THE CONVICT SHIP Hashemy at Port Phillip: A Case Study in Historical Error

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Abstract

The story of the convict ship Hashemy arriving at Sydney in June 1849 after being turned away from Melbourne has been repeated by many professional, amateur and popular historians. The arrival of the Hashemy, and subsequent anti-convict protest meetings in Sydney, not only became a turning point in the anti-transportation movement in Australia, but also added to an already existing antagonism on the part of Sydney towards its colonial rival, Port Phillip, or Melbourne. This article will demonstrate that the story of the Hashemy being turned away from Port Phillip is based upon a fallacy; investigates how that fallacy developed and was perpetuated over a period of 160 years; and demonstrates that some politicians and historians encouraged this false interpretation of history, effectively extending the inter-colonial discontent that began in the 1840s into the 20th century and beyond.

This article will show that the story of the convict ship Hashemy being turned away from Melbourne and sent to Sydney in 1849—an account repeated by many historians—is based upon a fallacy. The article investigates how that fallacy developed and was perpetuated by historians over a period of 160 years, and demonstrates that politicians and historians used this false interpretation of history to feed an enduring antagonism felt by Sydney towards its colonial rival, Port Phillip.
or Melbourne. The wider implications of this case study touch upon the credibility given to historians in their interpretations of historical events.

The stories written by historians are interpretations of the past, and most historians write credible, well-written historical interpretations. But these stories can sometimes inadvertently misrepresent the past—even though the historian undoubtedly believes they have presented a credible interpretation. Indeed, if the historian writes well enough, their ‘well-written history can lull us into thinking that it is the only possible story’.¹

What follows is a case study in how an error in Australian colonial history has been perpetuated by historians, whether deliberately, for political motives, or through careless methodology—and how the stories they wrote in turn became quoted as secondary sources, causing the error to be repeated—eventually entering the realm of popular historical myth.

**Convict Transportation in the 1840s**

In 1849, the British government was still transporting large numbers of serving convicts to Van Diemen’s Land, but the transportation of convicts to New South Wales had been discontinued since 1840. Since 1846, however, smaller numbers of ‘exiles’ were being sent to the Port Phillip District of New South Wales. Exiles were generally young convicts who had served two years of their sentences, supposedly learning useful trades at prisons such as Millbank, Parkhurst or Pentonville, and who were then given the option of serving the rest of their sentences in prison or of being sent to Port Phillip where they would immediately be given a conditional pardon and allowed to live an essentially free life—the condition of their pardon being that they were not to return to Great Britain until the term of their original sentence had expired. Many of these so-called ‘exiles’ went on to live good and productive lives, but there were sufficient numbers who caused trouble that they soon became known as ‘Pentonvillains’. By 1849, the program of sending exiles was not only opposed by most residents of Port Phillip, but also by Superintendent Charles La Trobe, who had originally, if hesitantly, supported the scheme to help address a shortage of labour. Growing opposition to the exiles was compounded when many thousands of ex-convicts moved to Port Phillip from Van Diemen’s Land during the late 1840s. Again, many of these ‘expirees’ went on to live honest and productive lives, but there were enough badly behaved expirees for public opinion to become polarised against convicts of any description.
While opposition to transportation was growing in Australia, W.E. Gladstone, the colonial secretary in London, had other ideas and, in 1846, suggested that a ‘modified and carefully regulated introduction of Convict Labourers into New South Wales or some part of it’ would be desirable—and cheaper than building more prisons in Great Britain. The proposal immediately stimulated the formation of an anti-transportation movement in Sydney. But, in 1847, a committee of the New South Wales Legislative Council tentatively agreed to the idea, as long as the men were sufficiently of good character to be deserving of tickets of leave, and that the convicts’ wives and children, as well as an equal number of free immigrants, should also be sent out. Although the committee did not represent the views of the majority of the population, Governor Charles FitzRoy misleadingly told London that the scheme would be given broad support, and, in September 1848, Earl Grey, Gladstone’s successor, announced that serving convicts would again be sent to New South Wales. The ships chartered for the task were the *Hashemy* and the *Randolph*.

In her 2011 study, *From Convicts to Colonists: the Health of Prisoners and the Voyage to Australia, 1823–1853*, Katherine Foxhall made the statement: ‘In 1848, Lord Grey re-introduced transportation to New South Wales. Rejected by colonists at Port Phillip, the *Hashemy* would be the first convict ship in a decade to sail to Sydney. Historians have vividly described the mass opposition that the *Hashemy* received as it arrived in Melbourne and Sydney, but the circumstances of its departure from Britain were equally traumatic.’ Foxhall’s work is an excellent account of the role of surgeons on convict ships; however, it is her statement about the relationship between the *Hashemy* and Port Phillip that raises questions.

