

SIR GEORGE GIPPS,

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Sir George Gipps, soldier and governor was born at Ringwood near Dover in 1791, the eldest son of Reverend George Gipps. He was educated at the King's School and the Royal Military Academy Woolwich; he entered the Royal Engineers as a Second Lieutenant in January 1809 was wounded at the siege of Badajoz and was promoted Captain in September 1814. He was with Wellington's Army from November 1814 to July 1817 but missed Waterloo because he was preparing fortifications at Ostend. After five years at Clarendon he was sent to the West Indies where he showed much administrative ability. In 1830 he married Elizabeth daughter of Major General Ransay another Kent family and they had one son; he then spent two years in Canada with the Gosford Commission and in his report to the House of Commons he is revealed as a helig, liberal and <sup>N.S.W.</sup> just towards the French Canadians. His eight years as governor in <sup>L</sup> were very significant and demanded all his administrative skills. ~~his~~ <sup>his</sup> duties as governor were difficult, challenging and sometimes unpleasant; many of the problems that he had to face like the question of immigration quotas and the squatter problem were topical today and he had the added difficulty of having to serve two masters - the Crown and the colony <sup>which</sup> ~~where~~ communications between the colony and Whitehall were slow and uncertain. Gipps treated the Colonial Office with respect and his dispatches were models of their kind. His personal philosophy was expressed once when he said "My whole official experience teaches me, that in Downing St, the governor who keeps his government out of debt is the best. Another problem which faced Gipps was the great issue of penal transportation. In 1838 the Hulseworth Committee had recommended abolition to the House of Commons and in 1840 an order in Council halted the flow of convicts to New South Wales while intending to send them to Norfolk Island and to Van Diemen's Land; the person put in charge of the prisoners was Macarochie whose ideas on penal reform were far ahead of his time; he proposed with Gipps to make a system to those felons recently sent from England, labour and good conduct should be awarded marks or points and the accumulation of 50 may thousands marks should award the convict his freedom; but again as with so many reforms in our Imperial history the decision was overruled by the home government.

RINGWOOD

BADAJOZ

GOSFORD

M HORTH

VAN DIEMEN'S  
NEW TASMANIA.

MACAROCHE

Another great issue facing New South Wales was the demand by the squatters for security of tenure. By the time Gipps reached the colony its economy was ~~not~~ riding on the sheep's back. Graziers were squatting both within and without the boundaries of location. As early as 1840 Gipps wrote resignedly: "As well it might be attempted to confine the Arabs of the desert within a circle, traced upon their sands as to confine the graziers or wool growers of New South Wales within any bounds that can possibly be assigned to them". There was constant antagonism between Gipps and the squatters even though he wanted to improve his social condition by allowing him to purchase his homestead and he insisted that all squatters should be treated alike; however by 1849 drought and a fall in wool prices had already reduced land sales and prices and Gipps was just discouraged when the British government by the Australian Land Act of 1842 raised the minimum price to £1 an acre and brought the auction system into universal operation and when Gipps appointed surveyors to measure out the boundaries of the land it added to his unpopularity and a pastoral association was formed to oppose his proposals. Gipps was an advocate of free immigration: when he arrived the crewed immigration schemes were in operation: the government scheme which gave free passage paid for government funds and the bounty system by which individual settlers were subsidised from government land revenue to bring out their own nominated immigrants with it is interesting to observe that unlike for example South Africa neither Gipps nor the Colonial Office would agree to import indentured Chinese or Indian labour. There were long debates at this time as to how the children of the immigrants should be educated especially on religious education and it was finally decided that children should be allowed one day's absence from school in order to receive religious instruction and in this he was supported by his old King School friend Broughton ~~the~~ the first Anglican Bishop in Australia. The last great problem Gipps had to face was the Aborigine. In this he was humane, practical and courageous. Over the years settlers had constantly pressed the Aborigines back into the interior; strife had occurred when white kidnapped native women, shot the wild game or seized vital water holes.

BROUGHTON

CARPENTARIA

But Gipps against a great deal of press opposition set up a protectorate and it was undoubtedly the most comprehensive effort ever made to ~~improve~~ civilise, Christianise and protect the Aborigines. He was also interested in exploration during his administration, for example he encouraged and financed an expedition to discover the Gulf of Carpentaria and Angus Macmillan made several expeditions into the rugged terrain of the south eastern corner of Australia which was named Gippsland. Throughout his administration the newspapers of the colony instead of attacking Gipps. After a brief honeymoon the editorials soon hardened into a hostile howl - only rarely was he praised. They painted Gipps as a creature of the crown opposed to colonial interests. They presented the squelching problem in this light. On 11<sup>th</sup> July 1846 Gipps sailed from Sydney a very sick man. Five months at sea failed to revive him. He was delighted to be reunited with his son when he had set back to school in England in 1847. On 28<sup>th</sup> February 1847 he had a fatal heart attack and he was survived by his wife and only son Reginald Rensay Gipps who became a general in the army and was knighted. A memorial to Gipps is at Canterbury Cathedral; in his portrait the keen black eyes and buoy eyebrows are arresting, the face intelligent shrewd and handsome. He was regular in his devotion to the Anglican church though he admitted "that Bishop Braghton's sermons were too much for him". He was blessed with a logical mind and a sharp analytical bent, a sense of detail and unimpeachable moral character. He was above all a prodigious worker and his proficiency in putting tremendous labour into everything helped to make him an able administrator. It is revealed in the ~~text~~<sup>verse</sup> and practical hints he wrote everyone, <sup>which</sup> he read with scrupulous care. On Australia's roll of governors and as an King's School boy his name must rank high.

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