Thane, Reid, Leishman, Gainford and Bradley (the latter married my grandparents, George Reginald Humble and Eva Threlkeld Siddins at South Head Congregational Church on 23 November, 1887) were appointed in 1886.

When the church was completed Threlkeld was in his 70th year and he wrote in his diary - "This is the 70th anniversary of my birthday and the wedding day of myself and my dear departed Sarah, now in Heaven, where days and years are swallowed up in one 'eternal now'. Five years will have elapsed of her sleep of death on the 20th day of December next, and I am waiting for the moment for the summons to call me to that rest that remaineth for the people of God, but until that period arrives, my motto must be 'Occupy till I come'."

On 31 March, 1854, he was elected a Corresponding Member of the Theological Society of London,

the ultimate reward for his services to the Aboriginal people.

He died on 10 October, 1859, just ten days before his 71st birthday. His daughter, Sarah, said he had been worried concerning matters relating to the Mariners' Church. Having preached at both morning and afternoon Services he complained of a chest pain and a doctor was called but considered there was no problem. Sarah later heard him moan and he suddenly died. His death caused great sorrow and regret in Sydney; flags on ships in the harbour were flown at half mast out of respect for the sailors' Chaplain. The funeral cortege moved from his No.195 William Street residence by way of the Mariners' Church to the Devonshire Street Cemetery and was one of the largest processions seen in Sydney for a long time. Ministers of all Protestant denominations attended and the Rev. James Fullerton, a Presbyterian Minister, delivered an oration extolling the virtues of the veteran missionary and Chaplain. "Mr. Threlkeld was faithful, energetic and independent. He desired to be actively employed in the cause of God and in being instrumental in doing good to men. He had for half a century trained himself to walk in the footsteps of his Master. He endured privations without murmuring and devoted all his time and energy to the service of others." On the following Sunday Memorial Services were held in many Sydney churches. The SYDNEY MORNING HERALD published a long obituary notice on 13 October, 1859, and a London religious weekly, THE CHRISTIAN CABINET, devoted the entire front page on 29 February, 1860, with photograph, to the work and an account of Threlkeld's life.

When the Devonshire Street Cemetery was abolished to make way for Central Railway Station his remains were removed in April, 1901, to Rookwood Cemetery and re-interred in the Independent Section (No.1672/4) (Department of Public Works Records 1901). The move was authorised by Esther Threlkeld, widow of Lancelot Threlkeld Jnr., A handsome monument surmounts the grave and bears the following inscription:

IN MEMORY OF

The Rev. Lancelot Edward Threlkeld, M.E.S.,

Born in the City of London 20 October, 1788.

Ordained in 1815. Laboured in Tahiti and Raiatea (Coadjutor of Rev. John Williams) in connection with the London Missionary Society until 1824, when he undertook a Mission to the Aborigines in Lake Macquarie.

Of whose language he wrote a grammar and a lexicon. Appointed Chaplain of Seamen at this Port in 1845. He became a Minister of the Mariners' Church erected chiefly through his exertion, where on the last day of his life he twice preached the Gospel, and retiring to his chamber

Slept in Christ
Sunday October 10, 1859
Aged 71 years

(M.E.S. is the abbreviation for Member of the Ethnological Society of London, conferred on Threlkeld on 31 March, 1854)

Obituaries quoted in various - "a vigorous, warm benevolent old man" and - "the labours of Mr. Threlkeld's will, of course, be estimated differently according to the standpoint from which they are reviewed." One newspaper's view was - "the fact is, when we see each other at a distance and can discover the burrs and roughness of public life we are all apt to misjudge the actual principles and final intentions of our neighbours. Mr. Threlkeld had not the art of concealing his opinions; his active and impulsive mind threw him into all the conflicts of his day. His indignation against injustice often made him unjust - his love of religious liberty was exaggerated into the forgetfulness of his rights."

His support for the Aborigines continued throughout his life but he was, nevertheless, an intolerant, blunt and self-righteous man. It was his intolerance of injustice and sharp criticisms of his own society and belief in his own cause which enabled him to weather the savage criticisms that were directed to

him.

On 14 November, 1825, he wrote to the Attorney General and submitted for consideration - "that a Register Book should be open for the insertion of Births, Baptisms, etc., etc., of persons not being members of the Establishment. This would include 'Jews, Turks and Infidels' Roman Catholics & Christians not members of the Church of England, some of whom do not baptise at all and others not in infancy." It was in response to this suggestion that the presently known Registrar General's Department to register births, deaths and marriages evolved. He was instrumental in obtaining the Land Grant to establish South Head Cemetery at Watson's Bay in 1845; a bottle was buried in the sand at each corner pin to mark the boundary.

I have endeavoured to express candidly and fairly all facets of the temperament and skills of Rev. Lancelot Edward Threlkeld, my Great, Great Grandfather, and my summation is that he was a man of sincere devotion to Christianity, sympathetic to those who were in need of help, impatient with those who would not contribute and, perhaps, tyrannical in that he refused to surrender despite enormous difficulties and hardships upon himself, his wife and family. He was a linguistic genius and pioneered the translation of the Awabakal language into English thereby implying that, while the Threlkeld 'Genius and Temper' could be roused, he could also be a man of patience and dedication. His unqualified commitment to the Aborigines and Christianity have been recorded but is unfortunate that so few know of his contribution to our country's history.

- Marjorie Raven -

19th August, 1992.

NOTE:

Following my further research I have found that Rev. Lancelot Edward Threlkeld died at 2 a.m. on Monday, 11 October, 1859, thereby indicating that the inscription on his headstone is actually incorrect

- Marjorie Raven -