Foxhall gave her sources for the *Hashemy* statement as Kirsten McKenzie, *Scandal in the Colonies*; Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore*; and A.G.L. Shaw, *Convicts and the Colonies*. A check of these sources reveals that, in 2004, McKenzie wrote of how the *Hashemy* arrived at Sydney in June 1849 ‘having nearly provoked riots in Melbourne en route’. This appears to have its origins in Shaw’s 1966 work—‘in May the *Hashemy* and in August the *Randolph* almost provoked riots [at Port Phillip] and had to be sent to Sydney’. However, Hughes’ 1987 *Fatal Shore* states that Earl Grey dispatched the *Hashemy* ‘direct to Sydney’. So which historians ‘vividly described the mass opposition that the *Hashemy* received as it arrived in Melbourne’—or did the *Hashemy* actually sail direct to Sydney?
In his 2003 *History of the Port Phillip District*, A.G.L. Shaw stated: ‘When the *Hashemy* arrived three months after the *Eden* [that is, in May 1849], La Trobe, fearing trouble sent her on to Sydney with her passengers still on board—to arouse protests there. In August, when the *Randolph* reached Port Phillip, the *Argus* prepared for action again.’\(^8\) Shaw stated that ‘my “original” sources have been the correspondence between officials in Melbourne, Sydney and London’.\(^9\) Indeed, he referred to his own *Convicts and the Colonies*—which does cite the correspondence; and to Alan Gross’s 1956 *Charles Joseph La Trobe*, and Ernest Scott’s 1911 article ‘Resistance to Convict Transportation’—neither of which referred directly to primary documentary sources regarding the *Hashemy*.\(^10\)

Scott’s 1911 article stated: ‘when in May, 1850, the *Hashemy* arrived in the bay, she was at once directed to proceed to Port Jackson’ by Charles La Trobe, Superintendent of the Port Phillip District.\(^11\) Scott repeated this in his 1918 *Short History of Australia*.\(^12\) How Scott concluded the *Hashemy* arrived at Port Phillip in May 1850 is unclear, as it arrived in Sydney on 10 June 1849, left again on 10 August, and was back in England by May 1850, preparing to sail to Western Australia.\(^13\) If it was simply a mistake in writing 1850, instead of 1849, then the *Hashemy* would have been the ‘first vessel’, rather than the ‘second vessel’. Nevertheless, Scott’s error was subsequently repeated by numerous historians over the next 60 years.\(^14\) In 2003, A.G.L. Shaw moved the 1850 date back to May 1849, but still had La Trobe sending the *Hashemy* ‘on to Sydney with her passengers still aboard’.\(^15\)

Some, such as T.A. Coghlan, were not so sure, and avoided giving a specific date—‘the ship *Hashemy* arrived in Sydney … a landing having been refused them at Melbourne in accordance with Governor Fitzroy’s promise’.\(^16\) Others, like Margaret Kiddle, enhanced the description: ‘The crowd which collected to prevent the landing of the men looked so ugly that La Trobe, watching anxiously, ordered the captain [of the *Randolph*] to proceed to Sydney with his unwanted cargo. When a second ship the *Hashemy* arrived a few months later he followed the same procedure.’\(^17\) Kiddle cited the *Argus* of 9 August 1849, which referred only to the *Randolph*, and said it was ‘the first of the polluting ships’; and the *Argus* of 22 August, which referred to an anti-transportation meeting, but said nothing about the *Hashemy*.\(^18\) Her source for the ‘ugly men’ was not given.

Because of Ernest Scott’s influence, it must be asked where he got the idea that the *Hashemy* came to Port Phillip? Historians of the late 19th
and early 20th centuries were divided in their opinions about whether the Hashemy visited Melbourne. In the 1883 edition of his History of Australia, G.W. Rusden, after observing that ‘Melbourne as usual was demonstrative’ about transportation, simply said the Hashemy arrived at Port Jackson in June, with no mention of a stop at Port Phillip, and went on to describe the arrival of the Randolph in August.19 However, by 1897, Rusden had changed his mind and also claimed the Hashemy came to Port Phillip before being turned away.20 Likewise, in 1906, Philip Gibbs claimed the Hashemy ‘entered Port Phillip’.21 In 1904, Henry Gyles Turner clearly stated the ‘Hashemy was ordered to Sydney and the Randolph to Port Phillip’.22 Similarly, in 1905, Arthur Jose made no mention of the Hashemy calling at Port Phillip.23 In 1917, Robert Thomson said the Randolph was bound for Melbourne and the Hashemy for Sydney.24

**Primary Sources**

To understand the development of this confusion about the Hashemy, we must go back to the primary sources of 1849 and look at contemporary reports and correspondence.

In Convicts and the Colonies, A.G.L. Shaw said he had referred to original correspondence. Most of the letters relevant to the 1849 convict ships are contained in Further Correspondence on the Subject of Convict and Transportation (In Continuation of Papers Presented February and July 1849) presented to both houses of the British parliament on 31 January 1850.25 However, nowhere in this correspondence is there a reference to the Hashemy calling at Port Phillip. FitzRoy’s letter to Earl Grey dated 27 June 1849 reported on the arrival of the Hashemy at Sydney and the distribution of the convicts, but made no reference to it being diverted from Port Phillip.26 Letters from La Trobe to Deas Thompson dated 4 and 17 December 1849 refer to the diversion of the Adelaide to Sydney in a similar manner to the Randolph—but ignore the Hashemy.27 When Grey replied to FitzRoy on 18 April 1850, he approved of the diversion of both the Adelaide and Randolph and made no mention of the Hashemy.28 In 1850, Joshua Jebb presented his Report on the Discipline and Management of Convict Prisons and referred only to the departure of the Hashemy from England and its arrival in Sydney.29 In presenting the case for a Bill for the Better Government of Convict Prisons to parliament in March and April 1850, Grey referred to the arrival of the Hashemy in Sydney, but made no reference to Port Phillip.30 In his original despatch to FitzRoy on 4
December 1848, Earl Grey said that the *Hashemy* convicts ‘will be sent to New South Wales’, which normally meant Sydney, rather than Port Phillip. Indeed, the despatch arrived in Sydney with the *Hashemy*.  

