

Louisa Anne Meredith

BY: MAUREEN MARTIN FERRIS

Louisa Anne was born 20 July 1812 in Birmingham, Warwickshire, England to Thomas Twamley and his wife Louise Anne nee Meredith.

Her mother Louisa Anne Meredith was the daughter of John Meredith a Birmingham Lawyer, and her father Thomas Twamley was a local village miller. Her father was 12 years older than her mother, he was considered an unsuitable husband for the daughter of an eminent and highly respectable legal family.

Louisa grew up during the Regency era - this was the age of elegance, achievements in the fine arts and architecture. It encompassed social, political and economic change as well as refinement.

She was the miller's pretty daughter in the care of a dairy maid. It was soon discovered that she had a remarkable memory, she repeated words from poems her mother read aloud. By the age of three she had learned to read them herself.

The little girl in the white muslin dress danced with excitement ... The child held her breath as she waited for her first glimpse of the Queen ...

The Princess Elizabeth smiled, drawing the child forward to pat her on the cheek. The grim old Queen herself smiled. The crowd relaxed. Louisa Anne Meredith, later to become the writer, had made her first public appearance.

Louisa was sent to Miss Wingrove's dancing school at Bath.

Mrs Twamley arranged for a daily governess (Miss Smith) to instruct her daughter in writing, music, English and French. Miss Smith was a very plain woman, badly marked with smallpox scars, Louisa became very fond of her.

As an eight year old, she developed an intense interest in nature and the natural



Miniature of Louisa
painted by Thomas Peat
c1818

wonders. Louisa received tuition in art and sketching and turned her hand to painting miniatures. These skills encouraged by her mother developed over the next ten years.

In 1832 Louisa exhibited five of her paintings in the exhibition galleries, including a portrait of her father Thomas Twamley.

Her first book called Poems, was published 1835 in London. Then followed in 1836 *The Romance of Nature; or The Flower Seasons Illustrated* and in 1839 *Flora's Gems or The Treasures of the Parterre* - drawn and coloured from nature by James Andrews also *Our Wild Flowers Familiarly described and illustrated* (12 plates by Louisa).

Louisa's cousin Charles Meredith along with his father George (George's 2nd wife Mary nee Evans) and siblings set sail on the chartered ship *Emerald* for Van Diemen's Land, arriving in 1821.

George and his family took up a grant north of Swansea at Great Oyster Bay on the East Coast. The property had a magnificent view overlooking the Freycinet Peninsula and was situated on a river. The first house was a small thatched roof hut - *Creek Hut*. Today this small dilapidated building still stands on *Redbanks* side of the Meredith River.

Louisa, not quite twenty-one, had mature observations with views on society, she did not suffer fools gladly; as many acquaintances learned. She admitted to being ambitious and having a restless and enquiring spirit.

She was stunned when her uncle George Meredith sent her a letter inviting her to emigrate to Van Diemen's Land. He offered her a position as governess to his growing family by his second wife. The sum offered was



Continued over page>

£100 per year – Louisa was not amused. This offer was far from flattering to a rising young star of the Birmingham literary and artistic circles.

Charles Meredith corresponded with his cousin Louisa Anne in England. He described Van Diemen's Land to her and would send her mysterious objects he collected.

One such object was a whale's ear bone, this curio Louisa kept on her mantel for visitors to debate its origin.



Whale's ear bone held in the East Coast Heritage Museum

It is believed the whale's ear bone in the East Coast Heritage Museum's collection is this very object.

George Meredith was a stern disciplinarian and ruled his family firmly, he expected and received obedience from both boys and girls. The situation was complicated, the children from his first wife did not get along with his second wife ... the one-time servant who replaced their beloved mother.

George was once described as *The King of Great Swanport ... an infinitely proud, domineering and quarrelsome man.*

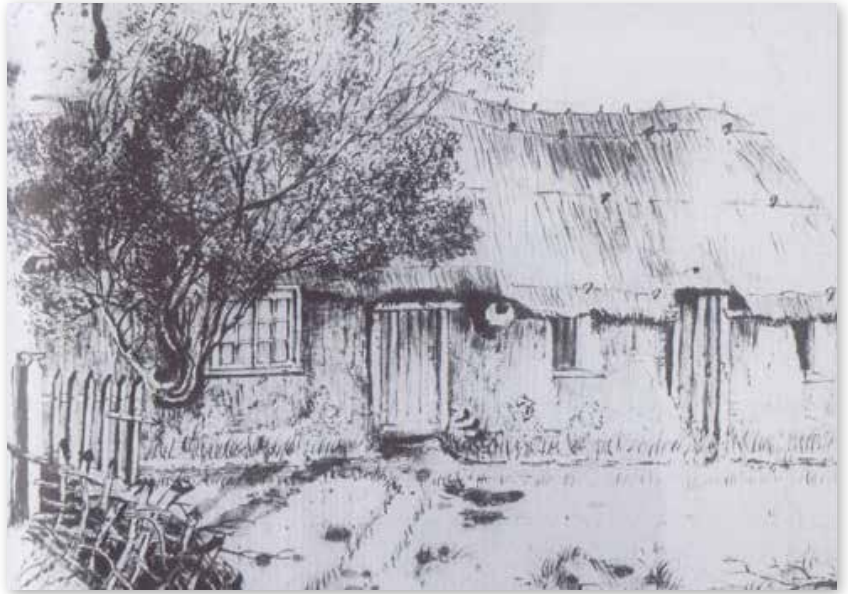
Son Charles assisted with his father's ventures, one was taking over the management of a whaling station on Maria Island. In 1834 Charles set out on his own, George gave his son £2,000, he then left for Sydney.

In 1838 Charles visited England, he was now twenty-seven and regarded as a successful squatter from the colonies. With his family connections, doors opened for him all over London and Birmingham.

Charles remained in England for almost a year. He visited relatives attended race meetings, theatres and social events. Charles was given the royal welcome by the family and met again his first cousin Louisa Anne Twamley, who was a child of eight when he last saw her.

The attraction between them was immediate, they made a handsome couple, spending more and more time together. Louisa must have been very much in love with Charles. She had so much to lose by the marriage.

On the 18th April 1839 Louisa Anne



Sketch of Creek Hut by Fanny Maria Meredith, 1846



Photo of Creek Hut taken in 2007



Old Edgbaston Church, Warwickshire, England



Louisa's Limerick lace veil worn at her wedding. It measures 179 wide by 200 long

Meredith married her cousin Charles Meredith at the Old Edgbaston Church, Warwickshire, England.

Louisa anticipated that her trip to the Colonies would be a short one, they planned on being back in England within 5 years.

Passage was booked on the barque *Letitia* bound for Sydney. The four- month journey was tedious and beyond measure for Louisa, she proved to be a very poor sailor. Louisa wrote:

Never shall I forget the feeling of intense pleasure with which I greeted the sight of land again ...

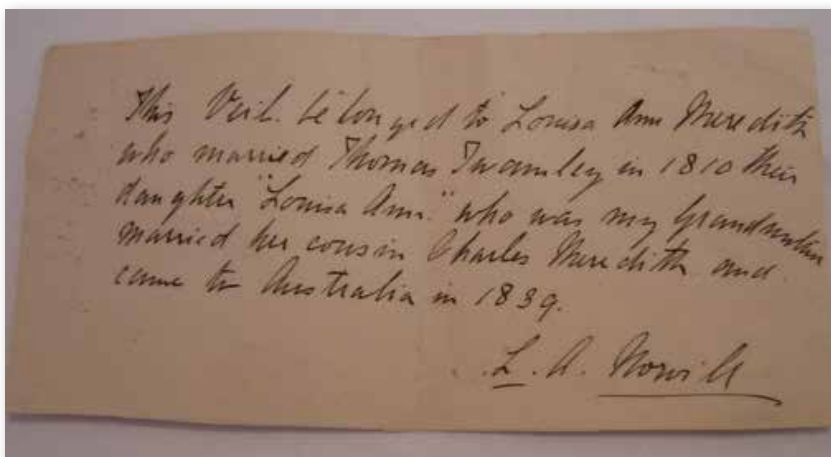
When the Meredith's arrived in 1839, Sydney was fifty-one years old. Louisa was surprised at its size, appearance and population, the only structure worthy of architectural merit in her opinion was the new Court House and Gaol. She did not find Sydney a place to her liking nor to live.

She was puzzled by the Australian accent and described it as a - nasal twang as many American have.

In January 1840, they moved into a dilapidated old house called 'Homebush', situated eleven miles from Sydney. The house had previously belonged to D'Arcy Wentworth, the colonial surgeon.

George Campbell Meredith was born in July 1840. Louisa's delight was short lived, news arrived from England of the death of her mother the previous February.

More bad news was to follow, with the collapse of Charles' holdings in New South Wales. During this period of depression in New South Wales the agents also failed and Charles lost everything.



The above note was written by Louisa's grand-daughter Louisa Anne Norville. It was donated to the East Coast Heritage Museum in Swansea by descendants

An Antique Veil

Seldom does one come across such a lovely specimen of the lacemaker's art as the Limerick veil worn by Miss Joyce Parsons at her wedding recently. It was first worn by Mrs. Louisa Ann Meredith, the great-great grandmother of this bride, 125 years ago, and has graced the head of many members of the Meredith family since those early days. A precious heirloom, it will no doubt be handed down to another generation, to appear as beautiful as when first worn. This fortunate bride wore also, on her frock, an old family jewel which clasped her cowl neck. It was fashioned of beautiful pearls set in a cluster and was the object of much admiration.

Mercury Newspaper, 18 December 1935



Homebush, Sydney NSW

Louisa supported Charles with loyalty and affection, she defended his lack of financial success both in her private and public writings.

After the collapse of Charles' financial affairs he saw no alternative but to return with his wife and child to the family estates in Van Diemen's Land.

Continued over page >

In October 1840 they set out for Hobart Town on the *Sir George Arthur*. Bad weather and being a poor sailor prevented Louisa from enjoying the scenery of the Derwent River.

Their overland journey to Great Oyster Bay is described in Louisa's book *My Home in Tasmania* (two volumes).

By 1844 they were close to bankruptcy. Charles was forced to accept the position of Assistant Police Magistrate at Port Sorell. It was with regret the family left *Spring Vale* - for this was Louisa's favourite home, a home they built. The family remained at Port Sorell thanks to Lieutenant-Governor Sir John Eardley-Wilmot saving his position.

Louisa, a fan of Wilmot, sprung to his defence, she was in firm favour of the convict assignment system, she never forgave Gladstone for recalling him. In later life she would ask her grand-daughter 'Is Gladstone dead yet?' She would answer no 'Well, then, he ought to be' she would say. They remained at Port Sorell till 1848.

Louisa's relationship with Charles sisters, Louisa (Mrs Bell), Sarah (Mrs Poynter) and Sabina (Mrs Boyes), and John's wife, Maria, were very friendly. The same could not be said for old George's attitude towards her. Louisa neglected to make friends with Charles' half-sisters, Clara, Fanny and Rosina, this resulted in them being unkind and referring to her as Mrs Bang Bang.

The final straw was when Charles' father George sold Cambria to his son John (by his second marriage). Charles being the eldest son was bitterly disappointed and Louisa was devastated and never forgave old George.

In 1853 letters were sent back and forth between the warring parties. George saw Charles as a bad businessman and poor manager of money.

The 1860s and 1870s were Louisa's years of triumphant, her writings and illustrations were widely acclaimed. She had



Christening Robe for Louisa's children made from her petticoat



Spring Vale, Cranbrook



Lath Hall, Port Sorell



Cambria, Swansea



Poyston, Port Sorell



Riversdale, north of Swansea



Plas Newydd, Swansea



Tivamley, Buckland

worked hard as the wife of a settler, Magistrate and Politician, 20 years in comparative isolation on the East Coast and Port Sorell. Her name was being mentioned with the likes of John Skinner Prout.

Charles, although a charming man, was not a very good businessman and many of his ventures failed. Life became a little more settled when Charles was appointed Colonial Treasurer in the first Tasmanian Parliament. Charles also represented Glamorgan and Spring Bay in local government. Keeping up their social station and lifestyle was a drain on their finances, thus they moved house frequently; living for a time in Hobart, Victoria and finally Launceston.

Throughout this period, Louisa was busy with domestic activities, she was able to spend part of her time painting and sketching native flowers, plants, insects, fishes and animals. She founded the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in 1878 with Mary Selina Gellibrand.

Louisa attended and performed in costume at many social events at Government House. She was the social butterfly.

First and foremost, Louisa was a conservationist. The fate of animals and plants lay heavily on her conscience, she did not see eye to eye with her father-in-law on many occasions. In 1864 she designed the seal for the Glamorgan Municipality – the Black Swan.



Charles the politician



Malunnah, Orford



Louisa the social butterfly



That gown!

Continued over page >

THE FAMILY

Charles and Louisa had 4 children:

1. George Campbell (born 1840, NSW & died 1917, Tas) Married Elizabeth Jillett & had 7 children.
2. Charles Henry (born 1841 & died 1842, Tas).
3. Charles Twamley (born 1844 & died 1888, Tas).
4. Owen (born 1847 & died 1927, Tas) Married Eliza Jane Windsor & had 5 children.

THE FINAL YEARS

Due to Charles' ill health they moved to Launceston in June 1879. Charles died on 2nd March 1880 from heart failure, he was in his sixty-ninth year.

Louisa was heart broken, their marriage had been a happy one. A public memorial was erected on the Domain in Hobart, and dedicated on 27th November 1885.

To Sir Henry Parkes, Louisa wrote that she had made a mess of her life in many ways and that her retrospect's were mainly regrets. *I was born under and evil star, or put myself under one, in quitting England in the first instance – and my life long struggle against fate – is vain.*

Louisa moved to Melbourne and lived there with her devoted grand-daughter Louisa Anne. When her grand-daughter suddenly up and left, she endeavoured to arrange for another grand-daughter, Winifred Eliza to stay with her; this failed because her mother would not let her leave.

Louisa moved in with friends at 171 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy, in a state of physical decline. She died calmly and peacefully, at noon on the 21st October 1895.

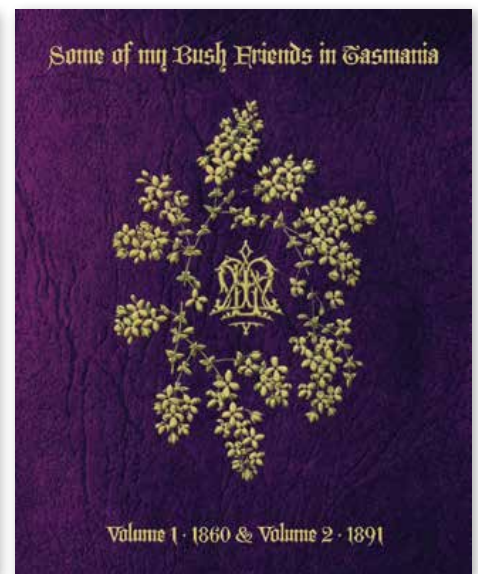
She died in relative poverty, leaving in her will, besides her personal effects, only a few worthless blocks of land on the east coast and a hundred paid-up shares in the Queen Meredith and Lucas Meredith Company.



Meredith family portrait



The fountain dedicated to Charles Meredith still exists in the Domain, Hobart



Louisa's memory lives on in her numerous books, poems and illustrations, these books are for sale, see price list on back page

ECHM EXHIBITION



The new Exhibition at East Coast Heritage Museum is titled "When We Were Wed". The exhibition will run until mid August 2017. The Exhibition includes Wedding Gowns and Veils with local historical significance, including:

- Amos family wedding gown dating from the 1850s;
- Wedding gown of Charlotte Bath to John Gatehouse 1859;
- Wedding Gown of Betty Castle to Russell Turner 1943;
- Wedding Gown of Judith Mitchelmore to Linus (Jim) Hastie 1956;
- Wedding Gown of Carolyn Loosemore to Gregory Dillon 1971;
- Wedding Veil of Louise Anne Meredith to Thomas Twamley 1810 then worn by her daughter Louise Anne Twamley to Charles Meredith in 1839;
- Wedding Veil of Sadie Hill when she married Halmer Pyke in 1948 and then worn by Maree Woods when she married Michael Pyke 1974.

The East Coast heritage Museum is at 22 Franklin Street Swansea and OPEN 7 days a week 10am to 4pm.

www.eastcoastheritage.org.au



DEATH OF 40TH TASMANIAN SOLDIER TO DIE IN SOUTH AFRICAN WAR LOCATED

BY REG WATSON

Tasmanian historian, author and member of the Glamorgan Spring Bay History Society, Reg Watson, has found another fatality of the South African War (The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902) and he turns out to be a native of Swansea.

"In my book on the Tasmanian participation in the war," said Reg, "I documented 39 Tasmanian soldiers who died from whatever cause during of the war. With the incredible find of late of Lieutenant William Scott Rundle, this brings the total to 40."

One reason why Rundle was hard to find as a casualty is that he enlisted with the New South Wales Lancers Described as a "dashing dragoon" (Mercury 13/8/1902) he saw quite a deal of action during the war, dying as a result of wounds received at Beaufort West, South Africa July 30th 1902.

"As the war ended 31st May 1902 I can only say that he was wounded before that date and died perhaps more than two months afterwards," said Reg.

Lieutenant Rundle was the son of Dr. G.E, Rundle who was the medical man at Swansea.

Reg said that the 'forgotten war' was the largest conflict Australia has been involved in after the two world Wars. He is the organiser of the annual Boer War Commemorative Day in Hobart (4th June Sunday) and in Launceston 18th June Sunday.

It is interesting, as the Hobart Memorial lists only 32 deaths, while the Launceston one lists 28 names. There is a Boer War Memorial at St Helens. Now the documented total is 40.



LIEUT W.J.S. RUNDLE

LAM PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE

The Glamorgan Spring Bay Historical Society has recently re-published Louisa's Some of My Bush Friends, Vol1 & 2 into one convenient publication. Also the Society has full size A3 Prints and attractive Card Sets available for sale. Prices are as follows:

TITLE	AUTHOR	REGULAR PRICE	MEMBER PRICE
LOUISA ANNE MEREDITH CARDS			
Cards (each)		\$3.00	\$2.00
Cards (set of 6) three different sets		\$15.00	\$12.00
SOME OF MY BUSH FRIENDS IN TASMANIA VOL 1 & 2			
Soft Cover (full colour throughout)		\$65.00	\$45.00
Hard Cover (full colour w/ dust jacket)		\$95.00	\$75.00
Commemorative Box Edition		\$180.00	\$150.00
LOUISA ANNE MEREDITH PRINTS (<i>Portfolio Prints from My Bush Friends in Tasmania</i>)			
Complete Folio set of Vols. 1 & 2 (26 pages)		\$250.00	\$210.00
Folio Set of Vol 2 (15 Pages) Black Folder		\$150.00	\$130.00
Framing Set Vol 1 (11 prints)		\$100.00	\$85.00
Framing Set Vol 2 (11 prints)		\$100.00	\$85.00
Single prints		\$15.00	\$10.00
Folio Cover Black Folder (No Prints)		\$50.00	\$30.00

Discount available to members - become a member today!

Society Matters

MEMBERSHIP

We welcome the following new Members who have recently joined: Susan McCrae of Point Cook Vic; Diana Terry of Swansea; Maggie Mars of Triabunna; Susan Grove of Pokolbin NSW; Loryn Costello Narre Warren Vic; Judith Riley Culburra Beach NSW; and Susan Nicholls Sommerton Park SA.

MAY HERITAGE FESTIVAL

The Theme for this year's Tasmanian Heritage Festival is "Having a Voice". The Society will join with the East Coast Heritage Museum for an Audio Visual Presentation & Exhibition in the Museum. Using the resources of Society's Oral History Recordings, "Voices of the Past Oral History" and "A Night At

FROM THE SEC. - PETER HUTTEMEIER

The Museum" with a Magic Lantern show, is planned. Dates to be advised.

RAY LEWIS

We were recently informed that Life Member Ray Lewis has decided to hang up his dark room and retire from active service to the Society. Ray has been the Society Photographic Archivist for many years now, and over recent years has been responsible for digitising the Society's Collection and putting the catalogue on the Mosaic Data Base. The Society photo archive consists of over 15,000 files. At the last General Meeting of the Society a motion of thanks to Ray for his many years of work was carried unanimously. A Thank You card was circulated for those at the meeting to sign and given to Ray on behalf of all Society Members. Thank you Ray Lewis.

