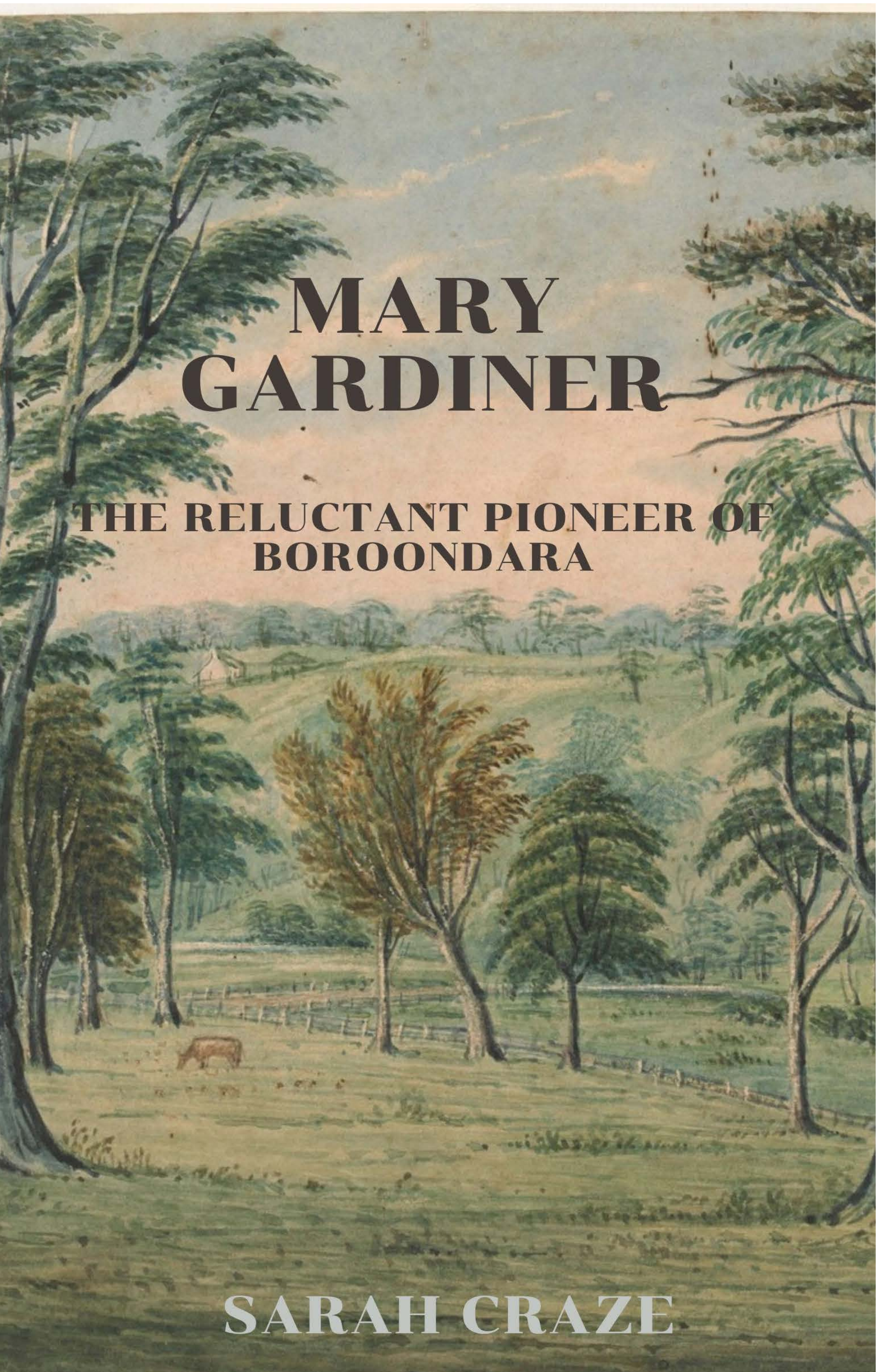
MARY GARDINER

THE RELUCTANT PIONEER OF BOROONDARA



SARAH CRAZE



Mary (Eagle) Gardiner, c. 1820

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Cover Image: First known painting of Boroondara (unknown artist) c. 1850. Available from State Library of Victoria. Portrait of Mary Gardiner, c.1820. Available from State Library of Victoria.

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PREFACE

The name Gardiner has been ubiquitous in Boroondara since John Gardiner leased the land in 1837 to run cattle. Much of the story we know today of how John came to be in the area is a re-telling based on the biography of him written in 1937 by Leslie J Wilmoth. Although a well-researched and thorough work, documenting John's emigration from Dublin to his death in Leamington Spa, the biography omits the other side of the Gardiner story: that of his wife, Mary.

This narrative examines Mary Gardiner's story, as described in Leslie Wilmoth's second and unpublished biography of the Gardiners. In it, he uses extracts of Mary's diaries, loaned to him by her granddaughter in the mid-1950s, to describe a woman of great intelligence and complexity.

Married to John at only 17, Mary is not a woman who complies with the myth of the stoic and long-suffering Australian pioneer woman. Pretty, pious and bookish, she is woefully unsuited to the life John's ambitions have in store for her. But she is headstrong and determined in her own way. Time and again, she makes the best of the situations John inflicts on her, at great personal loss and suffering.

Despite Mary's dry wit shining through, this is not a happy story. Rather than glorify John Gardiner's occupation of Boroondara, it shows the true cost of his occupancy; not just on the Wurundjeri but on the woman he married and eventually abandoned.

Sarah Craze

January 2026

INTRODUCTION

When Mary Gardiner stepped onboard the ship *Regia* for her new home of Port Phillip, she had long ago abandoned all hope of any lasting happiness in the Australian colonies. It had nothing to do with how she hated the incessant rocking of ships and the ensuing seasickness. That would blessedly be over soon enough. It was not that her husband John had not consulted her about this relocation, the sixth in 13 years in the colonies. He had long ago stopped discussing any of the decisions he made that affected her. No, it was because she knew she would never escape the gaping hole in her heart caused by the series of calamitous catastrophes that had befallen her and her birth family ever since John had decided to move them all to Van Diemen's Land from Dublin all those years ago.

Mary's story comes from excerpts of her diaries are included in the *Gardiners of Gardiners Creek*, an unpublished, handwritten manuscript written around 1959 by Gardiner's biographer, Leslie J Wilmoth. Wilmoth published his first biography, *John Gardiner: Pioneer and Overlander* in 1937, for the centenary anniversary of Melbourne's foundation. A geologist by trade, the Melbourne-born amateur historian lived in London for most of his adult life. This gave him ready access to records about the Gardiners held by the Royal Commonwealth Society in London, including one of Mary's diaries describing the family's arrival in Port Phillip in 1837. Much of this information has now been shared with the State Library of Victoria and the National Library of Australia but it appears no correspondence or documentation written by John Gardiner himself has emerged since Wilmoth wrote his biographies.

At the time of writing *John Gardiner: Pioneer and Overlander*, Wilmoth greatly admired him. He wrote the book in time for Melbourne's centenary so Gardiner would be recognised for his contribution as an early pioneer. Sometime after publishing

his first Gardiner biography, John and Mary Gardiner's granddaughter, Mary Harriet Austin, who was the custodian of the family's history, lent him her grandmother Mary's diaries. Wilmoth then used these to write a new biography he called the *Gardiners of Gardiners Creek*. He never published it, perhaps due to ill-health, as he died a few years later. His estate donated the handwritten pages to the National Library of Australia. In them, Wilmoth struggled to reconcile with himself what Mary's experiences living with John Gardiner revealed about the character of a man he admired so much. The following narrative is based on a transcription of the Gardiners of Gardiners Creek as the current location of all but one of Mary Gardiner's diaries remains a mystery.