If the official correspondence regarding the arrival and diversion of convict ships made no reference to the *Hashemy* coming to Port Phillip in 1849, what did contemporary newspapers say?  

First rumours of the despatch of the *Hashemy* appeared in the Hobart *Courier* on Saturday 24 February 1849, when it was reported the *Hashemy* was to sail from Woolwich to Hobart. Nothing more was heard until 4 April 1849, when the *Courier* reported its destination was Sydney. In the meantime, Governor Charles FitzRoy arrived in Melbourne in March 1849 and promised the people of Port Phillip, and Superintendent Charles La Trobe, that, should any convict ships arrive at Port Phillip, they could be diverted to Sydney. At the time, all that was known was that London intended sending convicts—the actual names and destinations of the ships were unknown, apart from the rumours that the *Hashemy* had already left England. News was slow in arriving—the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 12 April reported: ‘The *Hashemy* and other ships with convicts; being expected to arrive at this port from Great Britain, it has been directed by the Port Officer that the distinguishing flag for the same to be hoisted at Fort Phillip Signal Station, shall be the pendant No. 0, (being blue with white ball in centre), placed between the ship flag and the pilot’s report.’ Fort Phillip—not Port Phillip—was the signal station on Windmill Hill, above the Rocks in Sydney. On 17 April, Henry Parkes and the Anti-Transportation Committee in Sydney met to prepare for the arrival of the convict ship at Sydney. On 20 April, the *Sydney Morning Herald* listed the *Hashemy* as being ‘expected in Sydney from London’, and, on the same page, ran a sustained criticism of FitzRoy’s promise to divert other convict ships from Port Phillip. A few days later, the Anti-Transportation Committee was demanding an explanation from FitzRoy. Criticism of both FitzRoy’s promise, and Port Phillip’s wishes, was also expressed in the Legislative Council in May. Nevertheless, the *Herald* continued reporting the *Hashemy* being bound for Sydney throughout May and June, and its arrival on 8 June. It reported the ship made only one stop during the voyage—at the Cape of Good Hope on 26 April—and had been ‘looked for from day to day’ in anticipation.  

Despite the claims by A.G.L. Shaw and others that the *Hashemy* had stopped at Melbourne, a careful reading of the *Argus* for May 1849 shows
that the only mention of the ship was on 21 May when it reported that the
*Hashemy* had left Portsmouth on 7 February.\(^4\) Melbourne knew nothing
about the *Hashemy*’s voyage or arrival until 15 June, when the *Argus* carried
the news from Sydney.\(^5\) It is clear that there was no public expectation that
the *Hashemy* would be calling at Port Phillip, and when the *Argus* of 15 and
18 December 1849 reported that the *Adelaide* had been diverted to Sydney,
in a similar manner to the *Randolph* in August, it made no mention of the
same happening to the *Hashemy*.\(^6\) Indeed, in anticipation of the *Hashemy*
passing by on its way to Sydney, settlers near Twofold Bay had applied in
advance for an assignment of one hundred of the convicts.\(^7\)

When the *Randolph* arrived at Port Phillip on 9 August 1849, the *Argus*
proclaimed: ‘Colonists of Port Phillip! The hour has come and the men!
… the convicts are in the bay, and it behoves us to see that they obtain no
footing here.’ Henry Gyles Turner recalled that, although the newspapers
expressed some degree of animation, ‘the public did not evince any
excitement’, and two days later, the ship was on its way to Sydney.\(^8\) The
diversion of the *Randolph* in August was without precedent. If the story
that the *Hashemy* had already been rejected by Port Phillip in May came
from neither the official correspondence, nor the contemporary press,
where did it originate?

The story originated in Sydney when the separate issues of FitzRoy’s
promise to Port Phillip in March, and the arrival of the *Hashemy* in June,
gradually became merged. After the *Hashemy* arrived at Sydney, a protest
meeting, planned several weeks earlier, saw Robert Lowe, Henry Parkes
and Archibald Michie among the leading speakers—but none referred to
the *Hashemy* having been diverted from Port Phillip, and when Mackinnon,
MLC representing Port Phillip, addressed the crowd, he was greeted with
cheers.\(^9\) On 30 June, FitzRoy wrote to Earl Grey, submitting the petitions
drawn up at the meeting, and describing many of the protesters as the
‘idlers’ and ‘mob of Sydney’.\(^10\) The repercussions would be felt over twelve
months later when the despatch was eventually published in the Australian
press in August 1850. Indignation erupted in Sydney at the governor’s
apparently dismissive attitude. Gideon Lang wrote to the *Sydney Morning
Herald* on 14 August 1850 and engaged in a long discussion of the issues
surrounding the arrival of the *Hashemy*, and FitzRoy’s promise to Port
Phillip. Although Lang did not connect the two, the juxtaposition of the
issues set the pattern for linking the *Hashemy* with FitzRoy’s promise. The
*Bathurst Free Press* took the connection a step further on 17 August 1850,
when it criticised FitzRoy’s ‘notorious despatch’ and complained of ‘his unaccountable blundering in the partiality he showed for the Port Phillipians in his disposal of the Hashemites’. By late 1850, many in Sydney imagined a direct connection between FitzRoy’s March 1849 promise to divert ships from Port Phillip, and the arrival of the Hashemy in June.

