

# **THE UPS, DOWNS AND SURVIVAL OF A LAD FROM CASTLEMAINE**



**By: IAN J. LEE (2005) Book Number I**



**QUEEN ELIZABETH II**  
**At her Royal Best.**

Her Majesty leaving Castlemaine Railway Station at 6.15pm on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> march 1954. Most of the town population was there to greet her, including myself.

Photos & information supplied courtesy of the Ron & Wendy Rice Royal Family Collection.

We thank them for their contribution.

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## PREFACE

Major Mitchell arrived in the Castlemaine area in September 1836, he had no conception of the enormous wealth of gold that lay beneath his feet.

There has been an enormous amount of change from that period on, more than the original Australians thought was possible, although they had been here for thirty to forty thousand years.

By 1848 a Dr Barker had been granted a Pastoral Run in an area later known as Castlemaine, and a hut keeper on the Barker Run discovered gold on 20 July 1851.

By 1852 news of this strike attracted an enormous rush and by the end of that year the goldfields were producing 23,000 ounces each week. An estimated 20,000 diggers were working the fields, that number rising to 30,000 the following year.

The Castlemaine goldfields were to produce more than 131 tons or 6 million ounces of gold and prove to be some of the richest in the world.

Our ancestors in the search for a better life ventured from their homeland to a distant and little known land from which had come, fabulous tales of untold wealth awaiting discovery in the colonies.

With stories of riches and adventure circulating out there in the world, gold fever was the word. It seemed that anyone could be rich, and people travelled from all parts of the world, including large numbers from China, however most of our country's early settlers came from England, Scotland, Wales and very large numbers from Ireland.

Many Europeans settled, and some took up farming including one of my ancestors, Mario Guiseppi Barassi, from Lombardy, Northern Italy.

Our ancestors, especially those from Ireland struggled with poverty brought about by a system that kept the poor poor and the rich rich.

Our Irish ancestors escaped from the great famine, the English and from the harshness of the Tenant and Industrial system of England, to come to a land of promise, only to then encounter the great recession of the 1890's.

Their journey to Port Phillip Bay via Cape Horn in small wooden sailing ships, often in heavy seas which caused havoc with the ships riggings, and the discomfort and fear felt by the passengers must have been horrific. Cramped up below deck for weeks on end, the voyage varying from 60 to 120 days depending on the wind, sometimes gale force to the dull monotony of being becalmed for weeks with no wind at all.

Most were unable to afford to travel as passengers with cabins and have the freedom to move about freely. Large numbers had to travel in the cargo holds like rats. Meals often consisted of two ships biscuits a day or salted meat, often horse, and fights over food were common.

These people often did not appear on the ship's passenger lists and their arrivals are difficult to trace. On their arrival at Port Phillip Bay they found little comfort, with shortages of everything. Even accommodation was hard to find, that is if you had money for those sorts of luxuries, and the services were primitive at best.

The new land being so different to home, from the very hot summers, eucalyptus trees, persistent flies, and no roads, the tracks to the goldfields were thick with dust, and in the winter the dust turned to mud, and the drays would sink up to their axles.

The trip from Port Phillip Bay to the goldfields was generally by walking and carrying a swag with their worldly possessions and supplies, sometimes up to 120lbs. There were many discarded items lying along the track, but full of life and hope they pressed on.

Life on the goldfields was very rough, living in tents or bark leantoos, with few tools and generally unaccustomed to hard manual labour, novices soon found the pick and shovel no light work.

The men usually formed small teams of 3 – 6 men working in a party. Some were lucky enough to find someone with some experience in mining, however many had no idea and worked hard in the wrong places for little reward.

All supplies on the goldfields were expensive and few were able to find the riches they had travelled across the world in search of. In 1860 the completion of the railway to Castlemaine would have come as a great relief.

By 1880 the population had established to be 7500 and with the gold output declining, people were drifting to new finds in the west.

Some decided to forget trying to make their fortune on the goldfield and turned their talents to farming and building, and forged ahead to form our nation.

Our ancestors landed on these shores as ordinary humble hard working men and women, they endured hardships and heartbreaks but eventually accomplished great things in our beautiful wild and often harsh and uncompromising land.

Then the great loss of life during World War 1, followed by the Great Depression starting in the late 1920's and continuing to the start of World War II of 1939-1945, when job openings became available for all.

They survived the further great loss of life, the rationing and shortages for the war effort, which was to continue up until the early 1950's.

People who lived through the depression of 1927 to 1939 never forgot these extra hard times and although there was plenty of work for all following WW11, job security with Government Departments was seen by most as being essential and Mothers tried hard to get their sons into Government jobs.

However, our ancestors lived remarkable extraordinary and courageous lives as pioneers.

We today have benefited from their pioneering achievements and can now enjoy and take for granted luxuries far beyond our ancestor's wildest dreams.

