

Steam Power and Survival

Peter Henderson - Civil Engineer 1813-1904 & Caroline his Wife 1825-1882

By Margaret Henderson

Author's Note

Peter and Caroline Henderson were my great-grandparents and what records are available have been passed from their second surviving son George to my father Kenneth, who died thirty-five years ago.

It has not been easy to piece together a connected narrative out of the tattered newspaper cuttings, old railway maps, a couple of company reports, a few letters (chiefly Caroline's) and a number of references to his character and ability. Being formal and conventional these threw little light on anything except the trend of his thinking and sometimes his current place of abode.

Family names proved a little confusing. Caroline was baptised Jeanne Louise Caroline Le Blond. She was known to family and friends as 'Caroline' and to her sons as "little mother", but she was registered in NSW as 'Jeanne'. The eldest 'Victor Edwin' is always Edwin or Eddie in the family and 'Gabriel George' has been transposed to 'George Gabriel'. The two girls were always Tottie (Louisa) and Carrie (Caroline).

One of the interesting incidental findings is the number of regional newspapers, even in sparsely populated areas such as North Queensland and Tasmania, at that time the only source of news and comment, but long-lost victims of the electronic media. The State Library of Victoria and the Genealogical Society of Victoria helped with the background data, and Maggie Helass directed the production.

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The Industrial Revolution which so changed British lives in the nineteenth century was rooted in engineering. One of the most important contributions was the application of steam power to transport - the invention of the steam engine and its use in a system of fixed tracks. The movement of men, armies and livestock had not changed since the Romans built their roads. Steam power presented the engineer with seemingly limitless opportunities in transport and in mining and manufacture. The restless and ambitious were drawn to the new horizons of North America, Australia and South Africa in the wave of excitement which followed the discovery of gold.

Peter Henderson, Civil Engineer of forty-three years, was among those who left an apparently secure professional future to take wife and children to the little known and often unruly colony of New South Wales. It was a daunting prospect for his French wife, Caroline.

Peter Henderson and his parents were of North Country stock. He was born at Yarm in the County of York and baptised on 8 October 1813 - the baptismal certificate gives his parents' names as John and Mary and his father's occupation as carpenter. His brother John was born twelve years later in 1825. After local schooling Peter was apprenticed to George Stephenson, the creator of that early steam locomotive 'The Rocket', and pioneer engineer of the Stockton and Darlington Railway. Stephenson's first wife and the mother of his son Robert was Fanny Henderson but any relationship with Peter is unclear. She died giving birth to her second child.

Stephenson was a remarkable man. Born in 1781 in Wylam, a coal-mining village in Northumberland, he had no formal education, but a passion for things mechanical. At seventeen years he learnt to read, attending evening classes three times a week. His working life started in childhood as a cowherd, charged with keeping livestock out of the way of the coal wagons. He followed his father as a fireman in the colliery steam engines and became familiar with the pumps and machinery required in coal mining. He earned extra money by repairing boots and shoes and designing clothes for the miners and spent any leisure time studying birds. In 1812 his industry and ingenuity led to his appointment as engineer-wright to the Killingworth pits at £2 a week, and in 1815 he designed the 'Geordie' safety lamp to prevent explosions from firedamp.

He was bent on designing a steam locomotive moving on its own railway track to shift coal from the mines to nearby factories or ports. In this he succeeded in 1829, against competition from fellow-engineers and opposition from the rural community. 'The Rocket' was ungainly but effective. In the final race it propelled thirty persons and thirteen tons of freight at an average speed of fifteen miles per hour. His success in the Stockton and Darlington Railway led to requests that he design and survey railway systems elsewhere in Britain and overseas.

Peter Henderson's time with Stephenson was well spent. In 1836 the solicitor to the Great North of England Railway commends his "excellent knowledge of road-making" and Richard Ottley Esq of Darlington speaks of his "close attention to business and general good conduct during your clerkship with me". He received also in 1837 a reference from Joseph Pease Esq, the Chairman of the Railway and first Quaker Member of Parliament.