When Isaac Aaron wrote to the Herald on 19 August 1850 in response to Lang’s letter, he correctly made the point that while the Hashemy was unwelcome, it was actually the Randolph that was sent to Sydney ‘in pursuance of Sir Charles’ promise to the Port Phillip people’. But hostility towards both FitzRoy and Port Phillip had become entrenched, and, on 30 September 1850, the idea that the Hashemy had originally been intended for Port Phillip was presented to the New South Wales Legislative Council during a debate on transportation. W.C. Wentworth, who supported a limited resumption of transportation and was opposed to Port Phillip separation, observed that, during the late 1840s, Port Phillip employers had been happy to receive ‘exile’ labour. However, Wentworth complained, after free emigration satisfied Port Phillip’s labour needs, the exiles became ‘bounceable’, and the residents delivered a petition to ‘prevent their community from being contaminated by the convicts expected to arrive in the Hashemy’. On this point Wentworth was wrong—as shown above, Port Phillip was not expecting the Hashemy, and did not know it had arrived until news came from Sydney. Nevertheless, always looking for an excuse to criticise Port Phillip, Wentworth concluded: ‘It would have been far better had they received the people by the Hashemy … than have been receiving … thousands of much worse fellows from Van Diemen’s Land.’ Wentworth, like many in Sydney, wanted to blame the arrival of the Hashemy on Port Phillip.

Thus began the myth that Sydney only received the Hashemy convicts because Port Phillip had rejected them. But the myth could have soon died out—most subsequent contemporary historians of Victoria and Van Diemen’s Land either ignored the Hashemy or reported it going directly to Sydney—and despite his error in having it come to Port Phillip, in his 1911 article, Ernest Scott said: ‘the Hashemy incident belongs rather to the history of New South Wales than Victoria’. In 1852, John West wrote The History of Tasmania and made passing reference to the Hashemy in Sydney and the Randolph in Melbourne, but did not suggest the Hashemy went to Melbourne first. In 1858, Thomas McCombie’s History of the Colony of Victoria described how the Randolph sailed into Hobson’s Bay
in August 1849, and La Trobe ‘wisely averted bloodshed’ by diverting the ship to Sydney.\textsuperscript{54} Despite not previously giving any account of the Hashemy arriving at Port Phillip, McCombie curiously noted: ‘On the 11\textsuperscript{th} June, a violent meeting was held at Circular Wharf, Sydney, in consequence of the arrival of the Hashemy [sic] from Port Phillip.’\textsuperscript{55} Nevertheless, when William Fairfax published his \textit{Handbook to Australasia} in 1859, he mentioned FitzRoy’s promise and the Hashemy arriving at Sydney separately, but drew no connection between the two.\textsuperscript{56}

While the early historians from Victoria and Van Diemen’s Land generally kept the Randolph diversion from Port Phillip separate from the Hashemy incident in Sydney, it is clear that some in Sydney preferred to connect the two, and they might have taken heart from press reports of William Kerr’s address to an anti-transportation meeting in Melbourne on Monday 23 October 1854. The \textit{South Australian Register} reported Kerr as saying London ‘had tried direct transportation in the shape of the Randolph and the Hashemy’ and the people had proclaimed—‘The convicts by the Randolph and the Hashemy shall not land on our shores’.\textsuperscript{57} The Argus reported the same speech with the words—‘the ships Randolph and Hashemy had arrived with convicts. But these ships had also been obliged to leave our shores’.\textsuperscript{58} On the morning of the October meeting, the Argus had presented a case for no transportation: ‘In 1849 our tone was decided enough to secure the sending away of the convict ships Hashemy and Randolph. It would be a poor spectacle indeed for Victoria of 1854 to take lower ground than that achieved by the Port Phillip of 1849.’\textsuperscript{59} But the Argus was presenting a case against transportation to the whole of Australia, not just Victoria, and Kerr’s inclusion of the Hashemy and Randolph in the one slogan was rhetoric rather than fact, and his address came after one by Archibald Michie in which the opposition of ‘all the colonies of the Southern Hemisphere’ to transportation was being expressed.\textsuperscript{60} Michie had moved to Melbourne in 1852 after being involved in the Hashemy protests in Sydney in 1849.

