

**AUSTRALIAN JOINT COPYING PROJECT**

**SIR WILLIAM JERVOIS**

**Papers, 1877-78**

**Reel M1185**

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Lloyd's  
Lime Street  
London EC3M 7HL**

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## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Sir William Francis Drummond Jervis (1821-1897) was born at Cowes on the Isle of Wight and educated at Dr Burney's Academy near Gosport and the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. He was commissioned as a lieutenant in the Royal Engineers in 1839. He was posted to the Cape of Good Hope in 1841, where he began the first survey of British Kaffirland. He subsequently held a number of posts, including commanding royal engineer for the London district (1855-56), assistant inspector-general of fortifications at the War Office (1856-62) and secretary to the defence committee (1859-75). He was made a colonel in 1867 and knighted in 1874.

In 1875 Jervis was sent to Singapore as governor of the Straits Settlements. He antagonised the Colonial Office by pursuing an interventionist policy in the Malayan mainland, crushing a revolt in Perak with troops brought from India and Hong Kong. He was ordered to back down and the annexation of Perak was forbidden. He compiled a report on the defences of Singapore.

In 1877, accompanied by Lieutenant-Colonel Peter Scratchley, Jervis carried out a survey of the defences of Australia and New Zealand. In the same year he was promoted major-general and appointed governor of South Australia. He immediately faced a political crisis, following the resignation of the Colton Ministry. There was pressure on Jervis to dissolve Parliament, but he appointed James Boucaut as premier and there were no further troubles. His term was marked by economic prosperity and several beginnings: the University of Adelaide, the South Australian Art Gallery, the first tramway, and the building of the new Parliament House.

In 1882 Jervis retired from the Army with the rank of lieutenant-general. From 1882 to 1889 was governor of New Zealand, where he carried out further work on harbour defences. He occasionally clashed with ministers and his advocacy of Chinese migration to New Zealand and Australia aroused opposition. Nevertheless, he was a popular governor, travelling extensively and promoting cultural, scientific and sporting organisations.

In 1893 Jervis was appointed colonel-commandant of the Royal Engineers.

## SIR WILLIAM JERVOIS

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Papers relating to the constitutional crisis in South Australia, 1877-78.

On 18 October 1877 the ministry led by John Colton was defeated on a non-confidence motion in the House of Assembly. The motion was provoked by the action of the Government in commencing to build a new House of Assembly without securing the consent of the Legislative Council. The Cabinet urged Jervois, who had only arrived in the colony a few weeks earlier, to dissolve Parliament. He refused and the Colton Ministry resigned on 26 October 1877. Jervois asked James Boucaut, who had led previous ministries, to form a government. Boucaut resigned in September 1878 when he was appointed a judge of the Supreme Court of South Australia.

The papers comprise the following documents:

- 1 Address of the Legislative Council to Sir William Jervois incorporating a resolution of 4 October 1877 on the conduct of the Chief Secretary and relations between the Legislative Council and the House of Assembly, n.d. (printed, 8pp)
- 2 Minute of the Cabinet to Sir William Jervois setting out the background to the no-confidence resolution of the House of Assembly on 18 October 1877. (unsigned, 13pp)
- 3 Notes on the dissolution of Parliament, signed 'H.A., C.S.', 20 October 1877. (copy, 3pp) ['H.A.' was possibly an error, as Richard Andrews was Crown Solicitor in 1877]
- 4 Draft replies by Sir William Jervois to the Cabinet minute. (14pp)
- 5 Memorandum for the Chief Secretary [Sir Henry Ayers], n.d. (5pp)
- 6 Notes by James Boucaut on the formation of a new government, n.d. (3pp)
- 7 Letter from Sir William Jervois (Adelaide) to Sir Hercules Robinson (Sydney), 22 Jan. 1878: receipt of letter from Robinson on recent constitutional proceedings in South Australia; refers to actions of Sir George Bowen in Victoria. (copy, 4pp)