In 1838 the young engineer became an Associate of the Institution of Civil Engineers for an annual subscription of two-and-a-half guineas, and in May 1842 he read a paper at the Institution on 'The Machinery of Working the Diving Bell at Kingston Harbour'. But later that year he was on the Continent at Rotterdam and looking for opportunities in Russia and in Germany. Nothing seems to have emerged from these efforts but they point to the ambition and restlessness, which were to mark his future career. There is a relevant comment in a letter from Peter's niece Polly Fenwick, writing fifty years later to her cousin Caroline and quoting her mother (Peter's sister). "Our Peter never went on a straight road if there was a five-barred gate he could throw the cat across" and "My poor mother never got the mastery of Peter but once, and then she caught him by the heels and popped him in the water-butt". In this lively letter, written in 1896 on black-bordered mourning stationery soon after the death of her husband, she speaks of finding a newspaper cutting about a plan of P E Henderson CE "to carry the Glasgow, Kilmarnock and Ayr Railway over the Clyde". No project was too large, too ambitious or too costly!

He visited America in 1844. In Washington he saw Arch Henderson, a "far-away cousin" with the same family crest. He was interested in the ironworks of Virginia and visited the West Point Military Academy. In referring him to friends in Boston, Arch Henderson comments "You will find in him a gentleman and what the Yankees like still better, a thorough man of business". Be that as it may, no long-term engagement seems to have arisen from the American visit, and by mid-1845 he was back in England and again working with George Stephenson.

He was engaged as Stephenson's assistant in Belgium, surveying proposed routes for the Sambre and Meuse Railway Company. In November 1845 the *Railway Times* reports on a meeting in which he presents the first engineer's report and incidentally comments favourably on the mineral wealth of the district. Stephenson's final report in 1847 on the West Flanders Railway incorporated and acknowledged Peter Henderson's work.

The publicity on his ninetieth birthday brought letters from overseas, recalling this time in Belgium. Charles Gray, the son of an English clergyman, writes of "a handsome man of about 30 or a little more, a great favourite with everyone. . . he was in the habit occasionally of giving grand balls at the Hotels to all the best people living in Bruges, English and Belgians, and everything was done in the best style and no expense spared". Peter had then extravagant tastes and no encumbrances. He had a staff of four "very nice young fellows" who thought well enough of him to present him on his departure with a musical box "as a trifling expression of their regard and thanks". He was looking further afield and floated the idea of a rail link from the Netherlands to St Petersburg, a concept wildly impractical and ahead of its time.

It was possibly during this period in Europe that he met his future wife, Jeanne Louisa Caroline Le Blond, French and Roman Catholic. Although born in Paris she was living in Scotland at the time of her marriage in 1848. A portrait in oils of her parents has survived, her mother dark-haired and sharp-featured and her father portly and a little pompous, carrying a snuff-box with the initial 'N', he having been a member of Napoleon's retinue on St Helena.

The Banns were proclaimed on 3 September 1848 in the Parish of Hamilton in the County of Lancaster. They were married by the Rev James Smith in the Roman Catholic Church. He gave her a prayer book of which only the flyleaf has survived, a valuable record of the births and baptismal dates of their eleven children and the deaths of two of them.

Peter needed a steady income and an outlet for his energy and talents and he cast the net wide in the next five or six years with a frequent change in domicile. His first son, Victor Edwin, was born at Muir House, Scotland, a bare nine months after the wedding, but christened at Wakefield, Yorkshire. Eleven months later George Francis was born in Birmingham, but survived only a few hours. Fourteen months later Jules Thomas was baptised at Wakefield, and in 1852 the fourth son Gabriel George was born in Normanby in Yorkshire but baptised in London. There was an interval then of three years - in 1854 Peter was in North America, reporting to the bondholders on the financial aspects, proposed work and estimates for the Canandaqua and Niagara Falls Railroad. In 1855 John Henry was born in London. Christmas Eve of that year saw the death of four-year-old Jules Thomas. He was buried in the Catholic Cemetery, Chelsea, and we have the undertaker's account for the funeral.

"To be 3ft 6 Elm Coffin Covered with White Cloth. Plate of Inscription. Crucifix. Three Pr of Handles, dotted lined and ruffled mattress and pillows.

