

‘Save the people’: ES Parker at the Loddon Aboriginal Station

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Edward Stone Parker was the Assistant Protector of Aborigines for the Loddon district of the Port Phillip Protectorate from 1839 until the Loddon Station was disbanded on 1 March 1850 along with the Protectorate system. Many scholars have written about the Port Phillip Protectorate and some have also written about attempts to reconcile Christianity and humanitarianism towards Aboriginal people with the process of colonial land acquisition.¹ However, the simple and very material question, ‘Who got what?’ seems worth asking. This article asks this question of Edward Parker and the Djadja Wurrung people who lived at the Loddon Aboriginal Station in the context of public and personal events throughout the period of the Protectorate and the following periods of gold rush and settlement.

Born the son of a tradesman who would have had little hope of acquiring land or high position in England, Parker would become a parliamentarian, a magistrate, a member of the Royal Society of Victoria and of the Philosophical Institute of Victoria and holder of an extensive land estate, the former Loddon Protectorate, which he occupied until his death in 1865. Although a small number of Djadja Wurrung people were allowed to stay on a very small part of this land under terms set by Parker and the government after the Protectorate closed in early 1850, in 1864 they were obliged by the government to move off this land to Coranderrk. Just one year later, Parker died at this property which he had occupied as his own for nearly 25 years. This paper argues that Parker’s original protection project was overwhelmed by widespread, powerful opposition to Indigenous rights, by the impossibility of insulating reserves from the impact of European settlement and by the constraints placed on Parker by the needs of his large family.

The first stage of Parker’s career as a protector was inspired by the English anti-slavery movement and Parker’s firm Christian commitment to working with Aboriginal people. He acted with commitment and physical courage when he established the Loddon Protectorate. This was followed by a more uncertain stage of compromise and

¹. Accounts of the Port Phillip Protectorate include Kenny 2007; Broome 2005; Reynolds 1990, 1998; Mitchell 2004; Edmonds 2006; Rae-Ellis 1996; Clark and Heydon 2004; Christie 1979. Kenny, Reynolds, Christie and Mitchell have looked particularly at the humanitarian and Christian aspects of protection.

expedience as he struggled to keep the station in existence in the face of increasing family pressures, the criticism of colonial society, and a colonial government that begrudged expenditure on Aboriginal interests and that suspected its officers of poor work. By the time the Protectorate closed, Parker had moved into a third stage in which he apparently decided to fight for personal possession of the land in a variation on the self-interest of the squatters. Even at this stage, he may have felt that he was holding land for the benefit of the Djadja Wurrung, but there is also evidence of personal gain.

The first stage: setting up the Loddon Station

Parker had begun working life in London by following his father into the printing trade. A devout Methodist, he became a Sunday-school teacher and then undertook training for the ministry but this candidature ended in 1828 when he broke the strict conditions controlling probationers by marrying Mary Cooke Woolmer, the eldest daughter of a Congregational minister. This incomplete ministry training may have proven significant when Parker became an Assistant Protector. While he was in a position very similar to a Methodist missionary and undertook preaching and pastoral work as if a minister, he was without the full training and ongoing institutional backing that provided some guidance through the difficulties encountered 'in the field'. Mary and Edward Parker had six sons over their next ten years in London during which time Parker turned fully to teaching. His granddaughter, Grace Porter, would claim in the 1960s that he had been training for the medical profession, but no other accounts support this contention.² He was placed in charge of the Methodist Day School in Greater Queen Street, where he was employed in 1838 at the time of his appointment as one of four Assistant Protectors for the Port Phillip district.³

Parker was active in the English anti-slavery movement, the springboard for all five men who took up the roles of Protector and Assistant Protectors of Aborigines in the Port Phillip district.⁴ While much of the anti-slavery program had been achieved with the abolition of slavery in 1807, the ambition of raising native peoples to the level of Europeans remained an unfinished task. Many proponents believed that conversion to Christianity was a crucial step in realising the full inclusion of native peoples in the 'brotherhood of man'. Christian conversion was also a key part of the thinking of the 1837 House of Commons Select Committee on Native People which argued that conversion along with the provision of food and other services was just recompense for the seizure of native peoples' land.⁵

Joseph Parker, the eldest Parker son to survive into adulthood, gave his recollections of the family's voyage from England, to the Castlemaine Association of Pioneers and Old Residents in 1891 when he was 60 years old. 'I do not care to parade my merits or those of my ancestors before the public', he claimed, before proceeding to do exactly that:

2. Letter from Grace Porter to Edgar Morrison, 11 November 1965, record no 479.8.

3. Nelson 1974; Cannon 1983: 365. Cannon puts the date of appointment at December 1837.

4. O'Connor 1991. Robinson was on Flinders Island at that time and had already distinguished himself with the Colonial Office by his actions in Van Diemen's Land. Of the four assistants, Parker was one of three schoolmasters and the fourth, Sievwright, was an army officer.

5. Reynolds 1998: 39.

My father having been appointed by Lord Glenelg, then Minister for the Colonies [sic], to proceed to Australia as Protector of Aborigines, the sturdy Londoner might have been seen on the 30th April, 1838, wending his way to the Port. By his side was his wife who, like Rachael, was weeping for her children, not knowing what their destiny would be. Behind them were their six little sons. Soon were the pilgrims on board the barque 'Elizabeth'...⁶

The Parker family duly arrived in Sydney and took ship several weeks later for Melbourne with the other Assistant Protectors and their families. The Assistant Protectors experienced considerable tension with Chief Protector Robinson, the Colonial Secretary and the Governor about the terms on which they would embark. These disputes about timing of departure, supplies and payment made the Governor remark of Parker and Dredge in particular, 'a disposition is expected not to make difficulties but to overcome them'.⁷ The Governor's expectations, however, were demanding of these family men. He expected that they be 'constantly moving about with the different Tribes of Natives and not remain fixed at one station'. A ration rate for each member of the household was ordered in the same letter, showing both that funding disputes began before the men had set foot in Port Phillip and that the Governor was well aware of the wives and children for which each of these men were responsible.⁸

