

AUSTRALIAN JOINT COPYING PROJECT

SIR EDWARD MACARTHUR

Papers, 1854-58

Reel M592

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Sir Edward Macarthur (1789-1872), the eldest son of Captain John and Elizabeth Macarthur, was born in Bath, England. He went to Australia in 1790 with his parents and spent his boyhood in Sydney and Parramatta. He sailed to England in 1799 to attend school. He returned to Sydney in 1806 and with his father took part in the overthrow of Governor Bligh in 1808. Macarthur returned to England, received a commission in the 60th Regiment, and served as a lieutenant in Wellington's campaigns in Spain in 1812-14. He later joined the army of occupation in France. He became a captain in 1821 and a major in 1826, before going on the half-pay list.

Macarthur visited New South Wales in 1824 and in subsequent years promoted the agricultural interests of the colony and encouraged emigration to Australia. In 1851 he resumed his military career when he was posted to New South Wales as deputy adjutant-general. Promoted colonel, he accompanied Major-General Sir Robert Nickle and the other headquarters staff when they transferred to Melbourne in 1854.

Nickle died in May 1855 and Macarthur took over the post of major-general in command of the Australian forces. The Governor of Victoria, Sir Charles Hotham, also died in December 1855 and Macarthur acted as governor until the arrival of Sir Henry Barkly in December 1856. In this position he presided over the inauguration of responsible government in Victoria. Macarthur remained in the colony as commander of the Australian forces until 1860. He was knighted in 1862 and was made a lieutenant-general in 1866.

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- 1 Walter S. Davidson (London) to Macarthur, 3 Aug. 1854: acknowledges letters; sale of wool on behalf of Australian Agricultural Company; doubts if Melbourne society will suit Macarthur; plans of Walter Leslie and Christopher Rolleston to return to Australia.
- 2 Walter S. Davidson (London) to Macarthur, 3 Nov. 1854: departure of Walter Leslie for Sydney; Crimean War; Macarthur's accounts; doubts that Macarthur will like Melbourne as much as Sydney; proposed travels in Europe; market for New South Wales wool.
- 3 Sir Henry Barkly (Melbourne) to Macarthur, 18 Aug. 1857: sends despatch from Secretary of State on reduced provision for pay and allowances for military forces in Australia; requests copy of Macarthur's despatch to Secretary for War.
- 4 H. Labouchere (London) to Sir Henry Barkly, 20 May 1857: sends letter received from War Office on pay and allowances for forces in the colony. (copy)
- 5 B. Hawes (War Office) to H. Merivale (Colonial Office), 1 May 1857: despatch from Macarthur on payment of troops in Victoria; seeks views of Secretary of State. (copy)
- 6 B. Hawes to H. Merivale, 13 May 1857: despatch from Macarthur; Lord Panmure cannot justify expenditure which amounts to treble the regulated rate. (copy)
- 7 Macarthur to Sir Henry Barkly, Dec. 1858: functions and sphere of influence of headquarters staff stationed in Melbourne; transfer of headquarters from Sydney to Melbourne in 1854; financial arrangements. (copy)
- 8 Letterbook, January 1856 – October 1857 (62pp)

The bulk of the letterbook consists of copies of despatches from Macarthur, as acting Governor of Victoria, to Henry Labouchere, the Secretary of State for the Colonies. They deal with the death of Sir Charles Hotham; the formation of the Haines Ministry; elections for the new Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council; Macarthur's report on 'the remarkable progress of Victoria under a form of government that has now completed its natural course' (21 March 1856); the influx of Tasmanian convicts into Victoria; preparations for the new Parliament; Victorian objections to the renewal of convict transportation; the opening of Parliament (Nov. 1856); payment of troops serving in Victoria; the appointment and arrival of Sir Henry Barkly; the question of a knighthood or other honour for Macarthur.

There are also copies of two letters from Labouchere to Macarthur on the appointment of Sir Henry Barkly and Macarthur's service as acting governor (June 1856); addresses to Macarthur from the Legislative Assembly, the Legislative Council and the Dean and clergy of the Church of England (Jan. 1857); and copies of two despatches from Labouchere and a

letter from Macarthur to Barkly on medals struck in Victoria for the purpose of rewarding civil or military excellence (April-Sept. 1857).