CHAPTER 1
Mary in Dublin

As a young woman of 17 growing up in Dublin, Mary Eagle was no social climber. She sought intellectual sustenance and pleasure from a simple life of books, her Church of England faith and her family. But although her parents cared for her and her five brothers deeply, they had proven ill-equipped at financially providing for them all.

Mary's father George Eagle came from a long line of military men. He had chosen not to follow in his ancestors' footsteps. Unfortunately, whatever skills he did possess were not suited to the alternatives available to him in commercial or agricultural life. He failed in his venture as a silk merchant. After this, he sought a living as a farmer. He failed miserably at that too. By 1819, George and Anne Eagle had lost their two eldest sons in the brutal Revolutionary Wars (1802-15), and struggled to support their only daughter and three youngest sons, George (16), Solomon (14) and Edward (8).

All this meant that when 21-year-old John Gardiner took an interest in their only daughter, George and Anne encouraged the match as beneficial for all of them. John was the second son of a well-respected, Presbyterian and modestly well-to-do Dublin family. Besotted with their daughter's considerable beauty, John was prepared to marry their Mary despite the absence of any dowry. Although they were of differing faiths, marriage to John Gardiner promised Mary Eagle a life of stability and intellectual engagement in Dublin. She agreed to the match. On Monday, 27 September 1819, Mary Eagle became Mary Gardiner.

The young couple set up house at 78 Dame Street, Dublin. Perhaps in their naiveté the Eagles did not realise that as the second son, John did not stand to inherit his father's estate and was reliant on his parents financially. Fortunately, John took his financial obligations to Mary seriously but the geopolitical conditions of Ireland at the time made fulfilling them difficult.

Ireland was part of the United Kingdom in the early 19th century and feeling the economic impact of the end of the Revolutionary Wars keenly. In pursuing some kind of income-generating profession for himself and Mary, John quickly realised that Dublin held few viable prospects. He thought of moving to London as many of his countrymen had done and even discussed the idea with his siblings, particularly his sisters, Mary and Sarah. Then when his father died in 1821, his mother paid all five of her children a lump sum of £1,000 from his estate. Although sufficient to modestly support Mary, John had loftier ambitions than London for them both .

With no insight into John Gardiner's personal thoughts, motivations and ideological leanings available, we can only infer his thinking from the decisions he made from this point onwards. They all point to John Gardiner embracing the emergence of capitalism and its resulting ideology.

John came of age after the devastation of the Revolutionary Wars began a period of seismic change in Europe, including in Britain. The merchant and middle classes were now increasingly frustrated with how wealthy, corrupt landowners had capriciously sunk the country into huge amounts of debt and used taxation on them to repay it. They considered landlords, once thought to be paternalistic, as lazy parasites who profited off protective tariffs. British capitalist-farmers began to emerge as the leaders of enterprise, free trade and national prosperity. They followed a moral philosophy that strived for wealth accumulation through careful investment and combined it with evangelical religious principles that provided a moral justification and atonement for their aspirations. As men of commerce (usually middle-class and white), they cultivated an anti-aristocratic ethic of frugality and self-dependence in direct contrast to the monopolising excesses of the old economic guard. These men expressed masculinity through credibility, sociability, politeness and sober rationality.

Sometime in early 1822, John learned that the British Government sought immigrants of means to settle in the Australian colonies. Land was available there at the extraordinarily cheap price of one pound per acre, with a minimum investment of at least £500.

With little opportunity to pursue land and wealth accumulation in his hometown, the early 1820s convict settlements of Van Diemen's Land and New South Wales offered great opportunity for aspiring capitalists like John Gardiner.

To help inform his decision-making on which one to choose, John got his hands on a copy of W C Wentworth's *Statistical, Historical and Political Description of the Colony of New South Wales and its Dependent Settlements in Van Diemen's Land*. W C Wentworth was one of the first generation of Australian-born settlers. He had taken it upon himself to document the pros and cons of settling in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land in the 1820s. Financially depleted from supporting the convict system, the two penal settlements desperately needed the cash and reliable labour of monied settlers. This situation helpfully aligned with the aspirations of emerging capitalists.

Wentworth recommended New South Wales to his readers. Van Diemen's Land was wild and beautiful, he wrote, but arable land with access to fresh water was becoming limited and the situation with the 'natives' increasingly volatile. Wentworth openly acknowledged that the settlers' mistreatment of the Aboriginal people of Van Diemen's Land was at the root of conflict and distrust between everyone on the island. To add to the danger, many former convicts had turned to violence and bushranging to survive. They held no loyalty to the Crown nor their British-born oppressors. Although he described Van Diemen's Land magnificent harbours and coast as a land of opportunity, he also wrote of its insufficient military protection and absence of any concept of a police force. Better to go to New South Wales, Wentworth concluded, where far more land was available, the Aboriginal people less hostile, and civility and more opportunity would only flourish.

Armed with this information, at first John Gardiner took Wentworth's advice. 'I can bring out from thirteen to fifteen hundred pounds – perhaps a larger sum,' he wrote to Lord Bathurst in his request for consideration as a settler. The idea horrified John's sisters. In correspondence with her sister Mary,

Sarah implored her not to mention their brother's plan to their mother, for fear 'it would be cruel to give her any unnecessary trouble.' Despite his sisters' misgivings, John became resolute in his decision. Lord Bathurst approved and sent him a letter of introduction to the New South Wales Governor.

But soon after the letter arrived, for reasons no-one knows or documented, John Gardiner changed his mind. He decided to take his pretty young wife to Van Diemen's Land instead. Perhaps he withheld Wentworth's document from Mary and talked up the opportunity of moving to the magnificent island on the other side of the world, its climate more akin to Dublin than the harsh sun and heat of New South Wales. Mary, not yet the hardened cynic she would eventually become, decided that she would only move so far from their homeland on the condition that John ensured her parents and three younger brothers came with them.

Leslie Wilmoth, the Gardiners' biographer, considered this expectation of Mary to show an unhealthy attachment to her family. Perhaps this was true. But it was also prudent. The earliest population statistics of Van Diemen's Land are from 1848. At this time, only 20 per cent of the population of 70,164 people were free settlers with only 21 per cent of them married. The overwhelming majority of the small female population in Van Diemen's Land were convict women. We can assume from this information that 20 years earlier, there were even less women of Mary's social status and education for her to befriend and socialise with. She was only 20. Insisting on bringing her family with her provided Mary with a pre-existing network of support in a strange and dangerous place.

John agreed to Mary's demand. Lord Bathurst approved the change and notified Gardiner that the ship Andromeda was departing from Leith (in Scotland) about the middle of October (1822) and would call at Portsmouth to embark further passengers and freight. They had four and a half months to pack up their belongings and prepare for the long voyage.

Of the party of seven Gardiners and Eagles who eventually set sail, only John Gardiner would ever see their homeland again.

CHAPTER 2
Mary at Macquarie River

The voyage to Van Diemen's Land was long and arduous. Mary hated every minute of it. After the ship finally arrived in Hobart Town on 6 May 1823, Lieutenant-Governor William Sorell granted John Gardiner and his father-in-law George Eagle a combined 1,300 acres of uncleared land near the Macquarie River, in the vicinity of the little township of Ross (between Hobart and Launceston). To assist in the clearing, John acquired convict servants in Hobart Town and the group set off for their new life as prosperous sheep graziers.