Coach & Pair to Cemetery			
Coachman and fitting			
One Man as Bearer			
Use of Velvet Pall			
Undertaker Attendance			
Refreshmen (<i>sic</i>) for Coachman	£	s	d
	2	18	0
Dues at Cemetery	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
	£3	19	0

Ten months later a Stone Cross and Plinth was fixed over the grave for the sum of two guineas.

Meanwhile Peter was granted Letters Patent for the invention of 'Improvements in Ventilating ships'. He sought employment in coalmines and railways in Wales and ironworks in Middlesex, and discussed with a Mr John Templer the development of the Sarawak coal mines owned by Sir Ian Brooke. He seems to have been unwilling to commit himself to this project, but in 1854, armed with an impressive array of references, he applied for appointment as a Civil Engineer with the East India Company. He was accepted, but soon after in January 1855 resigned the job on the grounds of ill-health. He did have the professional attendance of a surgeon, late in 1856, at the quite considerable cost of £18. We do not know why.

No doubt Peter was moved to migrate by the prospect of major works to be undertaken in the booming prosperity of Eastern Australia after the discovery of gold. His

prospects in the Old World should have been very favourable - letters from his friend James McHardy, Sheriff Clerk of Glasgow, refer bluntly to his intention to migrate with his "better half". "I never could see how you could better yourself professionally abroad with the prospects and employment you represent in England".

Caroline was constantly pregnant or breast-feeding, but the scant consideration of his wife's needs was an accepted part of the prevailing culture. Her sixth pregnancy was well-advanced when they boarded the 'Camperdown' in London at the end of 1856; the boys were aged seven, four and fourteen months. What was life like for this French exile, for five months on board this ship, an East Indiaman of 993 tons?

They were Cabin Passengers, together with George White, his wife and five children, one other lady and two gentlemen, sixteen persons in all. The Steerage Passengers numbered twelve - designated "males" (7) "females" (2) and children (3). The passengers were outnumbered by the crew, forty-seven men including the Master and a midshipman of fourteen. They came from Sweden, Berlin, Trieste, US and Greece but mostly from Britain and included a surgeon of twenty-five and the usual compliment of carpenters (2) boatswains (3) sailmaker, butcher and cooks (2).

Caroline's sixth son, Arthur Vincent, was born on 11 February 1857 "during a violent storm off Walmer Castle Downs at 5 o'clock in the evening". He was baptised at sea and later christened in Sydney as a Roman Catholic at St James's Church. The 'Camperdown' berthed in Sydney on 24 March 1857.

They lived first in Woolloomooloo near the centre of Sydney at 'Winton Villa', No 1 Bourke Street. They do not appear to have spent much time in New South Wales, but time enough for Peter to submit a design for a single span Harbour Bridge from near Dawes' Point to Milsom's Point on the North Shore. A sketch of the bridge was printed in 1874. It is signed 'P E Henderson, planned in 1857'.

His major contributions in NSW were in the matter of the Lithgow coalfield, which he claimed to have discovered, and a survey for the railway over the Blue Mountains from Penrith to Mount Victoria and Bathurst. This is generally known as the Zig-Zag Railway, but at one stage was marked 'Henderson's Line'. It is the subject of a lengthy and impassioned letter to the Chief Secretary, the Hon J G Francis, in which he claims priority in the surveying and planning of this railway. His plans were warmly received by the business community of Bathurst, who raised £ 1000 towards his work. He claims to have spent three months on "such works in the mountains as no white man ever encountered before". Moreover his assistants were unskilled, "there was scarcely one who knew how to survey much less anything else" and "they spoiled and despoiled all the instruments I brought from England with me, cost me about £2000 and threw me out of time". In the event, the Government Engineers came on the field and took over the work without further cost to the local community, and (what chiefly wounded him) without acknowledgement of his prior designs.

The Lithgow coal he considered of a quality equal or superior to the best in Great Britain. It became the basis of a prosperous mining industry .

He made good friends in Bathurst and designed the new Church of SS Michael and John. The foundation stone was laid in November 1857 by the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Sydney.

Back in Woolloomooloo he concerned himself with safety on the Sydney waterfront, and in a letter to *The Empire* recommended that chain ladders be placed down the rocks from South Head to Botany Bay and that steps be cut in the rock. He advised the installation of lighthouses on North and South Heads at "comparatively small expense".