After some delay, Parker went north-west to search for a suitable site for his station. Mary Parker travelled part of the distance with her husband and then stayed with the children at a camp at Jackson's Creek in 1839 and 1840.⁹ At the end of March 1840, Parker had the following 'Presents for the Natives' in his possession at this camp: '17 tomahawks; 70 fish hooks; 36 table knives and forks; 11 sailors knives; 5 pocket knives; 3 hanks of twine; 3 cotton handkerchiefs; 18½ dozen blue glass beads; 42 looking glasses; 5 tin plates; 3 caps; 3 old muskets; 4 spades; 1 mortising axe; 1 mattock; 1 broad axe'.¹⁰

Mary was about 33 years old at this point, 12 years married to Parker and just about to give birth to her only daughter. As Joseph Parker told it many years later, this seventh child, Emma, was born in the, "'palace of self-denial" on the verge of the Black Forest'.¹¹ Instead of moving further away from Melbourne into the Loddon district, Parker made this his own camp for about 18 months; a decision which caused further tensions with his superiors who wanted their men in the field immediately. Robinson does seem to have had some sympathy with the Parkers, conveying to Superintendent La Trobe that they would move on 'once Mrs Parker has recovered', although taking a slightly long-suffering tone as if he were trying to get the reluctant Parker to behave to the letter of his orders.¹²

Following an unsuccessful attempt to set up in Neereman, close to Laanecorrie north-west of Castlemaine, Parker settled on a site for the Loddon Protectorate at

6. Joseph Parker in Castlemaine Association of Pioneers and Old Residents 1996: 25.

7. Cannon, 1983: 459; Governor's minute, 28 May 1839.

8. Thompson to Assistant Protectors, 14 December 1838, VPRS 4409, Public Record Office of Victoria (PROV).

9. Morrison 2002: 26.

10. Quarterly return of government servants in the employ of Assistant Protector Parker from 1st January to 31st March 1840, box 133/8, H13880, State Library of Victoria (SLV).

11. Business and Professional Women's Club nd: 5.

present-day Franklindon in 1841. Crown land was set aside for the Protectorate in between present day Daylesford and Castlemaine. There was an inner reserve of one square mile (640 acres) for cultivation and a five-mile radius for 'the Hunting Ground of the Natives'. No other stations were allowed within a five-mile radius of this inner reserve and every care was expected to be taken to select sites 'as far as possible from the settled districts of the Colony'. The Colonial Secretary wrote a reply to Parker's request for a homestead reserve on the Loddon that outlines all this, but it planted the seeds of confusion as to whether the purpose of these 'inner reserves' was mainly cultivation by Aboriginal people or mainly a homestead for each Assistant Protector. The letter also noted:

As every effort ought to be made to induce them to engage in the pursuit of agriculture or regular labour, the extent of their Hunting Ground should be progressively curtailed instead of increased:- and it is for this reason that His Excellency proposes to make the inner reserve a permanent and the outer reserve a temporary one.¹³

The Protectorate site on the Loddon had rich agricultural soil, plentiful water and magnificent views and Parker thought that he could have both the Mount Macedon and the Djadja Wurrung people there.¹⁴ Although he had made acquaintance with Aboriginal people around Mount Macedon in his first months at Jackson's Creek, this ambition was not realised since the new station stood in Djadja Wurrung country. Like the other Assistant Protectors, Parker received an annual salary of £250 as well as the use of supplies, the land, bullocks and the labour of the Aborigines and assigned convict servants.¹⁵ Parker fairly quickly depastured his own as well as the government's sheep on the run.¹⁶ He also had a makeshift homestead of four rooms with a bark roof built on the new station.

This dwelling was replaced two years later by a more substantial mud-brick house of eight rooms, but Mary Parker did not long survive the period of rougher living. She died at the age of 35 when her husband was away as he so often was for his work. Perhaps she died of complications from a miscarriage as her childbearing history would indicate she may well have been pregnant again. According to her son Joseph's 1916 account:

On one of those darkest of dark nights on the 11th October, 1842, at midnight hour, when we were all in bed, I heard a distressing noise in Mother's room. I

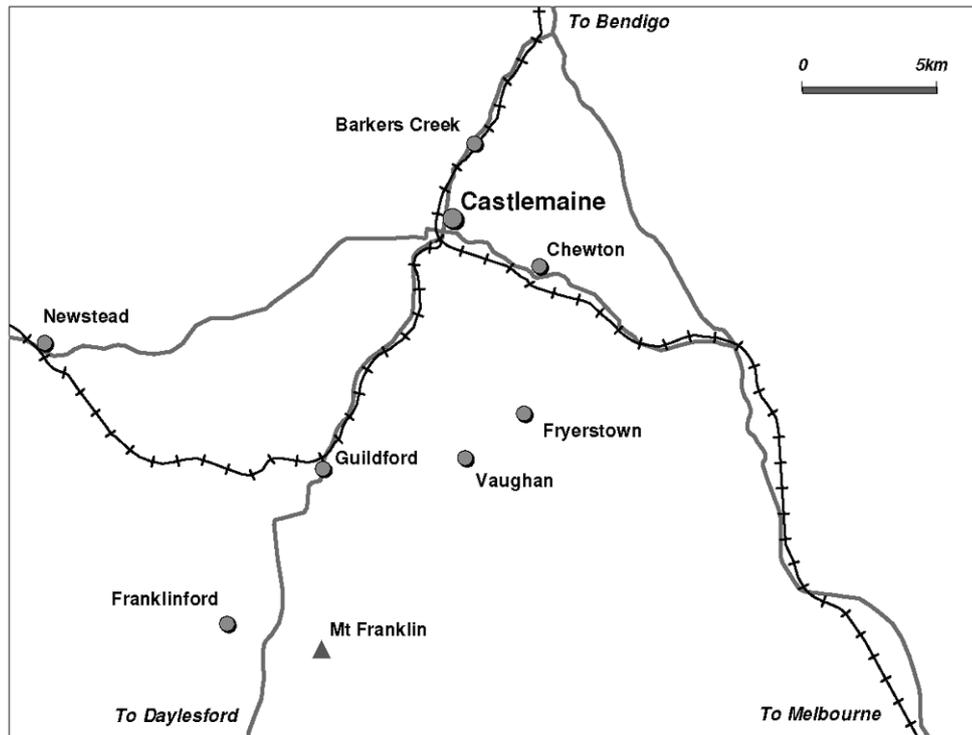
12. Robinson to La Trobe, 3 October 1839 and 23 September 1840, in Registered inward correspondence to the Superintendent of Port Phillip district, relating to Aboriginal Affairs, 1839-51, VPRS 10, PROV (hereafter VPRS 10, PROV); Cannon, 1983: 688.