To say they were woefully unprepared for the magnitude of physical work required to beat the untamed bush into submission is an understatement. The Eagles may have had some experience with farming back in Ireland but John and Mary Gardiner had no concept of just how much work was involved before they could acquire livestock. To compound matters, Mary quickly learned of the mistreatment of the Aboriginal people by the settlers. In a diary entry from 1830, she wrote, "they are a miserable race of beings and have been improperly used by the white settlers from the first formation of the settlement. The first step was Lieutenant Bowen's ordering them to be fined amongst when they were advancing to him across his landing in a peaceful manner. They have been shamefully, wantonly and cruelly aggravated by the stock-keepers in out stations, taking their women away and when tired of them turning them out, whilst the poor creatures would still linger around the hut the savage stock-keepers would then fire at her until they succeeded in making her leave the place. The tribe she belonged to would naturally show some resentment and this was the signal for their being butchered by the whites."

Mary's observation is the first indication that she does not align herself with John's capitalist/religious ideology. That she so astutely described what subsequent historic scholarship confirmed as true would have given her little comfort. She learned quickly that she could not abide living a life of such

intense physical toil and isolation. Some years later, she would write of the ‘miserable souls’ worked to ‘wreck and ruin’ in Van Diemen’s Land. Perhaps John had not envisaged life as a sheep grazier in Van Diemen’s Land to involve the back-breaking work of clearing hardwood trees and scrub either. He may have felt some relief at Mary’s pragmatism because after six weeks, the Gardiners abandoned their land at Macquarie River and moved to Hobart Town.

But the terms of John’s contract with the Governor meant he could not sell the land for five years. Having so much of his cash reserves tied up in the allotment meant he needed a job quickly. Based entirely on his good reputation as a God-fearing gentleman, John secured a job with the Bank of Van Diemen’s Land as their cashier. This also gave him some social standing in the colony.

George and Anne Eagle lacked the status and privilege of John Gardiner. They could not escape the physical burden of trying to scratch out a living working their allotment. Their sons would eventually grow up to offer some assistance but the toll on Anne’s health was particularly hard. Australian history may have manufactured a nationalistic myth of the stoic nature of female pioneers, but this entirely ignored the heavy physical and mental price women like Anne paid.

CHAPTER 3
Mary in Hobart Town

Mary was much happier in Hobart Town. The couple lived in an apartment above the bank. Now she had ready access to new books and could regularly visit church. Eventually relations must have improved sufficiently between the couple for their only child, a girl, to arrive in July 1827. Anne Eagle travelled up from Macquarie River to meet her new granddaughter, Anna Maria. "[She is] a complete Eagle, has hair and mouth from her mother," she wrote excitedly to her husband. "A strong healthy child and very like Mary at her age but much longer. Mary is quite determined on calling her after me and her cousin Maria." Anne suggested also including John's mother in the name, "but no, she would have her own way which she has in every use of the word. I often tell her I should like to take a lesson from her but I fear I am too old to learn."

Although working in a bank was not the life John had in mind when he brought Mary to Van Diemen's Land, by 1827 he felt confident enough in the security of his position to buy land in Sandy Bay and begin building Mary and Anna Maria a house. But the Bank was not on as firm ground as he thought. The discovery of fraud to the sum of £2,000 shook it to its very foundations and rippled throughout the colony. The culprit? Francis Hines, his cousin's husband.

Some time in early 1825, John Gardiner's cousin Paul Minnott arrived in Hobart Town with his family, including their daughter, Sarah. Sarah soon married another emigrant, Francis Hines. Wanting to help his newly married cousins, John vouched for Francis for a job as an accountant at the Bank of Van Diemen's Land. Francis took advantage of the bank's poor management practices and within 16 months, his criminal nature revealed itself.

The Bank's Directors placed no public blame on John Gardiner for making the recommendation. In fact, he was offered the role of accountant, perhaps for his honesty in over-riding family

loyalty to report the deception. But John took his cousin-in-law's betrayal hard. Within a few weeks, he resigned from the Bank.

It was now 1828 and John Gardiner was 30 years old. He still harboured some desire to be a successful landowner but watching his wife's parents toil pitifully gave John no appetite to return to his own allocation at Macquarie River. Instead, John decided to use the connections he had made with prominent businessmen in Hobart and pursue a living as a merchant. To start his business, he sold the land in Sandy Bay and, with his five-year restriction now expired, sold his holding at Macquarie River too. He managed to do this just in time for his father-in-law George Eagle to ask him for a loan. In need of all the cash he could get, John arranged for a mortgage on George's land to help him out. At the same time, George's eldest son George junior, now 21, decided he wanted his own property. He received a government grant for land at Prosser Bay and moved out there.

Meanwhile, John Gardiner's experience at the Bank did not translate into success as a Hobart merchant. Van Diemen's Land suffered a persistent scarcity of merchandise and any that did arrive was imported specifically for a store. Once he realised this, John decided he needed to locate his business away from competitors. In early 1829, he learned of Government plans for a road between Hobart and Launceston and a bridge over the Macquarie River, near Ross. If John Gardiner had held on to his allotment of land there, the proposed road would have cut right through it, offering an excellent location to set up a store for travellers on land he already owned. But alas, that opportunity was lost.

Instead, Gardiner leased a few acres of his old land from Mr Gillies, the man who had bought his Macquarie River property. Gillies allowed him to build a simple shop and house on it. Exactly what goods he was going to sell and how he was going to acquire them was his next conundrum. John decided to travel abroad for stock. In October 1829, he caught a ship to Isle de

France (Mauritius) with the intention of acquiring inventory of sugar, rice and hardware for sale.

CHAPTER 4
Mary at Erin Lodge

Before he left, John named the shop Erin Lodge and moved Mary and Anna Maria out there. Ross was no longer a squalid town attracting the island's ne'er-do-wells. To her surprise, Mary found herself quite contented there. It seemed she bore life without John exceptionally well. At Erin Lodge, she was living closer to her parents and brothers, all of whom doted on Anna Maria. Her brother George helped set up the store, discovering some aptitude for it.

In a diary entry from May 1830, Mary wrote extensively of the strong attachment she developed to the Ross area's improved circumstances. "Many are the improvements which have taken place since I first visited [six years ago]," she began. "Substantial comfortable dwelling houses are now to be seen in almost every direction where a short time ago there was almost no habitation or only a miserable sod hut vying with any cabin in my own dear country for any exposure to wind and rain."

She went on, "I am quite delighted with the numerous enclosed paddocks on the roadside, in which graze highly improved heads of English cattle... new roads had been cut, bridges built, lovely laughing children gambolled before many of the houses, in fact the population seems to have increased as rapidly as any other improvement."

"When I consider that this is a penal settlement, I am quite surprised at the order and regularity in prisoner population (before the largest) is kept. Though residing 78 miles in the interior, and keeping a grocery store, I have no fear of being attacked or robbed. How truly grateful I ought to be that the districts in which I reside is never disturbed by the blacks of who I have a perfect dread. Still, how many drawbacks are there to one's comforts, the greatest of which I consider to be the want of any place of worship."

But her happiness with her new situation would not last. John's

return a month later with new inventory to sell gave the family a strong revenue injection. The store did so well that by December 1830, he decided to buy back the entire 800 acres of his former land from Gillies. The purchase was either to flaunt his success or showed a breath-taking lack of insight and community disconnection because the Government's surveyors had changed their mind about the route of the new Hobart-to-Launceston road some time earlier. It would no longer be crossing Gardiner's newly re-acquired land but traverse the opposite side of the river from his store. By the time the workers completed the road, Gardiner's store would be most inconveniently placed and all but ruined.

It seems John Gardiner still had a lot to learn about building wealth. To limit his losses, John again sold almost all the property with a provision that he should retain the shop building and a few acres for a period of three years, the time it was estimated the road would take to build.

One could perhaps give John the benefit of the doubt that his failure to tell Mary of the limitation on their time at Erin Lodge was being loathe to see his headstrong wife's hard-won happiness ruined. He must have learned long ago she had no interest in business affairs, for she wrote in her diary how she would leave the room if a guest's conversation turned to stock sales and grain prices.