In this same year 1857 he was retained as Engineer to the Sydney Gas Consumers' Company. This was a new company to be floated with a capital of £100,000 in 20,000 shares of £5 each. In the event that 15,000 shares were not taken up within three months the company would fold - this was indeed its fate. The capital was to be returned to the shareholders and in a letter to *The Empire* in 1859 Peter averred that he had made no charge and was indeed £23 or £24 out of pocket. In matters of finance he was a born loser.

Peter appears to have formed a partnership with a Mr Johnson and in 1858 they were corresponding with a London engineer about the smelting and refining of iron ore and the manufacture of wrought iron bars and plates. The London letter contains a sketch plan for blast furnaces and the refining and casting plant, at an estimated cost of £7000. It seems no further progress was made on this front. It was probably over-ambitious.

The promise and expectations of these early years in NSW were not fulfilled and by 1860 they were in Victoria and living at 203 Albert Street, East Melbourne. They later moved to Victoria Road, Brunswick and to 'Greenford Cottage', Simpsons Road, East Collingwood - respectable but undistinguished addresses. For the Melbourne and River Murray Railway Peter surveyed a proposed deviation from the existing track, to carry the line further north between Malmsbury and Woodend. It is one of several proposals and is marked on the Railways' map as Henderson's Line.

At a meeting in the Mechanics' Institute he advised on the prevention of flood damage to the banks of the Yarra River by cutting a ship canal through to Sandridge (Port Melbourne) and called on the Government to widen the bridge to permit a facility for traffic. Being unsolicited, this advice was presumably unpaid.

Other commissions may have come his way, but in September 1862 he is seeking from the City Surveyor support in his application for the Surveyorship of Dunedin. John Reilly gives him a warm recommendation, but the fact that this letter remains among his papers implies that he did not go through with the application. It is a fate which befell a number of references which he solicited both in the UK and in Australia. One of the puzzling features of his correspondence is the number of these references from eminent people, all of course very favourable but obviously not put to any purpose, except maybe the bolstering of his own self-esteem. He was undoubtedly looking for the big project which would leave his name in the annals of the State, and was disappointed in his reception by the pragmatic and sceptical professionals of the Colony.

It was well nigh impossible not to be caught up in the prevailing fever for gold and Peter was no exception. In 1865 with a Mr Patrick McFarland he bought a one-sixth share in the Golden Gate Lease at Crooked River. It did not make his fortune.

Caroline had a further three sons and two daughters after arriving in the Colony. Louis Charles was born in Sydney in 1859 and baptised at St Mary's and Edgar Jerome was born in Melbourne, baptised at St Francis' s 1861. She had to wait fifteen years and bear eight sons before the arrival of her daughters, Caroline Maria in 1863 and Emily Louise (Tottie) in 1865. The final member of the family was Albert Jules in 1867. She was still very much aware of her family overseas. Emily's godmother was her sister Melanie Le Blond in Hamilton and Albert's was Marie Babin of Paris. His godfather was his uncle, John Henderson of London.

Caroline's angle on their situation is cautiously revealed in a moving letter she wrote in 1869 to her old friend and confessor, Rev James Smith of Hamilton, who had married them in 1848. The envelope is missing but one has to infer that the letter never reached him and was returned. Peter has added a postscript, written across Caroline's text in the stationery-sparing way of the time, and the baby has also left his mark. These things don't help the deciphering of her fine regular sharply angled handwriting on a dark blue notepaper. She was then forty-four years old.

She writes a good letter, significantly directing correspondence to the General Post Office, Melbourne "as we are thinking of moving from our present residence". She reveals her homesickness but also her pride in her family.

"You see how far we have wandered from home; like all others I suppose in search of Gold, which however I must regret we have not found. We came here a little too late when money was required to make money and the matters have not improved in the Colony.

"My good and kind husband is not well at present and we are anxious to return home in the hope with care to keep him many years to watch over us. . . The little Edwin that you blessed, and that the old beggar woman "Jeannie" walked 4 miles to come and bless also, has profited by your prayers, he is now a fine clever good boy of twenty. At 17 he matriculated at the university here; he is anxious to continue his studies for a doctor, he is in the accountants' branch of the Post Office, much liked and prized by his superior officers - the next George is 17 years of age, has passed one examination and also is a kind- hearted handsome fellow. Then come Harry 14, Arthur 13, Louis 10, Edgar 8, Caroline 5, Emilie 3 and last Albert 2 years old. All that little troupe promises fair in looks and character.

