

*the*  
**LANGLANDS**

*The history of the Langlands family  
in Melbourne and Horsham*

**By Edward (Ted) Stephens K.S.J.**

## **Author's Note**

In September 1840 Robert Langlands arrived in Melbourne from Dundee, Scotland, intending to catch up with his girlfriend who had been transported to Sydney for a minor misdemeanour. After making contact with her and arranging to be married later, he returned to Melbourne and purchased land in Flinders St, before sending for his associate in Scotland – Thomas Fulton, an ironmaster – to come and help him start a foundry. In the next few years his sister and three brothers joined him and within ten years they employed 350 workers and were the largest business in Victoria.

In 1849 another brother, George Langlands, arrived with his family including my grandmother, six-year-old Margaret. They set off in three bullock drays for the 300-mile trip through virgin bush to locate a survey peg on the Wimmera River marking the spot of 'A Place to be Called Horsham'. Here they built a post office and store from logs around which the town of Horsham grew.

In 1853 George Stephens, a blacksmith, arrived from England with his family, including my grandfather Edward James. He tired of the family trade and became an apprentice to a printer at Buninyong where he started a small trade magazine. Later he travelled to Horsham where he started a newspaper called *The Horsham Times*. Here he met Margaret Langlands and started a family including my father.

George Langlands and Edward James Stephens both wrote copious notes on the early days of the Wimmera. Together with historical notes on the Melbourne foundry they form the basis of this history of the Langlands family.

**Edward (Ted) Stephens K.S.J.**

## Chapter 1

# The Great Move South



Left: John Langlands (1751–1817). Right: Christian Thoms (1770–1850).  
Parents of Henry (1795–1863), George (1802–1861), Margaret (1804–1880),  
William (1808–1858) and Robert (1811–1863).

The Langlands family have always been very aware of their ancestry, having originated, as far as we can tell from the writings of the family, from William Langlands (1611–1688) and his wife Cecilia Brouhos (1613–1678) who were farming landholders at Kilgraston in Scotland. Their son William married Cecille Imrie in 1683. Then their son James also had a son called James Langlands, who married Margaret Reid. James and Margaret were the parents of John

Langlands (1751–1817), who married Christian Thoms (1770–1850). All of these generations appeared to live in the vicinity of Kilgraston, until John and Christian moved to London in the late 1790s where Christian's first son Henry was born. About 1800, John and Christian moved to Dundee where John became a baker and Christian bore him another three sons and a daughter, George, William, Robert, and Margaret.

The youngest of the children, Robert, who was also the first to come to Australia, added a note in his father's family bible:

*'Mrs Christian Langlands, my mother was born in Bathelvie in the parish of Flisk, Scotland and was baptised by the Reverend Mr Gourlay, in Flisk on 26th May 1770.'*

Mr R.F. Ritchie wrote the following on 3 March 1960 in a letter to his cousin Dr Ian Langlands:

*'Her maiden name was Thoms, and she lived until 1850; the date of the death of her husband John (The Baker) cannot so far be traced. See Australian Dictionary of Biography. It will be seen that Christian, our Great Grandmother, was born in the same year that Captain Cook discovered Botany Bay, little knowing that so many of her descendants were subsequently to infest this continent to this day.'*

Robert Frank Ritchie from the Horsham side of the family worked with his cousin Dr Ian Langlands from the Melbourne branch of the family tracing their relatives. They eventually drew up a comprehensive family tree.



Flisk Church, Bathelvie, Scotland.

These are the ruins of the later Flisk Church which was built in 1790 after the original church was demolished. Christian would have been baptised in the old church but quite likely married in this later building.

John and Christian's family was to have a very great part in the development of Port Phillip, or Victoria as it became known. The family seemed to have considerable wealth for the period, which was later invested in their

foundry business in Melbourne and also in the very successful department store in Horsham, Victoria.

## **Robert Langlands**

The first to migrate to Australia was Robert. Thirty-year-old Robert travelled alone as a saloon passenger on the *Helen Thompson* when she sailed from Greenock, Glasgow on 19 September 1840. One hundred and fifteen days later he arrived in Adelaide and from there sailed on to Melbourne, arriving on 12 January 1841.

It is probable that Robert and a Scottish friend Thomas Fulton (1813–1859), also from Dundee, had agreed to investigate the possibility of setting up a business in Melbourne long before Robert left for the ‘Antipodes’. It is not the sort of thing you jump into on the spur of the moment. Possibly Robert’s family saw migration as a means of investing their wealth in the new land.