When she eventually found out that John had sold the farm, Mary was livid. In her diary she wrote, "it is long since I have felt so aggrieved as last Friday when Mr G told me he had sold his farm... The remainder of our own place without now having a wish to leave it unless for my native country, but now everything is changed... but I couldn't feel the same interest in the prospect as before." To compound her sadness further, her mother Anne's health was in serious decline.

At 28, Mary Gardiner's interests remained much as they always had: books, her religion and her family, now extended to include her daughter, Anna Maria. The diary entries Wilmoth includes in Gardiners of Gardiners Creek reveal her to be an intelligent

and wry observer of goings on around her, and in possession of a bone-dry wit. She had no real interest in being a farmer's wife, nor was she entrepreneurial or stoic as the myth-makers for pioneer women would have preferred her to be. Perhaps these attributes limited her capacity to connect with the few women of a similar social standing around Ross acceptable for her to befriend. It is perhaps no wonder then that she became frustrated by the absence of intellectual companionship and conversation from John's visiting business associates. When combined with his dismissal of her feelings about their combined future, Mary began to become increasingly fixated on her family, her daughter and her religious beliefs.

Meanwhile, the agitations of the Aboriginal people against the increasing expansion of British settlers taking their hunting and gathering lands for themselves rose to boiling point. Time after time, the settlers took the law into their own hands, with the Aboriginals retaliating. As a shopkeeper and landowner, John Gardiner felt particularly aggrieved by the situation despite Mary recording in her diary there was no apparent threat to his business. According to Wilmoth, John and George Eagle (he does not specify whether it was father or son) joined Governor Arthur's 'Black War'. Wilmoth, preferring to paint John Gardiner in a flattering light in both his biographies, does not elaborate further in either of them.

The term 'Black War' was used by British settlers in Van Diemen's Land to describe the period of conflict between them and the Aboriginal people from the mid-1820s until the capitulation of the last Aboriginal people in the north-eastern region in 1832. Unlike a European war, it was not an officially declared war between two or more parties. This meant it had no defined beginning or end. Today, historians use the term 'the Black Line' to cover the period of the Governor's escalation of conflict in 1830.

Historian Nicholas Clements wrote in 2014 that by the spring of 1830, the Aboriginals had killed or wounded at least 417 colonists and plundered or destroyed thousands of pounds

worth of property. No-one had bothered to count how many Aboriginal people had died violently at the hands of colonists and by introduced disease. Governor Arthur finally succumbed to public pressure to mobilise colonists in an orchestrated defence of Van Diemen's Land against the depredations of its original inhabitants. The idea was to form into armed groups, go out into the wilderness, and 'capture' Aboriginal groups (with the 'capture' part being strictly optional).

Van Diemen's Land rural settlers may have lived in constant fear of economic ruin in a hostile land very far from any support or relief but most of them did not have the time to join the Black Line offensive. They were too busy running their farms and could not afford the loss of earnings. Many also did not want to leave their wives and families unprotected. Perhaps they understood that the Aboriginals inability to replace themselves faster than the rate the new settlers arrived meant colonisation of Van Diemen's Land was a war of attrition the Aboriginals were never going to win.

But John Gardiner had no qualms about leaving the business or his family. Governor Arthur ended up with, according to Clements, a 'Black Line comprised of some 2,200 men, of whom approximately 550 were soldiers, 440 were free men, 800 were assigned convicts, and 400 were ticket-of-leave convicts.'

Between difficulty in navigating the hostile and unfamiliar terrain, extreme weather and cold, inconsistency and inconvenience of any food replenishment system, absence of suitable footwear and clothing, lack of fighting experience, tension and hostility between groups, boredom, desertion – especially by convicts – and the lack of any real strategy, the whites just could not find the black camps. The Black Line was, in the words of Augustus Robinson, a 'battle with a shadow'.

Since Wilmoth wrote his biographies, a little more is known of the extent of John Gardiner's involvement in the Black Line. The Hobart Town Gazette reported on a Government Order from the Colonial Secretary's Office stating that on 7 October 1830, Major Douglas would form a chain of posts from Campbell Town

along the South-west bank of the Macquarie to its junction with the Lake River. Gardiner and Eagle (either George senior or junior) are named as contributors to this effort.

It is intriguing how in both the biographies he wrote about Gardiner, Leslie Wilmoth, a meticulous researcher who unearthed copious amounts of primary source material about the man, refuses to elaborate on Gardiner's participation in the Black Line. Nor does he mention it in the Australian Dictionary of Biography entry he wrote about Gardiner. The evidence he uses for Gardiner's involvement is the grant of poorly situated land the Government gave him as payment. This proved so useless to Gardiner he let the lease expire. Although Mary feared an attack by Aboriginals and described some of the brutality in her diary, we also know she held great sympathy for their plight, as many people in Van Diemen's Land did. That John would actively participate in efforts to suppress them probably opened yet another chasm in their relationship.

Having returned from the 'war', John began planning their departure from Erin Lodge and the location of his next shop. With George (jnr) Eagle showing some aptitude for shop-keeping, John decided the two should start a second business in nearby Campbell Town. But even though leaving Erin Lodge was still two years away, Mary struggled to come to terms with the idea. She sank into a depression. To make matters worse for her, John made another arbitrary decision without consulting her: to enrol Anna Maria in boarding school at Ellenthorpe Hall. In keeping with their family's social status, Ellenthorpe was the best school for girls in the colony. It was situated a few miles south of Ross but it may as well have been across an ocean for Mary. The little girl was only five and although Mary accepted that sending a child away at her age was normal, her diary entries show she was bereft without her daughter. Her depression worsened and, with no medical assistance on offer, her religious fervour deepened. "In spite of myself I cannot refrain from fretting after her though I am confident it has been for the best," Mary wrote. "May my Heavenly Father watch over

my child, protect her from every peril and enable her, through thy spirit, to instruct her aright when she returns to some, for Jesus Christ's sake, Amen."

Now with two shops to run, John's inventory from Isle de France quickly ran low. He recognised that as an extractive colony, Van Diemen's Land did not locally manufacture goods. Instead of diversifying this way, John decided to sail to Isle de France for more supplies. Soon after his departure in early 1832, Mary's beloved mother Anne died. Her life shortened by overwork on the farm, Anne's death deepened Mary's emotional distress.

On John's return, he sent George Jnr to Isle de France for another order of supplies. Although successful, George returned in early January 1833 with some kind of tropical disease. John sent him to Hobart for medical treatment, but it was too late. On 30 March 1833, 25-year-old George Eagle died. Mary's grief was palpable. First her mother and now George, at such a young age and with such future promise. "The Almighty has pity upon me and preserves me from the dreadful trials," Mary wrote. "For all of myself I am not able to contend with them, I am quite sick under them."

CHAPTER 5
Mary at Lovely Banks

If John offered some comfort to his wife, she did not record it in her diary. For him, George's death put a serious dent in his plans to expand his merchant business in the region. Instead of finding another partner, John decided to leave the shop-keeping business entirely. He closed the Campbell Town store at the same time as Erin Lodge and sold off the inventory. It is at this stage that John decided to move back into the animal husbandry life he initially envisioned for himself all those years ago in Dublin. The problem for him now was that other people had done all the hard work of clearing the land and there was no suitable land left to acquire. In the end, he accepted the tenancy on a large grazing farm of 5,250 acres situated on the road between Hobart and Launceston called Lovely Banks. He could use the proceeds of the sale of his inventory to purchase sheep and equipment for the tenancy. He did not discuss any of this with Mary. Even Leslie Wilmoth, born in the late 19th century writing in the late 1950s, noted that John had a 'disregard for his wife's feelings that is difficult to excuse.'