On 16 May 1856, the Argus observed that the current edition of \textit{Melbourne Punch} had published a satirical cartoon depicting ‘the resistance offered by Mr La Trobe and our fellow colonists to the landing of convicts brought by the Randolph and the Hashemy’.\textsuperscript{61} In fact, the illustration in \textit{Punch}, depicting La Trobe as Boadicea fending off the Romans, was simply entitled \textit{La Trobe and the Chieftains resist the landing of the convicts}, and made no mention of the Hashemy or Randolph.\textsuperscript{62} Further reinforcement of
the myth occurred in July 1863 when the former editor of the Argus, Edward Wilson, wrote from London on the subject of transportation and mistakenly recalled: ‘In 1849 when Lord Grey sent to Port Phillip the Randolph and the Hashemy … we adopted as our motto “The Convicts shall not Land” … and Mr. La Trobe sent the ships away again.’ Wilson wrote again in August and repeated the same statement. Despite Wilson’s version, on 20 August 1864, the Argus published a history of transportation and clearly stated that, in 1849, “it became known that the British Government had chartered two ships, the Randolph and the Hashemy, to proceed to Melbourne and Sydney respectively with convicts. With the former vessel the people of Melbourne were chiefly concerned—and when the Randolph arrived in Melbourne “The convicts shall not land” was the watchword.”

Nevertheless, the myth persisted, and the 1866 Handbook to Sydney and Suburbs informed newcomers: ‘In 1849, the Home Government, of their own motion and without reference to the wishes of the colonists, despatched from England the “Hashemy” convict ship, with orders to disembark the convicts at Melbourne’, and La Trobe sent them on to Sydney. And again,
on 15 October 1881, the *Clarence and Richmond River Examiner* claimed, in an unsourced story:

> In the reign of Governor Fitzroy an attempt was made to arrest transportation from England to Australia, and in the height of excitement the ship *Hashemy* [sic], with convicts, arrived in Hobson’s Bay, when the residents of Victoria refused to allow them to be landed, and Governor Fitzroy ordered the vessel on to Port Jackson.\(^{67}\)

This was clearly from a writer more closely aligned with Sydney. A few years later, in his *Chronicles of Early Melbourne*, Edmund Finn, who was in Melbourne in 1849, described the *Randolph* being diverted to Sydney in August 1849 and the *Adelaide* in December, but made no mention of the *Hashemy*.\(^{68}\)

By the 1890s, memories were fading. In 1890, James Sheen Dowling, a Sydney barrister in 1849, remembered the *Hashemy* ‘with upwards of 200 convicts not allowed to land at Melbourne, coming to Sydney to discharge her objectionable cargo … It was on this occasion that Robert Lowe made a brilliant oration which stamped him as an orator’.\(^{69}\)

Robert Lowe, another barrister and a leader of the anti-transportation protests in Sydney in 1849, was the subject of two biographies published in 1893—one by James Francis Hogan, the other by Arthur Patchett Martin. An extract from Hogan’s work was widely published in the Australian and New Zealand press during 1893 and described the day the *Hashemy* arrived at Sydney after supposedly being driven from Melbourne—‘so intense and demonstrative was the popular fury that the captain did not dare even to attempt to discharge his repulsive living cargo’.\(^{70}\)

The second biography, by Arthur Patchett Martin, claimed the *Hashemy*, ‘being unable to land her cargo at Melbourne, sailed for Port Jackson with a view to depositing them in Sydney’, where Lowe protested that FitzRoy had ‘rescued Port Phillip from the infamy of receiving a criminal cargo, which he now wished to inflict upon Port Jackson’.\(^{71}\)

In 1883, Patchett Martin left Melbourne ‘under a cloud … embittered by friends shunning him’.\(^{72}\) In return, he complained that the ‘best informed writers in Victoria … entirely overlook, or rather, have quite forgotten, the magnificent stand which Robert Lowe made in Sydney’ on their behalf.\(^{73}\) Martin was especially critical of George Rusden’s 1883 mild account of anti-transportation sentiment in Melbourne—‘Melbourne, as usual was demonstrative’—and claimed that ‘There were men … among the “demonstrative” early colonists, who marched down to Hobson’s Bay with the view, if necessary, of preventing
by force the landing of this first batch of Earl Grey’s criminal hordes’. Dismissing Rusden’s account, Martin said he preferred the version given in an 1868 lecture by Archibald Michie in which Michie recalled how ‘a large body of spirited colonists … marched down to Sandridge, resolved that a newly arrived cargo of convicts, per ship Hashemy, should not land here’. 

Martin ignored the fact that Michie’s 1868 lecture had been criticised by the Argus as betraying ‘the lecturer’s political bias’; of indulging in ‘abstract arguments and theoretical doctrines which might or might not apply to existing circumstances’; and of making statements that were ‘altogether untrue, and nothing more than the every-day experience of a Victorian resident is required to show their complete fallacy’. In addition to this criticism, Michie’s account of marching down to Sandridge to send off the Hashemy in May 1849 simply could not have happened—as a Sydney barrister, he was involved in an important court case in Sydney during May 1849; he was giving lectures in Sydney; and he was a prominent speaker, along with Robert Lowe, at the protests against the Hashemy in Sydney on Monday 11 June 1849. He may have marched down to Circular Quay, but he certainly did not march down to Hobson’s Bay.

With two biographies of Robert Lowe circulating, and both Lowe’s and Michie’s flawed versions of the Hashemy affair being given prominence, those who wrote new histories or those who tried to remember old histories had a new source upon which to draw. In 1895, Edward Jenks told how ‘the unfortunate Hashemy was driven with her convict cargo from Melbourne to Sydney’. In 1897, G.W. Rusden, undoubtedly conscious of the criticism of his earlier work by Patchett Martin and others, revised his 1883 History of Australia to reflect a similar version of events. But not all were so influenced—in 1904, Henry Gyles Turner and Alexander Sutherland clearly stated that, ‘Of the two ships which had been chartered, the Hashemy was ordered to Sydney and the Randolph to Port Phillip’. Nevertheless, by the first two decades of the 20th century, the story of the Hashemy was evenly divided between those who claimed it had sailed to Port Phillip first—Scott, Coghlan and Gibbs—and those who claimed it sailed directly to Sydney—Turner, Sutherland, Thomson and Jose. The opinions of later historians seem to have varied depending upon which of these secondary sources they preferred.

Charles Bateson’s 1959 The Convict Ships 1787–1868 has been described by Foxhall as ‘the only substantial study of convict voyages’ despite being ‘over half a century old’, and by popular historians as ‘the
definitive guide to Australia’s period of transportation’—thereby giving credence to anything listed by Bateson—and he listed the Hashemy as arriving at Port Phillip in May 1849.\textsuperscript{80} How he came to this conclusion is uncertain, although he claimed to have referred to captains’ and surgeons’ journals—but he clearly could find no conclusive evidence, and simply listed the Hashemy being at Port Phillip sometime during the month of May, whereas he gave every other ship a specific date of arrival.\textsuperscript{81}

An exact date of arrival is given in a curious document compiled a few years after the Martin and Hogan biographies of Lowe, the Rusden second edition and the Jenks history had all reinforced the story of the Hashemy stopping at Port Phillip. Nineteen-year-old James Cripps was part of the military contingent on board the Hashemy in 1849 and was on his way to join the 99\textsuperscript{th} Regiment in Van Diemen’s Land. In 1906, 57 years after the Hashemy arrived at Sydney, he wrote his Reminiscences and claimed to have arrived at Hobson’s Bay, Port Phillip, on 1 June 1849.\textsuperscript{82} Cripps related how, after stopping at the Cape of Good Hope, the Hashemy set sail ‘bound for Melbourne; where we intended to land our prisoners’.

There was nothing particular occurred during the voyage from the Cape to Melbourne worth recording. We arrived in Hobson’s Bay on the evening of 1\textsuperscript{st} June 1849. When it became known that the convict ship Hashemy was in the harbour, it aroused the inhabitants of Melbourne to the highest pitch of indignation, and so intense and demonstrative was the popular fury, that the Captain did not dare even attempt to discharge his living cargo… Physical force was threatened but it was probably the kind heart rather than the fears of Mr Latrobe which induced him to insist that the Hashemy should proceed to Sydney. The Captain was therefore ordered to clear out with all possible speed, which was immediately complied with.\textsuperscript{83}

There are major problems with Cripps’ narrative. If this really happened, we would expect the official correspondence and the press of the time to have mentioned it—but there is silence. When James Cripps died in Melbourne on 24 March 1917, an obituary appeared in the Argus.

Sergeant-Major James Cripps, who died on March 24, aged nearly 88 years, formed an interesting link in Australian history. He was born in Ireland May, 1829. In 1848 he enlisted in the 99th Foot, and sailing as one of the guard on the Hashemy, the last convict ship to come here. He saw the angry, threatening crowds on Circular Quay, Sydney, whose deputies drew up the historical “Protest” in June, 1849. Sergeant Cripps served at Hobart, Norfolk Island, Melbourne, first at the time of the gold discoveries, and two years later, and
at Ballarat twice, the first time just missing the Eureka affair. The term of his enlistment ending, in January, 1860, he was appointed drill instructor of volunteers, a position he held until 1884.\textsuperscript{84}

We might assume that some mention of the Hashemy being turned away from Port Phillip—if it happened—would have been of greater interest to Melbourne readers than the Sydney protest meeting—but again, there is silence.

The question must be asked whether Cripps included the stop at Hobson’s Bay in his Reminiscences of 1906 simply because that is what a number of historians at the time were saying had happened. Indeed, his choice of words betrays his inspiration—‘so intense and demonstrative was the popular fury that the Captain did not dare even attempt to discharge his living cargo’. Compare this to the phrase used by James Francis Hogan in his biography of Robert Lowe—‘so intense and demonstrative was the popular fury that the captain did not dare even to attempt to discharge his repulsive living cargo’. Hogan’s account had been widely circulated in the Australian press, and, apart from one word, Cripps’ phrase is identical.\textsuperscript{85} Nevertheless, Audrey Oldfield, in The Great Republic of the Southern Seas, accepts Cripps’ story and adds, without further reference, that ‘La Trobe, on Fitzroy’s orders, ordered the Hashemy to Port Jackson’.\textsuperscript{86}

Finally, if many of the secondary sources are unreliable, and the supposed firsthand witness account of James Cripps is suspect, we might ask whether the master of the Hashemy, Captain John Ross, the surgeon, Colin Arrott Browning, or the religious instructor, John Henderson, had anything to say about Port Phillip. The journal kept by Captain John Ross mentions passing Cape Otway and Wilsons Promontory early in June, but makes no mention of a detour into Port Phillip Bay.\textsuperscript{87} Nicholson’s Log of Logs combined the Cape Otway and Wilsons Promontory entries in Ross’s journal into ‘Port Phillip’—which is technically correct as they were both in the Port Phillip District—but the Hashemy was passing Port Phillip on 1 June 1849, not stopping there as Cripps claimed.