## Early History That Made Our Nation

- 1642 Tasmania was discovered by Tasman
- 1824 Hume and Hovell arrived at Corio Bay overland from Sydney
- 1834 Edward Henty founded permanent settlement at Portland, Victoria
- 1835 Colonists settled in Port Phillip Bay, now Melbourne.
- 1836 On 28 September Major Thomas Mitchell stood on a rise later named McKenzies Hill, with his wagons and his band of ex convicts and ticket-of-leave men, pushed down into the valley that was to become known world wide as Forest Creek and the Mount Alexander goldfield, later to be named Castlemaine.
- 1837 First Post Office established in Melbourne.
- 1839 The population of Port Phillip settlement had grown to almost 4,000.
- 1840 First resident Judge appointed in Port Phillip.
- 1845 Jessie Kennedy the first white child born in Castlemaine.
- 1851 Port Phillip separated from New South Wales and the new Colony is named Victoria.
- 1851 July 7<sup>th</sup> Esmond discovers gold at Clunes, three shepherds and a bullock driver in the employ of Dr Barker have discovered a quantity of gold and they kept their discovery secret. John Worley, one of the shepherds wrote to the Argus Newspaper and the letter appeared on September 8<sup>th</sup> 1851. Thereby opening one of the richest fields that the world had ever known which was later to be known as Castlemaine.
- First Census in Victoria carried out..77,345 persons.
- 1852 George and Sarah Davis arrived on 14 November 1852 on the sailing ship “Caroline” at Moreton Bay, Brisbane from County Armagh, Ireland.
- Jemima Hill (nee Jarrett) born England 16 March 1839 arrives in Australia.
- 1853 Robert (Bob) Hill born 1 September, first white boy born at Guildford, son of Jemima Hill (later to become Mrs Barassi).
- 1855 George Duke Lee arrives on May 14 on the sailing ship “Blue Jacket” arrives at Hudsons Bay from Nottinghamshire England
- 1855 Annie Thompson with her family arrived in Australia from Ireland later to marry George Duke Lee.
- Mario Guiseppi Barassi arrives in Australia from Northern Italy later to marry Jemima Hill.
- 1864 George Davis, my grandfather born 9 November at Kangaroo (Tarilta) and possibly the first white boy born in that valley.
- 2003 14 November, the grandchildren of George and Sarah Davis erect a monument at the frontage of the land they settled at ‘Tarilta’.





# Family Name Origin



## LEE

*SURNAMES as we know them today were first assumed in Europe from the 11th to the 15th Century. They were not in use in England or in Scotland before the Norman Conquest, and were first found in the Domesday Book. The employment in the use of a second name was a custom that was first introduced from the Normans. They themselves had not long before adopted them. It became, in course of time, a mark of gentler blood, and it was deemed a disgrace for gentlemen to have but one single name, as the meaner sort had. It was not until the reign of Edward II (1307-1327) it became general practice amongst all people. This name was derived from the Old English word *LEAH* 'the dweller at the meadow or pasture'. Local names usually denoted where a man held his land, and indicated where he actually lived. Early records of the name mention Henry de la Lee, County Cambridge, 1273. Johannes del Lee of Yorkshire, was listed in the Yorkshire Poll Tax of 1379. Ann, daughter of Walter Lee was baptised at St. Jame's, Clerkenwell, London in 1565. Henry, son of William Lea, was baptised at the same church in the year 1682. John Lea and Elizabeth Baker were married at St. George's, Hanover Square, London in the year 1799. At first the coat of arms was a practical matter which served a function on the battlefield and in tournaments. With his helmet covering his face, and armour encasing the knight from head to foot, the only means of identification for his followers, was the insignia painted on his shield and embroidered on his surcoat, the flowing and draped garment worn over the armour. Since the dawn of civilisation the need to communicate has been a prime drive of all higher mankind. The more organised the social structure became, the more urgent the need to name places, objects and situations essential to the survival and existence of the social unit. From this common stem arose the requirements to identify families, tribes and individual members evolving into a pattern in evidence today. In the formation of this history, common usage of customs, trades, locations, patronymic and generic terms were often adopted as surnames. The demands of bureaucracy formally introduced by feudal lords in the 11th century, to define the boundaries and families within their fiefdoms, crystallized the need for personal identification and accountability, and surnames became in general use from this time onwards.*

*ARMS - Argent on a pale between two leopards  
faces sable three crescent or*

*CREST - On a ducal coronet or a leopards face sable*

*MOTTO- EXEGI  
I have accomplished it*

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# **BRIEF HISTORY OF IAN JOSEPH LEE, HIS FAMILY AND HIS FRIENDS**

(STARTED MAY 1992)

**BOOK Number 1 IS MY OWN PERSONAL STORY**  
**BOOK Number 2 IS FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

My life has been a history of ups and downs often inventing solutions, improvising, fixing, operating and taking on challengers beyond my known capabilities without the benefit of much formal education, played and worked a visionary life of adventures, mishaps and achievements.

In the classroom of life as Jack-of-all-trades however, my greatest and most rewarding achievement has been my family and friends for they are the icing on the cake and the following is my way of saying thanks.

The following is not a family tree. It is a story of my family and friends as I remember them.

I believe that family history is not just a lot of dates and places, but where and how that person lived, worked and travelled during their good and hard times.

It is with this in mind that I have made an attempt to trace all the day to day types of issues of our family and ensure that existing family records are not lost, and to record in permanent form, information which has never before been gathered together. Of course, I have not written the complete story of the lives of any of the people in these pages, they lived much fuller lives than we can ever discover.

The passing of my mother and her knowledge has made me more determined to try and complete the following.

I must give credit to my father for most of the family story and most of the following information on the Davis and Lee family. He has even contributed a lot to my own life story, remembering things that I had forgotten or confused.

My grandmother's (Davis) birthday book has helped to piece together a lot on the Davis family regarding dates, although many of the names are difficult to piece together.

We must also thank my mother who took most of the photos of my children when they were little.

My thanks must also go to my daughter Susan, who typed up the original scribble and the changes to the format as it grew from a few pages to the size it is today by Denise Murphy, and Darryl J Thompson for his great help with the Lee history.

The family history will never be completed and will continue to grow and I urge you also to do more on your own family, not just for yourself, but for the family that we will never know.

**IAN JOSEPH LEE**

If I have made errors and/or omissions in the names, dates or events recounted in this autobiography, my sincere apologies.

There has been no deliberate intention on my part to offend any living person in the telling of my tales.