

# Foley and Stone: affidavits

John Foley and Edward Stone

## Introduction

From *South Australian Gazette & Colonial Record*, 1 September 1838.

## Stone

Statement of Edward Stone, taken down by Sir J. Jeffcott, at Encounter Bay, November 25, 1827.

About six weeks ago he left Port Fairy, accompanied by two of his companions, John Foley and Henry Manley, with the intention of making their way overland to this place.

They kept along the beach the greater part of the way. They sometimes walked fifteen or sixteen miles a day—sometimes less. Had a horse with them upon which they put their provisions. The provisions they had with them consisted of about one hundred weight of flour and a little tea and sugar. They supported themselves principally with the aid of their dogs, who caught several kangaroos. For the first 200 miles<sup>1</sup> of their journey, they did not experience any difficulty from the want of water, as they fell in with several fresh lagoons, the land in the neighbourhood of which, and throughout the whole of this distance, was very good both for sheep and cattle—fine hilly ground for the former, and extensive marshy plains for the latter. The ground for this distance was not very thickly wooded. The wood which they saw was principally she-oak and gum. They did not see any stringy bark—not a stick of it during that distance to the informant's knowledge. After they had proceeded, according to their calculation, about 200 miles principally along the beach, they fell in with two very good harbours at a short distance from each other. By good harbours<sup>2</sup> he means what he would consider good harbours for whaling according to appearance. About this place they, for the first time, fell in with the natives, whom they had not previously met with. They saw a good many—about 150 altogether, in groups of from thirty to forty at a time. They did not appear at all friendly. On the contrary, they had a very hostile appearance, as they were armed with spears and painted all over as if for war, and followed them in the day-time with menacing gestures. They were mostly stout, able, men. The informant and his companions were afraid to light fires in the night lest the natives should come upon them. This they never attempted to do, informant believes, in the dark, as they are afraid of darkness. After following them in the manner he has described for some days, the natives left them. None of them could speak English, nor, in informant's opinion, had they even seen a white man before. The reason why he supposed them to be hostile was from their coming up armed with spears; for, when the natives approach in a friendly manner, they always drop their spears. Informant has been much among the natives and is acquainted with their habits. A few days after the hostile tribes had left them, and while informant and his comrades were approaching the Lake Alexandrina<sup>3</sup>, they fell in with a group of friendly natives who, it was evident from their appearance, had recently come from some British settlement, as they were clothed with blankets, checked shirts, some with caps on their

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<sup>1</sup>Port Fairy to Guichon Bay via Cape Bridgewater is about 180 miles.

<sup>2</sup>Rivoli Bay and Guichon Bay are 30 miles apart.

<sup>3</sup>Lake Albert, an arm of Lake Alexandrina is about 100 miles from Guichon Bay, and the Lake itself about 15 miles further.