"We have not very good Catholique schools here; they have brought a few brothers who have taken the lower schools and the Jesuits have taken the College - there is a hope now that we will be better off. My boys have been obliged to go to a protestant school but one of the Neutral Schools, no religion is spoken of there at all.

"The Clergy are not so kind here as at home. I seldom see any but I have often envied their comforts for those I know at home - they are very rich here - horses, carriages, properties etc is common to them all but they are not the kind friends of the poor as you were, as Mr Reid was and the

good Bishop Murdoch was. I do not like them and I wish much for home, how happy my boys would be to see you. . .

"My poor sister Melanie is dead after a marriage of 18 months only - Victor (*her brother* ?) married very young and has a large family but has not succeeded very well in the world. My father and mother are yet at Hamilton but they seldom write to me.

"I hope dear Sir that when you receive this you will answer however briefly. You little imagine what pleasure it will give. I have yet in constant use the Ursuline Manual you gave me and I would not part with it for worlds. Though I have grown a grey-haired old woman I think I would enjoy a game at chess with you. Again I should not like to promise that I would play it without cheating but you know, dear Mr Smith, I still think you sometimes used to... mistake - when I know if I have really found you I will send you all our *cartes de visite*. I leave room to my husband who I assure you often speaks of you with great affection.

"Asking your prayers for mine and for myself Believe me, dear Reverend Sir, yours most respectfully, Caroline Henderson. "

Her husband adds a more conventional and playful note:

"My wife is often speaking of you and altho' she may think you acted right you will know by her letter how you served me out, just fancy that little *Girl* mother of nine big boys, almost men, at all events the head taller than herself, and indeed she is just the same as when you knew her, always happy. I would like to see you here very much; it is the best place in a worldly point of view for priests I ever saw".

Peter's experience and advice were officially held in high regard. In 1873 *The Daily Telegraph* reports on a Royal Commission on the use of low-lying lands near the city of Melbourne, between Melbourne and Sandridge. Peter Henderson again recommended a ship canal two miles long be created between the Yarra and Hobson's Bay to prevent flooding of the Yarra. It may be that he was at times unduly sanguine in his forecasts. He was still casting around for fresh ways to make his fortune.

In 1877 both Peter and his eldest son Edwin took up land leases each of 640 acres near Wakool. The *Northern Chronicle & Gazette* reports on a Land Inquiry Court at Deniliquin in April 1880. An inspector deposed that a visit in 1879 showed no indication of residence and no improvements, so presumably the leases lapsed. It is hard to believe that these highly urbanised men would have had the skills or the inclination to make a living on the land, nor the necessary capital.

George made some unwilling acquaintance with country Victoria when in 1882 he was posted to Echuca, on the Murray River, in the course of his job in the Inland Revenue Office. He and Edwin were part of the traditional recruitment of moderately impoverished young Catholics to the Civil Service. George was then thirty years old, single, but there is a passing mention of Jessie, his future wife, in his mother's letters. These are addressed to

G G Henderson Esq, Treasury Pay Office, Echuca, written on good quality stationery with the Henderson crest and a Victorian twopenny stamp. As the methodical George noted the date of receipt on each envelope one can deduce that the letters then took no longer than one or two days from Melbourne.

He is much missed by the family, particularly by his mother; her letters are addressed to "my darling son" and "dear old Georgie" and she signs off with "a thousand loving kisses from your old mother". She wants him home again- "our 'home' will be quite broken up if you stay- be sick or anything but come back". There are passing indications of family financial stress - "Louis gave me £ I and pa got his boots - L tells me today he is trying for an engagement to go to Queensland but as there is uncertainty you keep it to yourself. I do not know what the journey would be about - but where there is life there is hope. " . . . "I had a letter from Harry with £1 *for me*. Very welcome." .. . "I went out today for fish for Edwin and to the grocer to choose some tea as my tea and kerosine have not been got for me - I do not know if my present master will rebel if I ask more this week - he did on Saturday but he had to when he found I could not get on. I never said a word - Capt Ball came on Sunday and that means Whiskey, but we are all right - Edwin is practising a mass. I wish you were here".

Edwin had taken over George's weekend job reporting on rowing for *The Argus*. In March 1882 Caroline writes to George:

"Edwin has just returned from the Regatta and after a wash is hard at work - he counts his money and his lines like a regular miser - he fumes though at the money affairs, poor fellow he feels tied up without hope of relief - it is indeed hard for you dear fellows, so many years of trouble and no relief. Pa talks just now a good deal of his expectations. I really do not know what to make of it - I weigh every word to an exact meaning and worth and sometimes I have glimpses of hope - but I sometimes think I must be as big a goose, I had hoped so many years. God knows I do not care for myself but I would give much for it to become true for my dear old boys' sake."

It is clear that the financing of the family home fell on the shoulders of Edwin and George. The girls contributed as they could, Carrie at eighteen washed, ironed, mended and helped with the cooking.

There are other family letters - from "your own ever and ever loving sister Tots" - now thirteen, about a sad scalding accident to the dog Carlo, from Edwin, and from his "most affectionate father" cautioning him against card players and strange horses.

The picture emerges of a family surviving adversity by mutual support and devotion to their "little mother". When she and Peter visit Sydney in 1881she writes to George, "Rose will take care of your comfort . . . she only requires not to be bullied. . . don't let my dear little daughter interfere with the housekeeping and all will be well".

They stayed in Sydney with a business associate, Mr Neill and his wife. Peter was negotiating with his host - Caroline writes:

"(If only papa can succeed with his coals and take my Edwin from his slavery that he dislikes so much I will be so happy. . . I have no reason not to hope for the best, I think my old man deals fair with Mr Neill and it will be well if he does do so as he is himself a straightforward businessman. So we will hope all will be well and my dear old boys rewarded at last for their goodness - though you know Georgy with all the up hill work we have been very happy. I see no home like ours no where as yet. "

A natural gaiety surfaces in her enjoyment of a visit to Manly Beach "where we dined off Turkey and Champagne... and Mrs Neill and I had a long walk by the sea-shore and through the Bush". They went to "Galatea and Phygmalion", "the Rose of Castille" and a concert by Mrs Turner on successive days and she had her portrait taken "for her boys".

She takes gentle teasing about her oil painting - the bunch of roses was quite successful but the portrait of Edwin made him look like Ned Kelly. She is photographed with her two daughters - a small woman in quite an elaborate black dress, with firm and regular features and a direct gaze.

But all was not well with Caroline. These letters written to George in February and March 1882 make brief infrequent references to her health. "We are all well - at least your old mother is better. My little doctor is treating me". Although she makes light of it, this may explain the urgency of her need for George's presence and support.

She died on 13 August 1882 aged fifty-seven. Dr Fitzgerald certified the cause as "pleuritis (pleurisy) and pericarditis" with a duration of three months. Until fifty years ago these were common complications of pneumonia but the duration of the illness suggests tuberculosis as a more likely cause. She was buried next day in Boroondara Cemetery, Kew. On New Year's Day 1883 George picked the first flowers from her grave and kept them with some oak leaves from a tree which she had planted, in a small envelope with a heavy black border - dried and brittle witness to a son's devotion.

This signaled the gradual disintegration of the family. Inevitably the task of caring for Peter fell to the unmarried daughters, Tottie and Carrie, and they moved house to Hawthorne.

Peter was aged sixty-nine and still enjoyed some prominence in the community . He is on record as chairing a committee of the Barry Memorial Fund, to arrange the erection of a statue to that eminent judge and University Chancellor. It was to be placed in front of the Public Library and the supervising architect was his son Edgar , who later set up a branch of the family in Western Australia.

Peter continued some consulting work; in 1887 *The Northern Miner* reports a visit to Charters Towers, Queensland, of Messrs Henderson, Watson and Purvinton; two years later the *Cooktown Courier* reports on the arrival on the 'Bulimba' of P E Henderson FRS 'professional geologist and mining expert' representing English and Melbourne financial interests and inspecting the goldfields and coal mines of northern and central Queensland. The visit was expected to last three months in the height of summer - no light undertaking for a man of seventy-six.