Surgeon Colin Browning, not only compiled the required surgeon’s report for the voyage, but also wrote The Convict Ship, in which he described the Hashemy’s departure from England and its arrival at Sydney—neither document made any mention of stopping at Port Phillip.\textsuperscript{88} Indeed, the health officer’s report clearly responds to the question, ‘At what Ports have you touched on your passage?’ with a single port—‘Cape of Good Hope 26th April 49’.\textsuperscript{89} Katherine Foxhall quoted extensively from Browning’s report
as surgeon to the *Hashemy*, but did not detect the discrepancy between his account of the voyage and those of the historians she cited.

John Henderson, the religious instructor, kept a diary during the voyage. He described the arrival at Cape Town on 19 April, and being ‘sorry at leaving the land’ on 26 April. By 1 June, Henderson registered the ship’s location as 39.26° south and 131.44° east, which is south of South Australia; by 4 June, they were at 39.12° south and 142.22° east—‘Entered Bass Straits between Cape Otway & Kings Island in the afternoon … sailed on under easy sail but going pretty fast’; the next day, 5 June, they were close to Wilsons Promontory at 39.31° south and 146.11° east—‘beating about in the eastern part of Bass Straits the wind being unfavourable for passing out’; by 6 June—‘beat out of Bass Strait’; 7 June—‘Sailing along the coast of Australia all day’; and on 8 June—‘Coasting along, arrived between the heads at dusk … find that the people are averse to the reception of the prisoners’.

Not a word about a visit to Port Phillip—indeed, from 1 May until 7 June, the *Hashemy* maintained an almost unwavering course along 39° south latitude.

**Conclusion**

In 1966—the year Shaw wrote *Convicts and the Colonies*—Joan Ritchie submitted her Master of Arts thesis on Charles Joseph La Trobe to the University of Melbourne. After discussing FitzRoy’s visit to Port Phillip in March 1849, Ritchie referred to the *Hashemy* arriving ‘a few weeks later’, citing Turner—who actually said the *Hashemy* went directly to Sydney—and Gilchrist—who vaguely said the people of Sydney and Melbourne protested ‘so the vessels were ordered to Sydney and Moreton Bay’. However, in a footnote, Ritchie expressed reservations about the accuracy of the secondary accounts. Ritchie’s thesis was not published and her concern about the secondary sources was not made known—but Shaw’s article was published, and his statement about how ‘in May the *Hashemy* and in August the *Randolph* almost provoked riots and had to be sent to Sydney without unloading their “passengers”’, was subsequently cited by many historians, both amateur and professional. For example, Gregory Woods said, ‘The *Hashemy* arrived, first at Melbourne, where Governor Latrobe refused it permission to land: it proceeded to Sydney and arrived in Port Jackson on 8 or 9 June.’ Francis Crowley claimed the arrival of the *Hashemy* ‘roused great public alarm in Sydney and Melbourne’. Anthony Baker—‘When the Hashemy arrived in Melbourne
in 1849 with a band of “exiles”, a tumult prevented their disembarkation.”

Russell Ward—‘When the convict ship, Hashemy, arrived in Melbourne in 1849, the Superintendent of the Colony, Charles Joseph Latrobe, prudently ordered her to Sydney.’ And so the list goes on.

Perhaps most significant in disseminating the error to genealogists was Keith Clarke in his 1999 Convicts of the Port Phillip District, where he cited Shaw’s statement as his only source for claiming the Hashemy ‘arrived in Port Phillip Bay and La Trobe defied the Imperial Government by refusing permission for the convicts to land. After a delay the Hashemy was sent on to Sydney’. Clarke was wrong on two counts—not only did the Hashemy not stop at Port Phillip, but La Trobe had the governor’s approval to divert them had they done so. Such errors are easily perpetuated and multiplied in popular literature, and even more easily on the internet. A popular ‘convict website’, Convicts to Australia, claims the Hashemy ‘arrived in Sydney on June 9, 1849, but not before discharging her surviving Parkhurst boys in Victoria in May 1949’. The website gives its source as Ian Nicholson’s Log of Logs, and Paul Buddee’s Fate of the Artful Dodger. Perhaps in an attempt to correct such errors, the official Guide to Convict Records in the Archives Office of New South Wales states the ‘Prisoners did not disembark at Port Phillip but were sent on to Sydney’. Only partly correct—the prisoners did not disembark at Port Phillip because the ship was never there. Fortunately, there are some, such as Peter Cochrane, who do not included Port Phillip in the voyage of the Hashemy.

The secondary sources on the Hashemy incident are often unreliable and contradictory, and many cite other equally unreliable secondary sources as their sole evidence. The primary sources—not only the correspondence between La Trobe, FitzRoy and London, but also the journals left by the master, surgeon and religious instructor on the Hashemy, and contemporary press reports and shipping lists—provide clear and conclusive evidence that the Hashemy did not stop at Port Phillip in May 1849 before arriving at Sydney on 8 June.

Of course, we could ask does it matter whether the Hashemy went to Port Phillip or not? It matters partly because historians should correct mistaken perceptions when new evidence is found; when the old evidence itself is valid but belongs to a different puzzle; or when what was thought to have been valid evidence is found to have been fabricated or imagined. It is also important because many people in Sydney came to believe the arrival of the Hashemy was a direct consequence of FitzRoy’s promise that
La Trobe could divert convict ships from Port Phillip. That belief, together with FitzRoy’s failure to fully explain the reasons for his promise, led to a dramatic escalation in the already bitter antagonism towards Port Phillip. In the atmosphere of such hostility, it was easy for politicians, journalists, and ultimately historians, to write about and perpetuate myths that suited their own parochial prejudices—for example, Arthur Patchett Martin’s account of the Hashemy voyage combines not only Robert Lowe’s prejudice against convicts and Port Phillip, but also Michie’s mistaken recollections of a protest against the Hashemy in Melbourne, as well as Martin’s own bitterness against former friends in Melbourne.

During the 1840s, the Middle District of New South Wales, based on Sydney, was heavily reliant on wealth from the Port Phillip District. Since the late 1830s, the independence-minded people of Port Phillip had blamed Sydney for appropriating revenue that should have been spent in Port Phillip—and they were justified in that complaint. But Governor Gipps complained that if Port Phillip’s money was spent solely on Port Phillip, Sydney would not be able to pay its bills. By 1849, Port Phillip’s imminent independence, cutting off Sydney’s major revenue source, was bad enough—but the idea that Port Phillip had persuaded the governor to transfer the Hashemy convicts to Sydney was just too much. The people of Sydney blamed Port Phillip not only for their loss of revenue, but also for an influx of new convicts. They were wrong on both counts. Charles Joseph La Trobe was entitled to wish that Port Phillip revenue should be expended in Port Phillip alone, and he did not send the Hashemy to Sydney. That idea originated from and was perpetuated mainly by people such as W.C. Wentworth in Sydney itself, and repeated by historians ever since.

NOTES


These despatches are reproduced in New South Wales Parliament, *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council during the Session of the Year 1849*, vol. 1, Sydney, 1849; Shaw, p. 324.


Shaw, pp. 317, 318 & 324.


Shaw, *History of the Port Phillip District*, p. xvi.


*Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 August 1849, p. 2; *Perth Inquirer*, 30 October 1850, p. 3.


Shaw, ‘Victoria’s First Governor’, p. 89.


18 *Argus*, 9 August 1849, p. 2; 22 August 1849, pp. 2 & 4.


25 ‘Further Correspondence on the Subject of Convicts and Transportation (In Continuation of Papers presented February and July 1849)’, House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (HCPP), 1850 [1153] [1285].

26 FitzRoy to Earl Grey, 27 June 1849, HCPP, 1850 [1153] [1285].

27 La Trobe to Deas Thompson, 4 December 1849; 17 December 1849, 49/735, HCPP, 1850 [1153] [1285].

28 Earl Grey to FitzRoy, 18 April 1850, HCPP, 1850 [1153] [1285].


30 *Empire*, 6 February 1851, pp. 3–4.

31 Earl Grey to FitzRoy, 4 December 1848, HCPP, 1850 [1153] [1285]; *Argus*, 15 June 1849, p. 2; 19 June 1849, p. 1 supplement; Shaw, *Convicts and the Colonies*, p. 324.


33 *Hobart Courier*, 4 April 1849, p. 2.

34 *Hobart Courier*, 24 February 1849, p. 2; 4 April 1849.

35 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 April 1849, p. 2.


37 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 April 1849, p. 2.

38 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 April 1849, p. 2.
40 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 May 1849, p. 2; 2 June 1849, p. 2.
41 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 June 1849, p. 2; 12 June 1849, p. 2.
42 Shaw, *History of the Port Phillip District*, pp. 208–9, p. 294 n. 36; *Argus*, 21 May 1849, p. 1 supplement; *Maitland Mercury*, 6 June 1849, p. 2; *Colonial Times*, 12 June 1849, p. 4.
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48 FitzRoy to Earl Grey, 30 June 1849.
49 *Bathurst Free Press*, 17 August 1850, p. 4.
50 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 August 1850, p. 2.
51 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 October 1850, p. 2; 7 October 1850, p. 3.
52 Scott, ‘Resistance to Convict Transportation’, p. 133.
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59 *Argus*, 23 October 1854, p. 5.
60 *Argus*, 24 October 1854, p. 5.
61 *Argus*, 16 May 1856, p. 8.
63 *Argus*, 14 September 1863, p. 5.
64 *Argus*, 13 October 1863, p. 6.
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65 Argus, 20 August 1864, p. 4.
67 Clarence and Richmond River Examiner, 15 October 1881, p. 2.
70 Hobart Mercury, 6 March 1893, p. 3; For example, Sydney Morning Herald, 1 April 1893, p. 10; Colac Herald, 14 March 1893, p. 4.
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89 Health Officer’s Report, *Hashemy*, State Records Authority of New South Wales: Shipping Master’s Office; Passengers Arriving 1855–1922.

90 John Henderson, ‘Diary Kept by an Unidentified Person, Believed to be Mr Henderson, during the Voyage of the Convict Ship *Hashemy* from England to Australia, 20 Nov. 1848–8 June 1849’, MS 7902, National Library of Australia, Canberra.


93 Shaw, *Convicts and the Colonies*, pp. 317, 318 & 324.


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