13. Thompson to La Trobe, 28 April 1840, VPRS 10, PROV.

14. Culvenor (1992: 25-27) reproduces a letter from Parker to Robinson of 26 January 1841 stating Parker's approval of the new location and his intention to join the two groups.

15. Rae-Ellis 1996: 151; Quarterly return of government servants in the employ of Assistant Protector Parker from 1st January to 31st March 1840, box 133/8 H13880, State Library of Victoria (SLV). Parker was given two assigned servants, Thomas Davenport and James Moryce. Parker to La Trobe, 1841/1072, VPRS 10, PROV, requesting a replacement for his assigned servant who had obtained a ticket-of-leave.

16. Culvenor (1992: 31) cites letter from Grimes of Mount Macedon to La Trobe, 24 July 1848, which is one of many in the contests between pastoralists over land.



Mt Franklin and surrounding district.

called my brothers, and rushed for the mission doctor, but to no purpose, for dear Mother was dead, and we youngsters were left orphans, Father being away in Melbourne at the time, and he had to be brought back with all possible haste ... The lamentations of the blacks were something to be remembered ... all refused food and kept up a wailing for forty-eight hours.¹⁷

Mary's younger sister Charlotte, in response to Mary's letters, was aboard ship from England to provide assistance and company, although she arrived too late to help her sister.¹⁸ Parker married his second wife Hannah Edwards in 1843, about a year after Mary's death.¹⁹ Hannah was the daughter of a local Franklinford farmer and had come to the district from Somerset with her family. Prior to the marriage, she had been employed in the Parker homestead as seamstress and, in all probability, as part-time nursery maid.²⁰ Hannah bore six children, three boys and three girls, although two of the girls died in infancy.²¹ As Parker had already fathered six sons and one daughter with Mary, this brought his surviving family to nine sons and two daughters.

17. Joseph Parker from *Mount Alexander Mail*, 22 and 24 June 1916 in Morrison 2002: 309-310.

18. Charlotte Woolmer later married a local Franklinford man, William Bumstead, and lived at Franklinford until her death in 1902.

19. Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages, 1838-1888, no 896.

20. Morrison 2002: 65.

21. Morrison 2002: 65.

It is worth paying attention to these details of Parker's private life for their bearing on his public life. Having brought his young family across the world to live with few comforts on the Port Phillip frontier, his worst fears must have pressed close when Mary died just four years after leaving London. This was the woman Parker had forgone the ministry to marry and was the mother of his seven young children, now suddenly left motherless in an isolated, often hostile place. Just over three years later, his eldest son, also named Edward Stone, died at the age of 18 at Franklinford, an occurrence that is curiously unremarked in the Parker family history, but which must also have been terribly painful.²² It must have been a harsh predicament for a man torn between demanding work and the needs of his bereaved young family. Apart from quickly marrying the capable Hannah, Parker took other actions in the period after Mary's death that seem to mark a shift from a hard-striving intention to do everything possible for Aboriginal people towards a strategy of making his own luck.

The second stage: consolidating on the Loddon

Having settled at the Loddon Station, Parker's task was to carry out his protecting role with the local Aboriginal people while also protecting the whole enterprise from its detractors. In the second part of the task, he was joined by Protector Robinson and the other Assistant Protectors, with several of whom he had competitive, hostile relationships.²³ He did, however, have friendly and cooperative relationships with Tuckfield of the Buntingdale Mission and the Moravians who were preparing to establish the Lake Boga Mission.²⁴

Parker's nearest neighbours were squatters on the five stations that adjoined Loddon station: Smeaton Hill (west of Daylesford); Tarrengower (around Newstead); Bough Yards (around Guildford and Fryerstown); Holcombe (Glenlyon and Dry Diggings) and Corinella (around Hepburn Springs).²⁵ Relations varied, but Parker would be engaged in a series of boundary disputes, endemic among the early New South Wales squatters whose land acquisition depended as much on the boldness of their claim as on the official paperwork. The first years of the Protectorate had been marked by violent clashes between Aborigines and squatting interests, which Parker had been charged with investigating, but this was not a feature of his subsequent years on the Loddon.²⁶ These 'collisions', as the official correspondence called them, were a source of tension between Parker and his neighbours.²⁷ A letter from Parker to the squatter

22. 'Parker letters and photographs', MS 8174, MSB 423, SLV. Edward Stone Parker junior died on 23 November 1845.

23. Most notable were Parker's disputes with Sievwright, whom he would accuse of attempting to seduce Mary, his first wife, in a letter to La Trobe that strengthened the case for that man's dismissal. Rae-Ellis 1996: 167 and 190-191; Arkley 2000: 330-332, 344-345, 362, 430, 443-446 and 448-449; unregistered correspondence regarding the suspension of Charles Sievwright, VPRS 4397, PROV.