For Mary, the first hint of good news in years came when her uncle, Dr Pilkington and his family arrived to live in Hobart Town in early 1833. The happy reunion lifted Mary's spirits considerably, especially when her younger brother Solomon and their cousin Eliza Pilkington formed an attachment. The two married in October. With the youngest brother Edward, Solomon and Eliza took over the lease of the land at Prosser Bay given to their late brother George Eagle. They called it Strawberry Hill. Now a widower, George Snr decided to join his sons at Strawberry Hill and give up his land at Macquarie River, making a modest profit from the sale.

With her father and brothers now settled, Mary Gardiner finally began to regain some of her happiness in her new home at Lovely Banks. But once again, it was short-lived. Although John was finally occupied in the profession he had long desired and ran the sheep-grazing property competently, the couple were merely

tenants, not owners. This did not align with his aspirations for himself as a capitalist-farmer. In December 1834, the owner Mr Abbott decided to sell and terminate the tenancy. Now homeless, the only saving grace was that the new owner, Mr Mercer purchased all John Gardiner's sheep and implements. This meant the family were not too financially short-changed.

Fed up with his inability to acquire land, John decided that his time in Van Diemen's Land had come to an end. Dropping Mary and Anna Maria off at Strawberry Hill, he booked a passage to Sydney, with the intention of buying a property for cow and sheep-grazing in New South Wales.

CHAPTER 6
Mary at Strawberry Hill

With John away, Mary and Anna Maria enjoyed their first few months at Strawberry Hill. Then one day in October, Anna Maria became suddenly ill. The same day, Mary's brother Edward became terribly ill too. Concerned, Mary sent the farmhand Barney Sherry to summon the doctor for them both. In the meantime, one of the woman servants also fell to the same affliction. When Dr Storey finally arrived and examined them all, he found they were all suffering the symptoms of arsenic poisoning. Mary's enquiries revealed Edward had visited Barney Sherry's hut that day. Anna Maria had drunk milk brought in by Sherry. Fortunately, all three recovered and she kept her suspicions about the man to herself.

A few weeks later, having made a full recovery, Edward went out to look for a lost heifer. It should have only been a short search and when he did not return after three hours, his brother Solomon, wife Sarah and Mary went out to search for him. There was no trace of their youngest brother anywhere. Worried, they questioned Barney Sherry, who told them Edward had gone to Hobart by the Bream Creek Road. It was exceptionally uncharacteristic of Edward to do such a thing without telling anyone. Perplexed, the family waited impatiently for Edward to return. But he did not. Days passed. Enquiries made in Hobart revealed no-one had seen him at all. The long days of anxious waiting and hoping turned into weeks.

Accusing Eagle eyes turned to Barney Sherry. Dr Storey reported he strongly suspected foul play and all but accused Sherry outright. But the man maintained his innocence. Without a body, there was insufficient evidence to charge Sherry with Edward's murder. No trace of Edward was ever found.

For George Eagle, Edward's unexplained disappearance broke his heart. Having previously lost two older sons during the Revolutionary War, the combined loss of Anne, George and now Edward in the space of two years caused him to fall into a deep

depression. Mary also took the tragedy very hard. The constant of not knowing what happened to Edward combined with her failure to speak up about Barney Sherry after the poisonings tormented her. For months she was incapable of writing in her diary. When she did eventually recommence, she wrote only, “to return to the past I have not in writing. Though when busy continually brings forward to my mind that awful catastrophe which God has been pleased to permit to our family. It nearly caused my insanity, and even now, though ten months have elapsed, I feel when excited that creeping confused sensation in my head that often terrifies me.”

When the shocking news from Strawberry Hill reached John Gardiner in Sydney, he immediately booked a passage to return to Hobart. He had enjoyed his visit to New South Wales but the extended drought conditions had made the prospect of buying land there unappealing. However, he had heard about an exciting new settlement to the south that presented potential investment opportunities for him: Port Phillip.

When John returned, the whole of Van Diemen’s Land was full of excitement about the new settlement on the Yarra Yarra River. Mr J T Gellibrand was putting an expedition together to see what was happening there. When John learned of it, he took steps to be included in the reconnaissance party. Every day, men were crossing Bass Strait to seek new pasture lands and taking dozens of sheep with them. For John, Port Phillip finally offered the capitalist dream he had been waiting for.

But first, he needed to contend with his obligations to his family. Mary had once again sunk into a melancholy that was to become a permanent fixture of her personality. According to her diary, John’s decision to relocate her and Anna Maria to Port Phillip via Sydney – without consulting her of course – made little immediate impression on her. He seemed to harbour some affection for his hapless father-in-law George and invited him along too. He tasked George with making the arrangements for the family’s transportation. But first,

he needed to visit the settlement himself. It was now January 1836.

The weather was too rough for the Gellibrand expedition ship to make Port Phillip directly. The party disembarked in Western Port to trek overland. In his journal of the trek, Gellibrand complained bitterly of the heat and the difficulty in finding water. He made sporadic mention of John Gardiner's experience dealing with the Australian bush as a helpful addition to the party. The search for fresh water for the 1,200 sheep consumed much of their time but eventually they are picked up around present day Sorrento and transported to the small Port Phillip settlement.

'Settlement' was rather an optimistic word for the collection of ramshackle huts precariously constructed on the banks of the Yarra Yarra. But John now had some experience spotting land for pasture and must have seen potential around it. He quickly made his way back to Van Diemen's Land to pick up Mary, George and Anna Maria. Mary probably knew she would never see her only surviving brother Solomon and his wife Sarah again. As was now the fate of all the Eagle family, misfortune followed the couple and the farm at Strawberry Hill was not a success. To John's credit, he provided financial support when Solomon and Sarah needed it, but what became of the couple is lost to the historical record.

CHAPTER 7
Mary in Sydney

In March 1836, George Eagle and the Gardiner family left Van Diemen's Land for Sydney, never to return. Perhaps Mary felt some relief at leaving the island that had caused such relentless pain and disaster for so many years. If John felt any sense of regret that it was his ill-fated change of mind that had brought despair upon all his in-laws, Mary did not mention it. Had they gone to New South Wales as Wentworth suggested instead... well, there was no point dwelling upon that now.

John deposited his family in a cottage a few miles out of town. Sydney in 1836 was still a rough penal colony but rapidly developing its commercial interests. Mary hated it. "It is a most disagreeable town," she wrote. "In VDL things are differently ordered, there you find industry, neatness and comfort. I am unable to decide whether government or the people are most to blame but each noticeably added to the wickedness of this place. Almost every other house is one diminished by the former for the sake of ardent spirits and where you see numbers of the wretched populace entering to spend their money, health and morals."

"Oh give me the green fields, pastoral pursuits, the gardens, the dairy, fowl yards and – yes – even visiting the pig sty before this stifling town of Sydney," she wrote. Always shy of strangers, living for years in isolation in Van Diemen's Land had made her almost anti-social towards people outside her family.

John had decided to purchase cattle for transportation, reasoning that with so many sheep arriving in Port Phillip from Van Diemen's Land he could have a monopoly on the cattle market. He decided to drive the cattle overland to Port Phillip in partnership with two partners, John Hepburn and Joseph Hawdon. Setting off in December 1836, the journey took over three weeks. Accompanying them were a servant couple John

engaged in Sydney named Head. Mrs Sarah Head became the first white woman to make the overland journey between Sydney and Port Phillip.

Hepburn recounted later that their arrival at Port Phillip was greeted with some hostility on the part of the other settlers. The fifteen head of cattle already in the settlement were priceless to their owners and the sudden arrival of a further 400 completely devalued them. Gardiner's biographer, Leslie Wilmoth wrote of a story that Gardiner, to overcome this thinly veiled hostility, killed a bullock and distributed its flesh, thereby establishing more friendly relations. There is no evidence of this being true.