A similar commission took him to Tasmania two years later. On behalf of a Victorian Syndicate he visited the silver mines of the West Coast and some of the coal

deposits in the south. He was later to inspect 'valuable tin deposits lately disclosed and waiting the influx of capital'. It was a hot topic. The *Launceston Examiner* devoted a leading article to Tasmania's mineral wealth and the failure to exploit it. It criticised "inexperienced directors, incompetent mining managers, deluded shareholders and collapsed companies" and quoted Peter Henderson in support of the need for capable and experienced managers. The Mount Bischoff mine won his approval as "the best managed mine I have seen in 60 years' experience" - the manager had European training.

This may have marked the end of any significant professional work, but he was to live a further twelve years with his daughters at 198 Glenferrie Road.

At the time of his ninetieth birthday he rated half a column and a photograph in the Melbourne *Punch*, a lively and gossipy weekly. (The entry sits next to a full-length portrait of Miss Nellie Stewart, "Australia's favourite artiste" and of course the future Nellie Melba). He is described as "bright and hearty. . . as sane and lively of mind as he is healthy of body. . . to be seen daily taking his stroll accompanied only by his faithful dog".

At this time his sons were scattered across the commonwealth. Victor (Edwin) apparently reconciled to his "slavery" was the Deputy Collector of Taxes; George was a well-respected city estate agent and auctioneer; Arthur a doctor practising in Camberwell - these and Albert were in Melbourne. Henry was an architect in Adelaide, Louis a financier in Sydney, and Edgar an architect in Perth.

The publication attracted notice in Sydney and in the English press and brought letters from his nephew and from old associates, including the Charles Gray who had enjoyed his company and his hospitality in Bruges over fifty years earlier. His niece Polly Brechin conducted a lively correspondence from Edinburgh, with family news and some complaint of rheumatism in her legs, colds and pleurisy induced by the Scottish weather, and dry rot in the old house at Brechin.

Peter was to live only seven months after his ninetieth birthday celebrations. He died at home on 14 May 1904, of "senility and cardiac enfeeblement", and was interred with Caroline in Boroondara Cemetery. Eight members of his family lie under three plain stone slabs, now almost illegible through lichens and weathering.

Emily (Tottie) later married Ted A'Beckett of a very well-known pioneer family in Kew. They shared a small house in Auburn Road with Carrie, who remained single. George cared devotedly for these two sisters - he had at the age of thirteen been appointed Tottie's godfather - and after his marriage to Jessie Dowdell they were frequent visitors at 'Lymwark' on Sunday afternoons.

In 1894, with the death of Peter's brother John in London, each of the family received a legacy of £500 (George got £1000 apparently in recognition of his responsibility for a young family). In the dark days of the 'nineties in Victoria, when even the banks were closing their doors, the small windfall was very welcome. As George wrote to his son Kenneth, it arrived providentially "when I was thrown out of employment with not a shilling in the world, you as a baby and Rupert about to arrive".

There is no record of a Probate application after Peter died. One must conclude that he was dependent on his children, and that he departed from the Colony with no more worldly wealth that he brought with him.

Peter Henderson is something of an enigma. His ability was undeniable and there was surely no lack of opportunity for one of his experience and training. Railways, roads and bridges were everywhere in demand, and coal and minerals awaiting exploitation. At that time many fortunes were lost through speculation in mining and in land, but a letter from George, written twenty years later to his own son, is illuminating. He is opposing Kenneth's desire to marry, at the age of twenty-one, his long-standing sweetheart Sharley. He recalls with some bitterness the early years of "genteel poverty", the years of heavy family responsibility which postponed for almost ten years his own marriage plans. He writes.

"My poor old father was an exceedingly clever man in his own *profession*. Out of that he was silly as a child and all his experience in Australia never seemed to make him wiser. He made *enemies* by the score but never a *friend* and his wife and children had to pay a heavy reckoning. "

One has the impression that his vaulting ambition clouded Peter's judgement and prevented his coming to terms with more mundane and regular employment.

The passing of the years has shown that it was through Caroline and through the careers and families of their sons that Peter Henderson ultimately left his mark on the newborn Commonwealth.