24. Morrison 2002: 66-7; Kenny 2007: 86-87.

25. Culvenor 1992: 2.

26. Cannon 1983: 668-696.

27. Robinson to La Trobe, 1840/1013, VPRS 10, PROV: enclosing depositions collected by Parker relating to 'Monro's collision with Aborigines'; Parker to La Trobe, 1841/627, VPRS 10, PROV: enclosing deposition regarding attack in Mount Macedon district.

Learmonth about wheat and stock, however, has the tone of equals on friendly terms with each other.²⁸

The line between the government service and private enterprise aspects of Parker's work was indistinct from the station's early years and this type of blurring would open him up to accusations of dishonest dealings. Not all these accusations were made by opponents of the Protectorate. In 1846, Assistant Protector William Le Souëf claimed that Parker was often in Melbourne, rather than attending to his official duties, because he was speculating in land with two Melbourne businessmen, and that Parker obtained a favourable contract to sell cattle and sheep to the government through his connections to Robinson and La Trobe.²⁹ What is certain is that there was a lot of bitterness and rivalry between the Assistant Protectors. As early as the start of the 1840s, Parker and William Thomas were the only two of the original four Assistant Protectors still employed. Sievwright had been dismissed and replaced by William Le Souëf and Dredge had resigned.

Another uncomfortable question was raised about Parker's business dealings when his own and the Loddon Protectorate's wool bales were mixed together when sent to Melbourne. This caused what Rae-Ellis describes as 'a major fracas in the auditor's department' that was not resolved by 1850, when the Protectorate closed. Rae-Ellis believes that Robinson and Parker often colluded in making fraudulent returns to the government on expenditure, Aboriginal attendance and Protectorate activities.³⁰ The Protectorate system fell from favour with the government during the 1840s so much that by 1847 La Trobe would write that Parker was 'doing no more than any other settler and less considering the money it cost'.³¹

The third stage: ES Parker, landholder

The period beginning immediately before the closure of the Port Phillip Protectorate and extending over the next 15 years was the most clearly self-interested of Parker's career. The loss of his appointment as Assistant Protector must have been hard. He had fought to keep the Protectorate going, had lost his first wife in the effort and had a large family to support. In the midst of one of the most vicious scrambles for land and wealth that Australia would witness, his hardships must have seemed unjust when compared to the prosperity of his squatter neighbours. In this situation he appears to have decided to make the most of what he had; and what he had was the land, house and stores at the Loddon Station and his reputation as an expert on Aboriginal matters.

When the Loddon Protectorate closed in March 1850, Parker was granted a pastoral licence to the parcel of land it had occupied.³² He also successfully argued for the retention of equipment, stores and stock that had been the property of the Protectorate so that he could direct their use in the interests of the Aborigines. In this respect he managed better than Dredge, his fellow Assistant Protector, whom the government pursued for the cost of a bullock after his resignation.³³ Parker wrote many letters from

28. Parker to Learmonth, 23 March 1846, MS 11191, MSB 387, SLV.

29. Arkley 2000: 444–445.

30. Rae-Ellis 1996: 222.

31. La Trobe quoted in Rae-Ellis 1996: 222.

32. Culvenor 1992: 3.

1849 until his death in 1865 urging that he be allowed to retain the land.³⁴ For example, in December 1849 he wrote to La Trobe,

Referring to the intimation received from Your Honour, that the ground occupied at present as an Aboriginal Reserve on the Loddon, would probably be reduced, and the surplus land let for the benefit of the aborigines, I beg most respectfully to solicit Your Honour's favourable consideration of my application for permission to occupy the ground to be vacated, without encountering the risk of any public competition for the same. I am anxious, less for my own sake than for the sake of the native with whom I have so long been connected, to remain in the District that I may continue to employ such influence and facility of access as I may possess with them for religious instruction. I have hitherto been shut out from every opportunity of obtaining a station for my family. I am willing to pay for the occupation of the ground, any sum as may be fixed as rental by Your Honour, or the Commissioner of the District. And I should feel myself bound by every obligation, to render the utmost aid in my power for the success of any future measures or arrangements adopted by Her Majesty's Government for the benefit of the aborigines.³⁵

Joseph Parker made it all sound rather easier on his father's part and clearer in the demarcation between government station and private farming in his 1916 reminiscences:

When the Aboriginal Station was abolished, Father was offered a Licence for the Reserve (sixty-two square miles), which he accepted. We then moved our quarters to the foot of Mount Franklin, where we established our homestead, and commenced farming and grazing.³⁶

Educating the children was one of the main duties outlined by Lord Glenelg when the Protectorate was first established.³⁷ Nevertheless, Parker did not open a school at Franklinford until the Protectorate was about to close. James Bodkin had been appointed 'schoolmaster and constable' in 1841, though some education was offered prior to this date.³⁸ La Trobe thought that Parker and the other Assistant Protectors should have put schools before the cultivation of their land, but Robinson, like Parker, held out for extra funding to employ teachers.³⁹ Parker's comprehension of the importance of children to his mission and his willingness to take them from their families is apparent in his 1853 report to the Colonial Secretary. The school at Franklinford was central to this:

I deem it now quite practicable to extend the operations of the school by sending round the country on the Loddon, Avoca and &c., to collect the children belonging to the different tribes, and particularly several half-castes who must be now

33. Robinson to La Trobe, 4 September 1840, VPRS 10, PROV. Regarding £15 they wanted Dredge to return for the cost of the bullock that was part of the provisioning of the Goulburn Protectorate.

34. Parker to Surveyor-General, VPRS 2894. Parker sent letters about licence renewal at least on 31 March 1856, 18 March 1857, April 1859, 6 February 1860, 17 July 1861, 2 September 1861 and 17 August 1862.