heads, &c. They came up in a friendly manner, some speaking a few words of broken English; and from what they said, and the signs they made, and the gestures they urged, informant gathered that they were not far from an English whaling station, as they imitated the blowing of the whales, and the method of harpooning and lancing them. About this time they began to be in want of water, and the natives showed them where to find it, and appeared to take every opportunity of proving that they were on friendly terms with the white men, Some of them turned back with informant towards Lake Alexandrina, which was about twenty miles, or two days' journey, from the place where they met with them. Informant and his companions approached the Lake not far from the place where it communicates by a channel with the sea<sup>1</sup>. They could not see the whole extent of the Lake, as the sea on the beach, as well as the water of the Lake, was much agitated, and the waves were very rough on that day. The channel which flows from Lake Alexandrina into the sea was, in its widest part where they saw it, about 200 yards across; but where the water was deepest, it was not above a hundred yards<sup>2</sup>. At this narrow part, the water was deep enough to float a seventy-four<sup>3</sup>; and if not obstructed in its passage to the sea by a bar across the entrance, informant has no doubt that it would admit a seventy-four from the sea. Informant and his companions did not cross the Lake at this place, as the water was so rough and the current so strong that they feared they would not get the horse and their provisions over in safety. In order to ascertain the practicability of crossing, they induced two of the natives to go in with a rope attached to them by means of which they got over to the other side and returned, but with difficulty, the current was so strong. Informant and his companions then determined upon crossing the Lake further inland, which they did about sixteen miles from the sea<sup>4</sup>. Here the Lake was about five or six miles broad. The place where they crossed the Lake he should suppose is about sixteen miles from this place (Encounter Bay.) For a mile or a mile and a half on each side of Lake Alexandrina, a man might wade in with perfect ease and safety, the bottom being hard and firm. The depth of the water in mid-channel was seventeen and eighteen feet. It was fresh running water. He could see the Lake to a great distance from the place where he crossed. It might have been about the middle or hardly so much where he crossed. There the Lake was about six miles broad. Higher up he should suppose it was still broader. The land on the banks of the Lake appeared good, but it was very dry and the grass much parched from the want of rain. There are many salt marshes in the neighbourhood of the Lake. He does not think the land about the Lake as good or near as good as that which he saw for the first 200 miles on his way from Port Fairy, or that in the immediate neighbourhood of this place. There is a great deal of wood, principally pine and she-oak, in the neighbourhood of the Lake. He thinks there would be no difficulty in driving sheep from Port Fairy to Lake Alexandrina except from the want of water after the first 200 miles. There would be no difficulty, however, in procuring water any where on their route by digging for it.

## Foley

Statement of John Foley, taken before Sir J. Jeffcott, at Encounter Bay, November 27, 1837.

After leaving Port Fairy early in October they kept along the coast for a considerable distance—he should say for nearly 100 or 150 miles. They did not touch at Portland Bay on their way here<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>It is not clear whether they approached along the Younghusband Peninsula or along the inland edge of the Coorong. In either case the party had no difficulty in crossing from the Murray channel to the eastern bank of the Lake so the Coorong provided no barrier at this time.

<sup>2</sup>Now the party was certainly on the western tip of the Younghusband Peninsula. Whether they attempted to cross the Murray mouth may be doubted, since they did not apparently see the sea; more probably, it was to Hindmarsh Island.

<sup>3</sup>A third-rate man-of-war with 74 guns on two decks, the commonest ship in the British fleet around 1800. It drew no more than fourteen feet?

<sup>4</sup>Crossing the mouth of the Coorong would have brought them to the vicinity of Point McLeay. It is some four miles from there to Sturt Point, where they landed.

<sup>5</sup>This is not surprising. Foster Fyans, the resident magistrate at Geelong visited Portland in June 1839 and reported that 'the Magistrate could on occasions visit Adelaide where Mr Henty informs me he has met many of the Runaways who passed here—Fahey and Davis are supposed to be Runaways from Sydney—they remained near Mr Henty's for some months—and departed for Adelaide—the day they left here, two horses were taken from Mr Henty's. Mr Henty went to Adelaide, to the Chief of Police, without any satisfaction—the man Fahey is living with a Mr Hack—who has several others—at least four—in his employ' (Bassett, *The Hentys*).

They left Cape Nelson considerably on their left, and struck into the country until they came to Cape Bridgewater. After leaving Cape Bridgewater they saw two or three bays, but none of any size, and all, as informant thought, very shallow and unfit for either shipping or whaling. They did not see any natives for a long time after they had left Port Fairy. They had gone probably 100 or 150 miles before they fell in with any. They then saw them occasionally straggling on the beach, but they did not seem inclined to approach. Informant and his companions coo'd to them, but they kept away till informant showed his handkerchief to the one nearest to him, who came up and seemed anxious to get possession of the handkerchief, which informant, however, declined giving him. Informant was armed with a musket, and would not have hesitated to use it in self defence had he been attacked. The natives, however, when they met upon this occasion and afterwards, although they had a very hostile appearance, being armed with spears and painted all over, did not actually molest them. They sometimes came down from behind rocks in groups of twenty or thirty at a time, and came towards them, when the informant and his companions hurraed, and then they ran away up the hills. At last they got clear of these natives altogether. A few days afterwards they fell in with another party of natives clad in red shirts, some with caps on their heads, and other parts of European dress. These natives came up to them in a friendly manner, and gave them to understand by their gestures that there was a whaling establishment close at hand, as they imitated the blowing of the whales and their being harpooned, &c. Some of these natives turned back with them till they came to the channel which connects Lake Alexandrina with the sea. This was about sixteen miles from this place. He has no doubt that this channel communicates with the sea, as he heard the sea roaring on his left-hand quite close to where he stood. The channel was narrow and the current very rapid, and the water, he should say, very deep. He wished to cross this channel, but the rapidity of the current and the depth of the water frightened him. He had previously induced two of the natives to jump in with a rope attached to them and cross over. The channel here was so narrow that this rope, which was not above thirty fathoms long, could stretch from bank to bank. He thinks, therefore, that although the water was deep enough to float any vessels which could enter, the channel was too narrow to admit any but the very smallest. If Stone, therefore, said that a 74 could enter he must have been mistaken. Stone, too, is a farmer and not a sailor, which informant is. The channel in its widest part could not, in informant's opinion, be more than 100 or 150 yards across; but in the deepest part, as he before observed, it was not more than thirty fathoms, or sixty yards. After they found that they could not cross over at this place, informant and his companions moved along the banks of the Lake to the right for, he should think, about fifteen or sixteen miles to look for another place to cross. At length they came to a place where pine-trees grew, and they cut some down, informant having brought a small axe and a hand-saw with him, and they made a raft, with which they crossed over. The Lake at the place where they crossed was about five or six miles in width. For a mile or a mile and a half from the beach at each side the water was so shallow that a man could wade in and be not above knee deep. For two miles or two miles and a half in the middle of the Lake the water was, he should think, sixteen or eighteen feet deep. The channel here seemed to be running water; but the day was so rough and it blew so hard, and the waves were so high, when they crossed it, that he cannot speak positively on the subject. The water was fresh and well-tasted. After crossing the Lake it took them two days to come to Encounter Bay, as they had to make a circuit to avoid the numerous lagoons which were in their way. Thinks the journey might, however, be made in a day in fine weather, as he does not think the Lake is more than fifteen or sixteen miles from this place "as the crow flies." During the whole journey, occupying as it did six weeks, they did not experience any very great inconvenience. Their dogs and guns always supplied them with food, as the kangaroos and emus were very numerous. The first 100 or 150 miles the land was tolerably good; but from thence to the Lake, in informant's opinion, it was very bad, consisting of swamps and lagoons and nasty barren scrubby ground. From Port Fairy to Lake Alexandrina they did not fall in with any thing that they could call a river. The streams, such as they were, never gave them any trouble to cross, as they were never above the knee. They generally found water where the natives had encamped, as they take care to pitch their encampments near a place where water is to be had. He does not think sheep could be driven overland from Port Fairy the way they came from the want of water; perhaps further inland they might. The land about Lake Alexandrina, in informant's opinion, is any thing but good; and this is also the opinion of Stone, who is a practical farmer. It abounds in salt lagoons, and does not appear to be at all of a good description. The salt is deposited in large cakes at the bottom of these lagoons. Brought away a sample of some very fine salt, which he produced. If salt was an object of traffic, any quantity might, in informant's opinion, be got from these lagoons. Took the salt produced

from a lagoon not forty rods from the Lake. He repeats that the land in the neighbourhood of the Lake, as far as his observation went, is very bad. Although engaged in whaling, he has also been a farmer, and knows good land from bad. During the whole of their journey, they saw very little timber of any kind fit for use, and no stringy bark. They did not, however, go more than four or five miles from the coast, except while coasting the Lake, all the time. The land from the Lake to Encounter Bay is better than that at the other side of the Lake.