Robert arrived in Melbourne at a fortuitous time. He apparently had money to invest and, seeing the opportunities available, he must have contacted his friend Thomas Fulton and convinced him to pack up his family and belongings and come and join him. The two men must have had great faith in each other to have taken such important and far-reaching moves in a new land with nothing but their own abilities with which to carve out a future.

Thomas Fulton arrived in Melbourne on 9 February 1842, travelling on an assisted passage in the ship *William McNicholl* together with his wife, Elizabeth, and daughters, Agnes, aged four, and Anne, two.

Thomas and Robert set up their business in Flinders Street under the name of Langlands and Co.

### **Margaret Langlands**

On 25 April 1844 Robert Langlands's forty-year-old unmarried sister, Margaret, arrived in Melbourne on the ship *Arab*. Margaret put her considerable funds into the fledgling business in partnership with her brother. Margaret appears to have had management skills which contributed to the early success of Langlands's business before her two other brothers arrived.

Margaret apparently lived a quiet life alone in the growing town of Melbourne. She was surrounded by her brothers' families while she worked in the family business. During the thirty-six years she spent in the growing town, she would have witnessed huge changes in the living conditions of Melbourne.

As so often is the case, very little is written down in the newspapers of the day about the women who helped build our country, other than births, deaths, and marriages. Despite the fact that Margaret was a pioneering businesswoman, apparently she was not thought newsworthy at the time.



On her death at the age of seventy-six years she was interred with her wider family in the Langlands memorial grave at Melbourne Cemetery



Margaret Langlands memorial.

*Penny Turnbull.*

## Henry Langlands

The next member of the family to come to Melbourne was fifty-two-year-old Henry, the eldest of the Langlands family. He came to Melbourne with his third wife, Janet, accompanied by a daughter and two sons of a previous marriage.

The family arrived in Melbourne on board the *Anne Milne* on Monday 4 January 1847. The *Anne Milne* was a barque of 584 tons which took four months to travel out from Glasgow to Melbourne.

Henry arrived soon after the breakup of the original partnership with Thomas Fulton who had set up his works next door to the Langlands foundry. Henry launched straight into the business and at this stage the foundry name was changed to H and R Langlands and Co. From here on it appeared that the new force behind the business was Henry, and several years later Robert resigned from the business and, with his wife, Agnes, returned to Scotland.

Henry Langlands was held in high esteem by all who had dealings with him. As an employer he cared deeply for his workers' wellbeing. In those days before social security and health care, Henry apparently took care of his workers and their families when they fell on hard times.

## **George Langlands**

George, the second son of John and Christian Langlands, arrived in Australia in 1848. George was eight years Henry's junior and had for some considerable time been a very successful drapery merchant in St Andrews, Scotland. He and his wife Betsy Ritchie were some of the most respected people in the town, and George had recently served two terms as mayor. In those days as now, situations arise to upset the 'best laid plans of mice and men'. The repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 opened up many previously protected industries to foreign imports, and the Langlands were no exception. The nation was also experiencing a severe depression in common with Australia. George suffered the considerable indignity of bankruptcy and was left in a financially parlous situation. His brothers and sister in Melbourne presumably encouraged and aided him to join them in the new land.

## **William Thoms Langlands**

Next came the remaining brother, William Thoms Langlands. He was married to Alison Cairns Arnott, a family well known for their connections with the European settlement of Africa. William travelled to Melbourne alone, arriving about 1852, and busied himself with the day-to-day running of the business, now equal to the largest in Melbourne, employing

upwards of 320 workers. William left a thriving drapery business in Scotland to come to Australia, leaving his wife, Alison Arnott, in charge of the business with about fifteen employees. Unfortunately, he died on 21 January 1858, several years after coming to Melbourne. In his will he left his entire estate to his 'beloved' wife Alison. Alison in the meantime had started another family with a man called McConnell, and twins were born to her in the year before William's death, followed by two more children in the next few years.

### **Arriving in Melbourne**

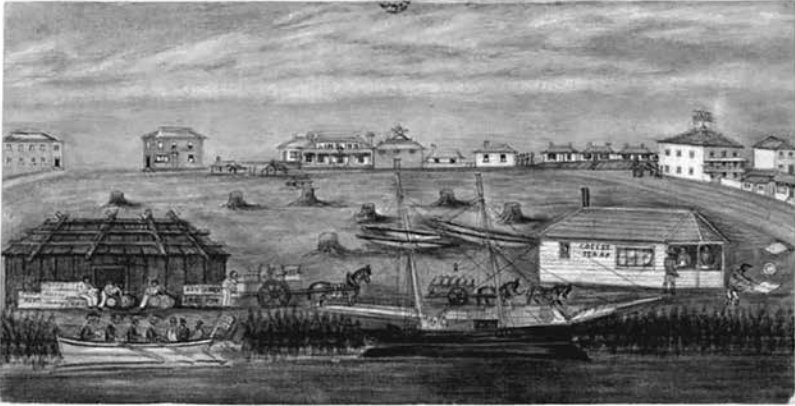
When Robert Langlands arrived in Melbourne in 1841, he would have landed on the shore, a bare sand dune, in the vicinity of the present Port Melbourne and would probably have paid a member of Wilbraham Liardet's family to bring ashore his personal effects. Robert Langlands arrived alone on this beach soon after the Liardet family had taken up residence. He may have wondered if he had done the right thing coming to this deserted landscape. Little would he know that within fourteen short years he would be asked to build Australia's first steam locomotive to start a train service between this lonely beach and the thriving town beyond.

Wilbraham Liardet was the first European settler of Port Melbourne. Liardet arrived with his wife Caroline

and nine children in 1839 and erected a tent on the beach opposite what is now Bay Street.

*‘The Liardet’s beach camp was the beginning of a long and charmed relationship with the foreshore near Melbourne; Liardet’s Beach became known later as Sandridge and it was here that Wilbraham built the first town pier (the mailbags were landed there on the crude jetty and delivered to the post office by horse from the Beach). The tea tree-built jetty was quickly constructed and followed by the erection of a ‘magnificent house’, Liardet’s Pier Hotel, a rambling building which became a resort for the holiday crowds and Melbourne’s small establishment society. Liardet and his sons, having gained the contract for the delivery of the mails for Melbourne, assisted in the development of a regular carriage service from the Port of Sandridge to the town centre.*

*While carrying the mails, Liardet and his sons are credited with saving many people from drowning, in many instances displaying great valour. Liardet is properly accorded the honour due as the Founder of Sandridge.’ (La Trobe Journal, vol 13, no 54)*



Wilbraham Liardet's painting of his jetty and hotel at Sandridge.  
*The Museum of Lost Things.*

William Westgarth later reminisced about his arrival in 1840:

*'At the time of my arrival, all Melbourne-bound passengers were put out by their respective ships' boats upon that part of the northern beach of Port Phillip that was nearest to Melbourne, whence, in straggling lines, as they best could in hot winds, they trod a bush track of their own making, which, about a mile and a half long, brought them to a punt or little boat just above "The Falls," where the owner made a good living at 3 pence a head for the half-minute's passage. This debarkation place got to be called, par excellence, "The Beach." It consisted already of two public-houses, kept respectively by Liardet and Lingham. Both were respectable people in their way, but the*

*first was also a character. Of good family connection, he had enjoyed a life of endless adventure, which, however, had never seemed any more to elevate him by fortune than to depress him by its reverse. He was a kind of roving Garibaldi, minus, indeed, the hero's war-paint and the Italian unity, but with all his frankness and indomitable resource. Having a family of active young sons, he secured the boating of "the Beach" as well as the other thing. But his untold riches of experience seemed never to condescend to develop into riches of mere money — and perhaps without one pang of regret to his versatile and resourceful mind.*

*This Beach was a sterile spot, afterwards fittingly called Sandridge, and presented so little inducement to occupancy that these two public-houses were the whole of it till well on to the days of gold. Then The Beach awoke to its destinies. When the Melbourne and Hobson's Bay railway was projected, in 1852, there were already a good few houses, mostly wooden, straggling along either side of the original bush track. Then arose the respectable suburb of Sandridge, to be finally superseded by the municipality of Port Melbourne, which, with its mayor and corporation, can now enter*

*the London market with its own loan issues.’  
(Personal Recollections of Early Melbourne &  
Victoria, William Westgarth 1888).*



Wilbraham Liardet Memorial. Opposite Bay St, Port Melbourne.

*Photograph by Kent Watson / Lorne Lewis.*

### Front inscription:

*‘Wilbraham Frederick Evelyn LIARDET was acknowledged as the first European settler and founder of Port Melbourne, (Sandridge) arriving in 1839 with his family. The family camped on what was known as Liardet’s Beach, later to become Sandridge, later still, Port Melbourne. They began a ferry service*



*with a couple of boats and waggons [sic],  
ferrying people to and from ships in the Bay  
and collecting and delivering mail.'*