35. Parker to La Trobe, December 1849, VPRS 10, PROV.

36. Morrison 2002: 220.

37. Rae-Ellis 1996: 151.

38. Parker to La Trobe, 1841/1104, VPRS 10, PROV.

39. La Trobe to Robinson in 1847 and Robinson 1844 in Rae-Ellis 1996: 222.

reaching an age when their habits may be fixed for life if left without instruction among their uncivilized relatives. The Schoolmaster has expressed his earnest wish to undertake such an expedition if he can be furnished with the means of conveying the children to school and suitably rewarding the parents.⁴⁰

Parker was adept at promoting his ideas to government and at requesting funding. By 1853, the Protectorate had been closed for three years and Parker needed justification for his continued occupation of the site. This school would continue to operate until the remaining Aboriginal people were removed to Coranderrk in 1864, despite criticism of the condition of the school, of poor attendance and the allegation that the schoolmaster's tuberculosis was very likely to have infected his pupils.⁴¹ Perhaps this criticism was part of the systematic denigration of the protection project as this school produced at least one very able student in Ellen who was literate and proficient in needlework and who makes another appearance later in this account.

The Parker family story insisted on the popularity that Edward Parker enjoyed among the Aborigines. Here is Joseph Parker's description of his father's impact on Aboriginal people when he first came to Melbourne in 1839,

On seeing Father, they immediately came round him, and bowed down at his feet and regarded him with marked reverence and respect. A bystander seeing this, remarked to Father that the 'darkies' appeared to regard him as a divine person. Father certainly did have some special influence over them, a power he carried with him until the day of his death.⁴²

Joseph told another story about his father's influence with the Aboriginal people:

One fine morning, early in 1841, a party of nine men, all mounted and armed to the teeth, came up expecting to find us all killed and eaten, but their surprise was great when they found us all safe and happy, save and except the results of their own actions. The leader of the party, in addressing my father, wondered how he and his family survived in the midst of so many 'savages', as he termed them. My father replied by saying that he resorted to acts of kindness and proper treatment. ... 'Here is my ammunition,' said my father, drawing from his pocket a small Bible; 'there is my convincing element, and up to date it has not failed me'.⁴³

These accounts of an uncanny, almost divine influence now seem exaggerated but apparently proved quite convincing to the colonial government, and certainly this belief in the power of Christian practice was preferable to the conviction that Aboriginal people must be controlled at gunpoint. Parker based his claim for retaining the land on several arguments: the debt owed to the Aborigines; the debt he was owed for his public service; his ability to keep Aboriginal people under control; and a sort of pre-emptive property right because he had held the land for ten years.

In late 1853 the Legislative Council again considered the future of the land reserved for the Loddon Protectorate and confirmed that Parker could continue to hold

40. Parliament of Victoria 1853.

41. Attwood 1999: 41.

42. Joseph Parker from his 1916 newspaper reminiscences quoted in Morrison 2002: 308.

43. Joseph Parker's address to the Castlemaine Pioneers and Old Residents Association, 26 June 1891, in Castlemaine Pioneers 1996: 126–127. Joseph Parker gave an almost identical version of this incident in his 1916 reminiscences for the *Mount Alexander Mail*.

the station 'for the benefit of the Aborigines' and as a measure of 'due regard to his position for past services, and the influence, which he undeniably possesses, with the tribes frequenting it'.⁴⁴ In that year Parker was appointed to the Council of the University of Melbourne and in the following year, he was appointed to the Legislative Council.⁴⁵ He would later be appointed as Inspector for the Denominational Schools Board from 1857 to 1862.⁴⁶ From 1855, demand for land by the people who had flooded into the district for gold meant that at least part of the Protectorate Reserve was subdivided, although it is certain that 640 acres close to Mount Franklin remained, 'for use by a small number of Aborigines who wished to continue farming'.⁴⁷ A letter from Mr W Wilson of Castlemaine to the Chief Secretary in late 1859 inquires about the timing of the expiration of Mr Parker's lease on his run and its likelihood of renewal. The response by the Commissioner for Crown Lands was that Parker would be given preference for the land.⁴⁸

In 1860, Parker could still be found leasing 10,000 acres for grazing, although that year he apparently did not reapply for a lease renewal as much of the run had been reserved for commons and mining.⁴⁹ He was still coming under suspicion for misuse of government property in 1860; this time sparked by a letter to the Surveyor-General at Castlemaine and signed, 'A Native'. The anonymous writer questioned the use of government rations at the station and the conduct of Parker's junior colleague, the school teacher Judkins. The writer accused Judkins of not earning his wage and keep as, they claimed, he was busy working his own farm rather than teaching the children.⁵⁰

Parker renewed his annual lease applications from 1861, generally pleading that he be allowed advantageous terms because of his good works and peculiar hardships. He often also understated the desirability of the land in question in this correspondence. For example:

I have the honour to apply for a renewal of my licence to depasture stock on such portions of the Mount Franklin Aboriginal Reserve as may be unsold or unappropriated for commonage or mining.

I beg respectfully to remind you that I have held a depasturing licence for this area since the year 1850.

The application should have been made at an earlier period, but from the utter uncertainty whether any portion would be left after the appropriation of farmers' and diggers' commonages. The quantity of available pasture is very limited, consisting mainly of densely wooded ranges.⁵¹

Parker had been quite inexact about the land he still held, describing some of it as his 'commonage right' and other as used for 'depasturing' as well as the central 784 acres

44. Parliament of Victoria 1854.

45. Nelson 1974.

46. Nelson 1974.

47. Culvenor 1992: 3.

48. Parker to Commissioner of Land and Works, 4 January 1860, Registered inward correspondence of Surveyor-General, VPRS 2896, PROV.

49. Culvenor 1992: 19-20.

50. Morrison 2002: 272.

51. Registered inward correspondence of Surveyor-General, 17 July 1861, VPRS 2896, PROV.

that he held.⁵² This confusion was partly the product of Glenelg's original directions that were ambiguous about the inner and outer reserves. The pressure for selection land finally reduced Parker's land holdings in 1862 when the Board of Land and Works recommended that the land be auctioned, 'at an upset rental of £125 per annum containing about 10,000 acres in accordance with the 98th section of the Land Act 1862'. The Board also noted that the land had not been included in the list of runs and therefore the occupant (Parker) had not been paying the rate.⁵³ He had been paying at most £100 per annum for the entire holding throughout the 1850s.⁵⁴ Joseph and Edward Parker had each also selected 640 acres of land at Glenlyon, adjoining Mount Franklin, in the early 1860s.⁵⁵ Perhaps this was a contingency plan should Parker's pleas for the Mount Franklin run fail.

The Parker house would become quite solid, according to the Parkers' granddaughter. Grace, the daughter of Mary's only daughter Emma, wrote of the old Mount Franklin 'homestead' and its library and of her mother having a governess.⁵⁶ The property was rated for an annual value of £32 during the 1870s and described as 'house of wood and farm Mount Franklin'.⁵⁷ Emma C Parker owned the property at least until 1873 but it must have been another Emma in the family as this seventh child, Emma Mary Parker, would marry James Williamson in 1860.⁵⁸ This house has not survived although a small stand of poplars marks its former position just off the road from Daylesford towards Castlemaine with sweeping panoramic views across the ranges.⁵⁹ This was the second house site, established when the Parker family moved up the run towards Mount Franklin after the Protectorate was disbanded. Parker and his son Joseph always referred to this address as 'Mount Franklin', making it sound like a pastoral holding. This is where Parker died in 1865, 15 years after the closure of the Protectorate and a year after the removal of the last Djadja Wurrung people to Coranderrk, yet with much of the land and improvements still within his possession.⁶⁰

Hannah Parker survived her husband by 28 years, dying in 1893 at the age of 75 after probably remaining in the Mount Franklin house.⁶¹ The details of property and will are scant: the probate papers for Parker's estate valued his possessions as not

52. Registered inward correspondence of Surveyor General, 17 August 1862, VPRS 2896, PROV.

53. Registered inward correspondence of Surveyor General, 8 September 1862, VPRS 2896, PROV.

54. From 1851 to 1853, Parker paid £60 rent annually according to the Audit Office, Parliament of Victoria 1854.

55. Daylesford Historical Museum index of landholders. Joseph also had a 'house of wood and garden' at Franklinford, Shire of Franklin rate book, Daylesford Historical Museum.

56. Porter to Morrison, 11 November 1965, 479.8.

57. Shire of Franklin rate book, Daylesford Historical Museum. The rateable value was based on the annual rent that would be due if the property was leased, not on the market value if sold.

58. Morrison 2002: 17.

59. Conversation in August 2005 with members of the Daylesford Historical Society and inspection of their Mapinfo database of early landholdings.

60. *Mount Alexander Mail*, 28 April 1865.

61. Parker family gravestone, Franklinford Cemetery. Funeral notice of Hannah Parker in the *Mount Alexander Mail*, 14 March 1893. It is not certain that Hannah was still living at the house on the former protectorate. She could have been living elsewhere in the district with another member of her large family.

exceeding £184/10/-, which is a remarkably low figure for a man of his stature and dealings.⁶² Either his large family cost a lot to keep, or Parker may not have actually ever *owned* much property, even though he had the *use* of a great deal of public estate. When Parker made out his last will, he gave his occupation as 'Landholder'.⁶³

There are intriguing continuities between Edward Parker's career and that of his son, Joseph, and his nephew, Shirley Waldemar Baker. Joseph stayed peripherally involved with Aboriginal affairs, arguing when he could for the re-establishment of a protectorate-style system and hinting at his own readiness and fitness to play a leading role.⁶⁴ Joseph Parker finally found a similar project in the 1890s when he was appointed overseer of the Glenlyon Village Settlement, a Christian-socialist 'back to the land' experiment aimed at improving the poor of Melbourne. It was hoped that people would acquire land by the application of their own labour, but the financial terms were harsh and it ended up disbanded and heavily in debt.⁶⁵ Edward Parker's nephew, Shirley Waldemar Baker, undertook the land and moral improvement project on a far larger scale than his cousin Joseph. Baker lived with his uncle at Franklinford during his Wesleyan missionary training. His training complete, he was sent to Tonga where he became a favourite of the King, reorganised the country's land and tax laws, was appointed Prime Minister, formed a break-away version of the Wesleyan church of which he declared himself head and became very wealthy. He was eventually removed by the British who were alarmed at his interference in their trade, lost heavily on the New Zealand stock market during the 1890s depression and returned to Tonga in much reduced circumstances for his final years.⁶⁶

Parker's thoughts on Loddon Station

In an 1854 address to the John Knox Young Men's Association, Parker gave a demonstration of his expertise on Aboriginal affairs and laid out his project.⁶⁷ Delivered ostensibly to educate the audience, this lecture was also very much a performance that consolidated Parker's eminence as an expert and a 'good' man of charitable principles and actions. This reputation was of direct material benefit to Parker and he seems to have been quite conscious of it as a significant asset. Parker explained to his audience that colonial acquisition and Aboriginal protection need not conflict:

But let every Christian man, and especially every Christian young man rise, and say with one voice, to the government, to the legislature, and the nation; occupy the land, till its broad wastes, extract its riches, develop its resource, if you will; but, in the name of God and humanity, SAVE THE PEOPLE.⁶⁸

⁶². Probate of Edward Stone Parker, VPRS28/P0000/60, PROV.

⁶³. Parker's will, VPRS28/P0001/11, PROV, is undated, and is there no date for the will given in the probate papers, VPRS28/P0000/60, PROV. Curiously, his death certificate gives his occupation as 'printer', presumably how Joseph Parker advised it be recorded in his capacity as next of kin. Dr Daniel gave the cause of death as 'general dropsy after rheumatic gout' on 26 April 1865.

⁶⁴. Parliament of Victoria 1877-78: 31.

⁶⁵. *Mount Alexander Mail*, 26 April 1893; Cannon 1967: 193.