John spent the day after their arrival looking for a suitable place for the establishment of his station. The hilly and heavily textured nature of the country east of the Port Phillip settlement, as compared to the basaltic plains to the west, had deterred the sheep-owning settlers from taking up this area for grazing purposes. But for cattle, the locality was eminently suitable. The Wurundjeri people called the district "Boorandarah": the 'place of shade' and the creek that ran through the land Kooyong Koot, meaning 'the abode of wild fowl'. When mapped by the surveyor Hoddle, the land became Boroondara.

Gardiner's grant of land at Boroondara required the payment of an annual fee of £10. In those early days of Victoria, before the separation from New South Wales, the Governor granted land with only grazing rights because it had not yet been cleared or even fully explored, making the exact boundaries vague and ill-defined. Aware of the low-lying nature of Kooyong Koot, Gardiner sent his men the task of building a homestead at the top of the hill near the Yarra/Kooyong Koot intersection, around where Fordholm Road, Hawthorn is today.

Having chosen the site of his cattle run, it was time to drive the weary cows to their new home. The men chose a point just below Dights Falls, forcing the poor animals to scramble down the steep banks and across the fast-flowing stream. Two were

lost in the chaos but eventually, the rest made it to Kooyong Koot and quickly began feasting on the murnong roots buried in the earth.

With the cows happily destroying the native habitat and the homestead construction underway, John left Mr and Mrs Head in charge and quickly sailed back to Sydney, via Launceston. He had originally planned for his family to accompany the cattle overland to Port Phillip by following the Murrumbidgee River. Supplies had even been sent ahead. But John called the trip abruptly off and the party never left. Mary wrote only that "circumstances of an unforeseen nature" cancelled the trip. This could have been anything from excessive heat (it was February after all), fire threats, or the rumours of attacks on settlers by Aboriginals outside of the town. Whatever the reason, John decided they would travel to Port Phillip by sea.

CHAPTER 8
Mary in Port Phillip

The years had not faded Mary's hatred of sea travel. To torment her further, their ship Regia departed Sydney on 17 March 1837 in torrential rain and the full force of a squally southerly gale. Everyone suffered from seasickness, Mary and Anna Maria included. The weather was so bad the ship stayed for nearly two weeks in Twofold Bay waiting for the wind to abate. "This is tedious," Mary recorded with her usual frankness. "The wafting of the wind, the raging of the waves and the pitching of a vessel have no charms for me. People may talk of the beauty of a ship sailing gallantly over unfathomable depths, her sails filled with the wind or in the words of the poet as well I remember them 'she walks the waters like a thing of life' but let us admire her with terra firma under my feet."

Finally, Regia set sail again and they made their way around to the entrance of the heads of Port Phillip Bay. "They are very unpretentious and unassuming that can possibly be imagined to such a spacious harbour," Mary wrote. "The land being quite low, the entrance very narrow and not perceptible until you are close upon it so much so that the captain was a long time doubtful whether it could be the place or not."

The shallowness of the Bay made it a ponderous voyage up to the settlement. "The fault lay in that the sea no longer is a deep clear and open but black and muddy," Mary wrote. "The captain with looks of anger and I must write it, contempt, a shake of the head, a shrug of the shoulders conveying his sentiments to each call. For not a word was spoken that they lose hearing that dull monotonous voice telling the depth of the water.

"How much have you now sir," called the captain. "Two fathoms, sir," replied the man. But of what use was this interrogation? Then we struck bump succeeded bump and then all found the use of the organ of speech and expressed their opinions.

"I knew we would be upon the main Bank," said one.

"Why does he not take in sail?" cried another.

"We are getting deeper in the mud," ejaculated a third.

As for myself," Mary concluded, "I know not what I said but well do I remember my feelings."

Finally, on the night of 3 April 1837 the Regia arrived at Gellibrand Point. "How delightfully sounding the chain cable as it came out! Sincerely do I hope that never again may the words of the depth fall upon my ears but that we may find next peace and quietness in the new settlement. I am weary of moving about. We make the seventh vessel that's lying off Gellibrand Point."

It was over two months before Mary wrote in her diary of her impressions of the Yarra River. Although happy to be on dry land, she was not immediately impressed by yet another new home. "From the account I received from some of the other passengers respecting its beauty I was led, I suppose, to expect too much and was consequently disappointed. There is a sameness in the river to me most uninteresting, though not without a beauty of a singular nature to a European eye. Similar to how many of our nautical captains have so energetically described the West Indies.

Luxurious foliage grow[s] at each side into the water forming, in many parts, most grotesque arches overhead and causing a dread that the roots might be underground and that one of these stately trees might give way and sink you to the bottom.

Between the trees abound reeds of enormous size, some upward of seven feet high. This causes the land to be quite impeachable to our eager searching eyes. Aside from in one or two parts, where the recent Settler has cut them down to thatch his cottage with. But oh, what a different appearance will it present in the course of seven or eight years when highly cultivated grain, handsome gardens and elegant villas will adorn each side. I hope sincerely, however, that the future occupied in my Mind's Eye

of all these luxuries will have sufficient taste to retain many clusters of those splendid mimosas which are now perfuming the air with the most delightful fragrance.”

CHAPTER 9
Mary in Boroondara



Sketch of the Gardiner residence by Anna Maria Gardiner

After a week making their acquaintance with the residents of the squalid Port Phillip settlement, on 12 April 1837, John, Mary, Anna Maria and George sailed up the river to where the Yarra met Kooyong Koot and the beginning of John's large allocation of land. According to a sketch done by Anna Maria a few years later, their new home was a small, unpretentious weatherboard structure of four rooms with a thatched roof. After unpacking their belongings, the family soon planted trees and turned the flat ground on the banks of the river in the foreground of the picture into a vegetable garden. John also made it his custom to assemble his household for morning prayers.

In June 1837, the surveyor Robert Hoddle held the first sale of 100 plots of Crown land. John, Mary and George rode into the settlement for the auction. John purchased a half-acre plot on the southeast corner of Elizabeth Street and Little Collins Street. Elizabeth Street at this time was a small stream and Hoddle had marked the plots by a series of pegs in the bush. Mary wrote, "the sum realised by Mr Hoddle amounted to nearly 8,000 pounds, an enormous amount to be collected in

this newly civilised place." She was not impressed by so much money being locked away in government coffers in Sydney when the Melbourne settlement desperately needed bridges and roads. The only establishment it did not lack was public houses. A teetotaller her entire life, she strongly abhorred these too and the waste they laid on the population. It remained one of the only things she and John still had in common.

Back in Boroondara, Mr Head shifted his duties to oversee Gardiner's run at Boroondara, while his wife worked as domestic help in the cottage. A visitor from Sydney, Thomas Walker noted the Gardiner's house in Boroondara as comfortable and well finished, apparently in great contrast to what he had seen elsewhere. For John, it offered a desirous place for local businessmen to visit but Mary still despised discussion of commercial affairs in her home. Three business acquaintances of her husband had inflicted themselves on her, remaining "until nearly nine o'clock at night. I have been wearied by their conversation, if conversation it could be called, which consisted only of the respective value of sheep and cattle, the price of wool, the best runs, and the price of stock." Given her irritation that Hoddle had sent the huge sum raised from the land sale to Sydney, it seems Mary deeply disliked the extractive nature of the colonial business her husband engaged in. Visitors seemed to only want to talk about how much money they could all make and keep for themselves rather than investing in churches or infrastructure for the benefit of all.

This conflict could only be compounded when, within a few months of their arrival, John Gardiner realised that the rapid expansion of the settlement would soon render his grazing rights over Boroondara very insecure. It was far too close to the township not to fall within the scope of governmental schemes of land alienation. Mary does not document what she thought of this development. Her established settler mentality meant she may well have figured out the impracticality of a cattle run so close to Port Phillip long before John did.

Yet John remained determined to adhere to his wealth

accumulation ambitions at the cost of his marriage. He sought another area for a cattle run to the west of Melbourne, around the Moorabool River. He decided to apply for a grazing licence over 15,000 acres near present-day Yarra Glen. Assisting him in this decision was the arrival of his elder brother David Fletcher, his wife Jane and his young cousin William Fletcher in Melbourne. If John's life had not turned out the way he thought it would, at least the move had meant he could keep his head above water financially. His brother David's decision to stay in Dublin had proven disastrous and the family became dependent on John for their employment and survival. John set David, Jane and William up in the new station at Yarra Glen, transferring more of his cattle up there. William, who was a youth at the time, eventually became a partner and inherited the property on John's death.

Although escaping his wife's disdain and moving to Yarra Glen may have been tempting for him, he remained at the cottage in Boroondara. He employed capable staff who created his dairy produce and competently ran his large vegetable garden well enough to allow him and his family to live off the proceeds. It was a quiet and probably monotonous existence for Mary and Anna Maria but preferable to the rabble and squalor of the Port Phillip settlement.

In November 1837, the quaker missionaries James Backhouse and George Walker came to visit the Gardiners. For once, men visited that Mary was more than happy to receive in her home as the couple had known Backhouse in Van Diemen's Land. Backhouse recorded in his own diary that John Gardiner spoke a little of his journey overland from New South Wales with the cattle a year earlier.

Today, the primary account of the journey is written by A S Kenyon and features the recollections of John Hepburn. It glosses over some of the more controversial aspects recorded by Backhouse. According to Backhouse's version, the Aboriginal boy Hepburn described as helping to guide the party was

instead a hostage taken to prevent others attacking. He did not leave because he grew tired of his role, as Hepburn wrote, but instead escaped when his guard fell asleep. Backhouse's alternate version of these aspects of the legendary Overland story are all that counter the dominant narrative of the heroism of Gardiner, Hepburn and Hawdon (and the unacknowledged stoicism of Mr and Mrs Head) for accomplishing this feat.

The settlers of Melbourne in 1837-8 lived rough lives, prone to excessive alcohol consumption. As Quakers, Backhouse and Walker decided to start a temperance society. They began gathering around them a circle of religiously-minded men who were anxious to raise the rock bottom moral standards of the town. The group elected John Gardiner as president, George Langborne of the mission station as secretary, and George Eagle as treasurer. This was the first time since arriving in the Australian colonies that John Gardiner had played any role in public life outside of attending church.

Meanwhile, Mary, dragged by her husband from place to place for years, struggled to adjust. Melbourne was all business. Mary longed for culture, religion and fresh books to stimulate her intellect. None of these had arrived in Melbourne yet. Perhaps if John had waited a few years for these institutions to arrive, or moved to Port Phillip alone, Mary may have had less time to dwell on the sadness of her past. Still tormented over the mystery of Edward's disappearance, her thoughts often returned to the last time she was truly happy, at Erin Lodge on the Macquarie River. "For this place, I neither like nor dislike it," she wrote of Boroondara. "When I remember the pretty dwelling on the Macquarie River where I commenced writing these pages and the happiness I enjoyed there in the society of some who are now saints in heaven, of one who's fate is still enveloped in awful purgatory, I wish that things were as that time," she concluded sadly.

CHAPTER 10
Mary and the Wurundjeri

To avoid the systemic violence he had witnessed in Van Diemen's Land when the settlers first came to the island, John Batman had attempted to make a treaty with the Aboriginal people of the Kulin Nation. The Wurundjeri and Bunurong people knew full well the terrible impact of British settlers on other Aboriginal people further north. They understood they could do little to stop them coming and realised that negotiating mutually agreeable ways to share the land (as the Noongar had in Western Australia, for example) could potentially allow for beneficial agreements between everyone. Unfortunately, Governor Phillip refused to see it this way or accept Batman's treaty.

The Wurundjeri people lived in Boroondara for tens of thousands of years before John Gardiner arrived. Within weeks, his huge herd of cows upset the delicate environmental balance of Kooyong Koot and, by extension, the Wurundjeri's food supply. The consumption of native grasses by sheep and cows caused the Wurundjeri's main source of protein, wallabies and kangaroos, to move away. The use of Kooyong Koot as a drain by Gardiner and those that also established themselves in the area, caused contamination, disease and fish death. It is not surprising then that the Wurundjeri began to retaliate.

The first disturbance of the Wurundjeri to the Gardiners' property came in April 1838. By this time, the settlers had all but exterminated the Wurundjeris' food sources or driven them far back from their traditional hunting grounds. One of Gardiner's men reported clothes and other items stolen from his hut near the homestead. When visiting the township a few days later, another of Gardiner's men reported an Aboriginal man wearing the stolen goods. Based on this piece of information, Mary Gardiner wrote to Captain Lonsdale reporting the theft. According to her diary, she never received a reply. However, she later recorded that Henry Batman, a constable and brother

of John Batman, had chased the Aboriginal man and recovered the stolen property.

She may well have put the incident out of her mind until the events of Sunday evening, 22 April 1838 became seared into her memory. “Yesterday when John was reading a sermon after service,” she wrote, “we were all much alarmed by frightful cries of ‘murder’”.

One of the stockkeepers had caught several armed Aboriginal men stealing potatoes in the Gardiner’s paddock. The two parties exchanged gunfire. When one of the Aboriginal men’s guns misfired, he threw it down and jumped into the river. “Our man Harry snatched it up, fired and shot him in the shoulder in the water. Two of the men crossed over to the other side and captured one [of the Aboriginal men]. When bringing him over in the boat, he very nearly succeeded in drowning both of them had not a third swam off to their assistance with a rope.”

The incident sent a shockwave through the rapidly burgeoning settlement. Eight days later, Mary wrote again, “the black taken by our men and another arrested in Melbourne were committed for trial and a warrant issued for a third. However, Mr Langbourne the missionary, worried about escape said he would not have that man taken on any account whatsoever. The following night the two in custody succeeded in setting fire to the jail which communicated with the commissariat stores and, in the confusion, escaped. One was retained.”

To George Langbourne, head of the Aboriginal mission, Lonsdale’s enforcement officers used unacceptable levels of force to arrest the Aboriginal they assumed was involved in the attack on the Gardiners’ garden. He lodged a bitter complaint with Captain Lonsdale about their behaviour. Langbourne was so angry that over the next few months, he refused to send reports on his mission to Lonsdale, eventually earning himself a severe reprimand from the governor in Sydney.

The Gardiners knew it would only take a well-placed spark

to quickly devour their small wooden cottage. Combined with their experiences in Van Diemen's Land, this probably inflated their perception of how much of a threat they faced from the Wurundjeri. A week after the potato incident, Mary wrote of being disturbed by the barking of the dogs. "We got up, dressed ourselves expecting they would set fire to the thatch roof of our cottage. We dare not light a candle... [We waited] in painful suspense for three hours." But nothing further happened. "We retired to bed regretting that they had not made an attack when we were so ready for receiving them." In the morning, they found a few footprints around the huts but nothing further had been stolen.

After this incident, John decided Mary and Anna Maria would be safer in the Port Phillip town with all the drunken white men rather than in Boroondara with Aboriginal people who stole a few potatoes to feed themselves. Although she did not much like the rapidly growing settlement, living there meant Mary could attend church services in the weatherboard building the Church of England used. This always made her happier.

There was a school in town but whether Anna Maria attended is a mystery. We can only assume that she learned at home with her parents for Boroondara was too far away for her to attend on a regular basis. Anna Maria had some talent for art, as evidenced by the sketch she made of their cottage at around 13 years of age, but of the rest of her education, nothing else is known. According to Wilmoth, Mary wrote proudly of the complementary remarks she received about her daughter's beauty.

While living in town, John and Mary befriended the newly arrived Reverend Mr William Waterfield. He liked the family and provided a few snippets of observational information about them in his diary. He appreciated their commitment to religion and their hospitality. It is through their connection to Waterfield that John Gardiner became involved in collecting subscriptions to build a Presbyterian church for the town.

CHAPTER 11
Mary in Boroondara again

In mid-July 1838, the Gardiners moved back to Boroondara. "I fear I have improved by the opportunities of being able to attend public worship," Mary wrote, "[but] I long for the quiet privacy of a country solace." But once again, John would make decisions without consulting her. He had already begun to abandon the notion of being a cattle farmer and moved his cattle to his Yarra Glen run operated by his brother, David.

Although John was well-regarded for his piousness among the other settlers, aside from financially contributing to the establishment of a church, he did not invest in public services or infrastructure to improve Melbourne. As it had in Van Diemen's Land, his primary motivation in life was to improve his personal finances. Since he only retained grazing rights in Boroondara and the rapid expansion of Melbourne would soon encroach on it, he began to speculate on the increasing monetary value of the land that was being sold by government auction in the Melbourne township. On 12 August 1838, Gardiner bought two plots of land; 1,192 acres in modern day Thomas Town, and 700 acres in modern day Preston. Records show that he made a considerable profit when he sold them the following year.

Sensing yet another unwelcome change afoot, a depression fell over Mary. It was not helped by Melbourne's infamously erratic weather. In November 1838, she wrote in her diary, "we have had an awful thunderstorm this afternoon the Fury of which has not yet obeyed. I saw a sheet of lightning in resemblance to a ball gradually lengthening until it disappeared on the ground opposite the parlour window." By Christmas, a steady hot dry wind had set in to make life unbearable. Mr Waterfield, who was on a visit to the family, left to escape the discomfort. Mary wrote of her bewilderment at the sudden shifts in the weather, "Tuesday Christmas Day 1838. The

heat is dreadful. Every pour in the body is I believe opened. The blobs of water stand thick upon my hands and face and I can scarcely hold my pen. We have closed all the doors and windows and still it gets in. This must be very trying to the custodians as it was only a few days ago we were shivering over the fire."

As many a Melburnian would be familiar with, the tricks the weather played did nothing to help Mary's deteriorating mental health. It caused her to ruminate constantly on the disappearance of her brother Edward and the fate of his soul. She and Anna Maria travelled into town for a week in January for a change of scene but it had little cheering effect. Eventually in March 1839, Mary felt well enough to write in her diary again. "I ought to be patient for an improvement in my health. Though not wholly rested I am able now once or twice a week to get up for breakfast yet with great difficulty of breathing and exert myself about the house."

By this time, the rapidly growing population of Melbourne created such a demand for land near the settlement that prices escalated rapidly. For once, John's decision to speculate on land paid off for him significantly. But the facilities for handling finance and for maintaining the necessary supply of money were very haphazard. All credit facilities were very inconveniently in banks either in Sydney or Hobart. Sometimes bills were discounted in Melbourne by those who had ready money at rates as high as 20 per cent. On 21 August 1838, the Bank of South Australia opened the first bank in Melbourne from a two-room brick cottage on the west end of Collins Street. This marked the beginning of the banking industry in Melbourne. Before long, the Union Bank of Australia, a London company, opened too. Its organisers invited John Gardiner to be a director.

With this appointment, John began to distance himself from cattle-grazing in Boroondara and spend more of his time away in town. From her diary entries, Mary did not seem to mind

his absence.

By 1839, a destructive land sale boom took hold and frenzied investors feared missing out. Reported the Port Phillip Gazette, “every successive sale of ground in Melbourne establishes more fully the feasibility of holding government auctions in the port. One allotment at the corner of two principal streets purchased by Mr Ellison for the sum of 27 pounds was sold on Thursday last by Mr Williams for 530 pounds.”

The settlers found the new banks immensely frustrating because they evaluated the true value of land. This did not suit the enthusiasm they had for the property market. In June, at the height of the boom, several settlers met to form their own bank they called the Port Phillip Bank. The nominal capital was a modest £60,000 divided into 1,500 shares of 40 pounds each. Although a director of a rival bank and in no way connected with setting up the Port Phillip Bank, John Gardiner did become a shareholder in it.

The new bank’s more lenient lending practices and extravagant valuations meant inflation quickly began to take hold. Port Phillip Bank soon found itself in a perilous state. To save their investment, the directors asked John Gardiner to help them. He accepted and resigned from the Union Bank. Wilmoth described him charitably as ‘a doctor called in to save the life of a very sick patient.’ He does however concede that the ‘wild orgy of speculation sweeping through the town should have warned Gardiner of the impossibility of the task.’

CHAPTER 12
Mary in Melbourne

Mary was not impressed when she heard the news. John would now need to spend all his time in town and liquidate his assets to support them there. It meant selling up the assets on the Boroondara property and moving into town. Although she had not formed an attachment to Boroondara like she had at Erin Lodge, she still preferred a country life. However, according to Wilmoth's review of her diary entries, it does seem that for once, the couple discussed the matter. Mary suggested abandoning the investment, but John refused. In the end, as per usual, John's wishes prevailed. The Gardiners stayed on in the Boroondara house until 17 January 1840, when they moved to an unknown location in town. This ended all connection between Gardiner, Kooyong Koot and Boroondara. The Gardiners had lived in the area for barely three years.

Later in the year, Gardiner bought land on the north side of Bourke Street near its junction with Spring Street and built a house for his family. Mary wrote of her unhappiness in her new life in the town but not of the state of her relationship with John. Wilmoth reports she very rarely mentioned him at all from that time on. Even Anna Maria, a frequent topic of discussion in her younger years, began to fade from her diary. Instead, Mary wrote endless streams of religious prose, tormented herself over Edward's disappearance, and sunk into a depth of misery she could not seem to escape. Even John's departure for London in March 1841, orchestrated as an attempt to save Port Phillip Bank and deliver a petition for Melbourne's administrative separation from Sydney, did not rate a mention. Neither did the 18 months he was away or the fact he may never return. To his credit, he made financially sustainable arrangements for her and Anna Maria's care before he left.

John's visit to England was not a success. He found his mother and sisters in various states of poverty and in desperate need

of financial assistance that he duly provided. A change of government meant any banking contacts he cultivated through his time in Hobart Town and Melbourne had disappeared and he could not raise capital for the Bank. At a government level, the upheaval meant delivery of the petition for separation from Sydney fell on largely deaf ears. The only positive was a reunion with his cousin, Sarah Fletcher and his enjoyment of her flirtations and charms.

Back in Melbourne, Mary found she could leave the house just fine with John not around. She threw herself into the St James Dorcas Society, a women's charitable group focused on helping the poor, orphans, and managing community welfare. She was the first treasurer. The group went on to become a stalwart of Melbourne throughout the 19th century.

By 1842, the disastrous end of Melbourne's property boom created an economic depression. Speculator and non-speculator, squatter and merchant, everyone suffered. Robert Russell wrote in his diary on 20 March 1843, "Melbourne is no longer Melbourne, no money, no credit, no trade, nothing but failures, the sheriff's man is the only active man in the community. Even cargoes can scarcely succeed in getting paid. Land is worthless and cattle and sheep little better. The latter do not fetch more than half a crown per head."

Although she remained in the Bourke Street house he paid for, Mary made no mention of John's return in her diary. Their relationship now irrevocably disintegrated, John quit the Port Phillip Bank and moved to his property in Yarra Glen, still run by his brother. