

AUSTRALIAN JOINT COPYING PROJECT

THOMAS MELLERSH

Diary, 1836-38

Reel M466

**Mr George F. Mellersh
Guildford, Surrey**

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

Filmed: 1963

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Henry Mellersh, who came from Hambledon (probably in Surrey rather than Hampshire), sailed from England to the Swan River on the *James Pattison* in 1834. His fellow-passengers included the governor, Sir James Stirling, and Lady Stirling, who were returning to the colony, and Mellersh subsequently managed a flock of sheep owned by Lady Stirling. He received a large grant of land near York, east of Perth, where he bred sheep and grew wheat. In 1838 he sailed to England, leaving a tenant to manage his property. He returned to Western Australia on the *Westmoreland* in 1840 and resumed his life as a farmer. He was one of the founders of the York Agricultural Society.

Mellersh returned to England in 1849, but retained his ownership of properties in Western Australia and took a strong interest in the colony. Along with Stirling, Captain James Mangles, Captain Henry Sanford and other former colonists, he was a member of the Western Australian Association set up in London in 1860. In 1863 he took part in discussions about the continuance of convict transportation to Western Australia.

HENRY MELLERSH

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Daybook kept by Thomas Mellersh while farming at 'Woodlands', York, 1836-37, and a journal kept on his voyage from Swan River to Mauritius and England, 1838. (1 vol.)

The daybook dates from 12 March 1836 – 27 December 1837. It contains brief entries for each day, written continuously with no paragraphs. They refer to the erection of Mellersh's house and barn, work on his garden, planting of vegetables, visits to York and Guildford, purchases of provisions and other goods, land clearing (grubbing), ploughing, sowing of wheat, reaping, binding and wheat grounding, lambing, sheep shearing, work with horses, wood splitting, carting timber, work undertaken by his employees and local Aborigines, kangaroo hunting, problems with wild dogs and cats, the management of Lady Stirling's sheep, news of ship arrivals, his surrender of 4000 acres to the Government, Mellersh's decision to leave the colony (November 1837), his departure from 'Woodlands', and financial transactions. There are frequent references to visits from or to neighbouring settlers, including R. Brockman, G.S. Burgess, G. Elliott, A. Trimmer, Macleod, Mortimer and Knights.

The journal describes Mellersh's voyage from Fremantle to Mauritius on the brigatine *Abercrombie* (which he spelt 'Abercromby'), 12 February – 7 April 1838, and the voyage from Mauritius to England on the barque *Majestic*, 10 April – 11 June 1838. Although it continues straight on from the daybook, the diary is quite different in form and substance. The daily entries are quite lengthy and Mellersh sets down his thoughts and reflections, refers to the books and magazines that he read (mostly religious, historical and literary works), and summarises occasional conversations and arguments with his fellow-passengers. Among the passengers on the *Abercrombie* were the Quaker missionaries James Backhouse and George Washington Walker, who had spent six years in the Australian colonies. In addition, Mellersh refers to the management of his property in Western Australia, the future of the colony, his friendship with the Stirlings, his eyesight problems, the weather and the seas, his impressions of Port Louis at Mauritius, the sighting of Table Mountain at the Cape of Good Hope, the landing at St Helena, a visit to Napoleon's tomb, sighting of ships, games and other pastimes. The diary ends when the *Majestic* was entering the English Channel.