⁶⁶. Rutherford 1969; *Sun*, 28 May 1955.

⁶⁷. Lecture delivered by ES Parker on 10 May 1854 to the John Knox Young Men's Association at Mechanics' Hall, Melbourne, published later that year and reproduced in Morrison 2002: 281-305.

To hold the two compatible in 1854 in the Loddon district seems a remarkable conviction. This was one of the peak years of the gold rush that caused so much further harm to Aboriginal people, and attempting to hold this pressure back by means of a relatively small reserve of land amid high density settlement seems very optimistic. Parker's message to his audience was that *he* was a saviour of the people and that land exploitation by the colonisers did not conflict with this saving. Robert Kenny takes Parker at his word, admiring his passionate conviction to the preservation of the lives of Aboriginal people.⁶⁹ This article does not argue that Parker was indifferent or that he did not abhor the destruction of life, but it does contend that Parker's proposals generally had an element of career advancement.

His own station was run on the basis of colonial development mixed with saving the Aborigines, he told the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Welfare in 1858:

I now wish to make a statement as to my experience in civilising the Aborigines: There are at present settled, immediately in sight of my residence, TWO families who hold land under the authority of the government; they have been farming on their own account since the year 1852, they are two married men with their families. ... They have erected decent residences for themselves; have cultivated the soil; have taken several crops, and, in the entire habits and associations of their lives, are in no respect different from our ordinary peasants.⁷⁰

Antoine Faucherey's late 1850s photographs show the Aboriginal farmers assembled outside their bark and log house.⁷¹ Two of the mature men in the pictures were probably Tommy Farmer and Dicky, who had been granted a Crown lease in 1852 on 21 of the 10,000 acres held by Parker at that stage. The others were probably people who also lived at the farm, including Lankey and Ellen, but who did not have the same official recognition as holders of the land. Later they were granted 100 guineas for seed wheat, working bullocks and tools.⁷² Tommy Farmer was born Beembarmin (or Beernbarmin) around 1831.⁷³ Morrison thinks Beembarmin and Yerrebulluk (Dicky) were taken into Parker's household in 1841 at the first Loddon station site after their fathers were killed in a conflict with the 'Goulburn tribe'.⁷⁴ Perhaps their fathers died this way but there is little doubt that there would have been other family members to care for these boys and that Parker's 'bringing them in' was opportunistic. Adopting orphans was a practice that Parker had successfully suggested become government policy.⁷⁵ Acquiring Aboriginal children for white households was widespread, meeting mixed desires for obedient workers, to conduct social-religious experiments and for pleasant companionship.⁷⁶

68. John Knox Young Men's Association lecture in Morrison 2002: 305.

69. Kenny 2007: 62-63, 79, 98.

70. Evidence given by ES Parker to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Welfare, 17 November 1858, reproduced in Morrison 2002: 274.

71. Reilly and Carew 1983.

72. Barwick 1998: 50. It is difficult to tell from Barwick's account just when this grant occurred, but probably in between 1859 and 1861, seven to nine years after the land grant.

73. Attwood 1999: 41; Barwick 1998: 50. Attwood thinks he was born in 1827 but Barwick thinks it was 1831.

74. Morrison 2002: 261.

75. Thompson to Robinson, 3 December 1839, VPRS 10, PROV.

76. Reynolds 1990: 165-191.



Group of Aboriginal men, women and children at Parker's station c1857–1859 by Richard Daintree. By permission of the State Library of Victoria (H84.167/42).

Morrison wonders if Farmer and Dicky's adoptions predetermined their chance to farm.⁷⁷ Attwood believes that it was their conversion to Christianity.⁷⁸ By the early 1850s when this Aboriginal farming experiment commenced, Parker needed as many arguments as possible to stay in possession of the former Protectorate. Farming had mixed results for those involved. Of substantial benefit was the refuge that the farm provided for other clan members and visiting Aboriginal people.⁷⁹ However, the farmers themselves fared badly: Lankey died when he fell down a mineshaft at nearby Yandoit in 1855; Farmer's wife Norah died in Castlemaine Hospital and Dicky died of tuberculosis at Mount Franklin in 1862.⁸⁰ Although Parker reported the farm as a success to the Colonial Secretary in 1853, managing to include the remark that his family had helped the Aboriginal farmers to get in the crops, a less flattering story emerged in Farmer's evidence to the 1877 Royal Commission on the Aborigines.⁸¹ When asked about the reason he moved from the farm to Coranderrk, he answered, 'Well, this piece of ground I had I lose all my team, my bullocks. I lent it to Mr Parker and they took the lot of bullocks I had, and lose nearly all my bullocks.'⁸² Morrison has looked at

77. Morrison 2002: 235.

78. Attwood 1999: 39.

79. Parliament of Victoria 1877-78: 31.

80. Attwood 1999: 41.

81. Parliament of Victoria 1877-78: 29. Parker was still claiming the farm as one of his successes in 1858, 'Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Welfare', reproduced in Morrison 2002: 274.

Farmer's evidence to the Commission and quotes Farmer as saying: 'My own people camped around and eat me out'. Farmer's account of the failure of the farm can be read simply as other Aboriginal people needing to eat. Morrison, however, takes up Joseph Parker's insinuation that these people were unwilling to work and were taking advantage of those who were, completely ignoring Farmer's further testimony about Parker using and then losing his bullocks. Morrison makes a conjecture about goldminers taking the animals and concurs with Joseph Parker's explanation for the failure of the farm: that apart from Farmer, the Aborigines just died.⁸³

In establishing Aboriginal people as farmers, Parker took the belief in work as a civilising strategy further than many other missionaries and protectors did in south-eastern Australia at that time.⁸⁴ Reynolds also noticed Parker's inclination to get 'his' Aborigines working, citing Parker's advice that they, 'should be made to feel that their occupation is for their own benefit, rather than for the benefit of the employer. They appear generally to feel that they owe us nothing and that they are under no obligation to work.'⁸⁵ The Colonial Secretary's early direction to the Assistant Protectors to get the Aborigines working had been clear. With this in mind, Parker may have been producing good politics as much as good workers.

Removal to Coranderrk

Ellen, a young Djadja Wurrung woman of about 13 years of age, was a member of one of Parker's ideal peasant farming families still living at his station in 1863. Her father was Yerrelluk (Dicky) who had just died and her mother was Beibie (Eliza), who was also still living there. Ellen had been taught by Mr and Mrs Judkins at the Aboriginal school at Franklinford and could read, write and do needlework. When the Prince of Wales married in 1863, the Kulin at Coranderrk ceremoniously presented wedding gifts for Prince Albert and birthday gifts for Queen Victoria to the Governor at a public levee in honour of the royal family. In a related gesture, the Djadja Wurrung, part of the same Kulin people, sent the Queen two letters written by Ellen and a collar she had crocheted. The departing Governor's wife was also sent one of Ellen's crocheted doilies. The Queen replied with her thanks, particularly asking Ellen to make it known to her people that she was concerned for their welfare.⁸⁶ The Queen's concern was warranted. Twenty-five years of contact with white people had already killed large numbers of the Indigenous people of central Victoria, with the goldrushes accelerating the spread of disease and alcohol.⁸⁷ Ellen herself died in 1874 at the age of 24 or 25, following the deaths of her three children from tuberculosis.⁸⁸ The other Kulin people from Coranderrk had a more satisfactory response, although the timing may have been a happy coincidence, of the gazettal of land for the Coranderrk reserve.⁸⁹

^{82.} Parliament of Victoria 1877-78: 31.

^{83.} Morrison 2002: 241.

^{84.} Mitchell 2004: 225.

^{85.} Reynolds 1990: 96.

^{86.} The text of most of the Queen's letter is reproduced in Lydon 2002: 83-84.

^{87.} Cahir and Clark 2004: 14-15. Attwood describes estimates of a halving of the Djadja Wurrung population during the decade of the protectorate's operation as reliable, Attwood 1999: 36.

^{88.} Barwick 1998: 67.

By 1864, apart from one Aboriginal adult, only children remained at Franklinford. As already noted, other Djadja Wurrung people used the station as one of their camps but the Central Board for the Protection of Aborigines was keen to close Franklinford as an Aboriginal reserve in any form and to move the remaining people to Coranderrk. This was carried out in 1864.⁹⁰ The presence of Willie Parker, a 'half-caste from Loddon' in the Coranderrk records is an interesting element in the Parker family tree, although he would have almost certainly taken the surname as a gesture of reciprocity and respect or for want of another suitable European surname rather than being actually related. Willie Parker survived longer than many of the people who moved from the Loddon to Coranderrk, although by late 1882 he was hospitalised with lung disease.⁹¹

Parker was in the habit of taking orphaned Aboriginal children into his household from his earliest time in the colony of Victoria when he took in a boy called Kolain whom he found in Melbourne. He was with the Parkers at their Jackson's Creek camp in 1839 and 1840, where Parker claimed stores on his behalf: 'Flour (100 pounds), meat (662/3 pounds), tea (331/3 ounces), sugar (121/2 pounds), soap (162/3 ounces)'.⁹² In 1916, Joseph Parker wrote, 'After the abolition of the Protectorate, Father demanded that some provision be made for this youth, when he was taken away by the government, and I have never heard of him since'.⁹³ Kolain was by then hardly a 'youth' and went to Coranderrk with his wife Harriet in 1864. Both were dead by 1870.⁹⁴ It should not have been too difficult for Joseph Parker to keep in touch with Kolain after he went to Coranderrk, but perhaps his father's death just a year later interrupted such contact.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that Parker's personal circumstances combined with the frontier and settlement circumstances of that time and place produced this outcome. Parker was an Englishman with a government appointment who arrived on the frontier at the right time to be part of the land acquisition that was occurring all around him. It appears that this circumstance eventually prevailed, despite an earlier concentration on Aboriginal protection rather than land acquisition. In matters of land, Parker would come to act most like the squatters in fighting for his own interests ahead of all other claimants, although he apparently thought that this did not conflict with protecting Indigenous people.

Parker argued that Aborigines need not inevitably die out, although he believed that they were in some natural way weaker than Europeans and unusually susceptible to harm. That is, Parker was required to protect the people so Parker should retain the land on the Loddon. With the stated aim of fostering an Aboriginal peasantry, he supervised a small Aboriginal farm which, along with a belatedly established Aboriginal school, supported Parker's argument for retaining control of the former Loddon Protectorate.

⁸⁹. Barwick 1998: 66–67. There is a fuller discussion of the significance of this gesture in Lydon 2002: 82–85.

⁹⁰. Attwood 1999: 42–45.

⁹¹. Walter c1865; Central Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, 1 November 1882.

⁹². Account of provisions issued to one Aboriginal orphan male child, box 133/8 H13879, SLV.

⁹³. Joseph Parker quoted in Morrison 2002: 308.

⁹⁴. Barwick to Morrison cited in Morrison 2002: 262.

Also, perhaps he *was* owed something for his efforts and the personal losses he had endured. George Robinson could return to England with a good pension and divide his time between Bath and the Continent, but Edward Parker still had to finish raising a large family. Parker could also have returned to England or moved away to Melbourne or taken up his selection land, but he was no longer a young man. Parker's best option was to stay on the Loddon trying to continue his protecting career and to obtain what government appointments he could in the much more hostile environment of post-goldrush Victoria. Parker may have genuinely believed that his land interests were secondary to those of the local Aboriginal people but that he chose to describe himself as 'Landholder, Mount Franklin' and that he and his son were so assiduous in promoting his works does suggest that self-interest became a strong element. This self-interest was endemic in colonial Victoria and Parker was obliged to be worldly if he was to protect his family.

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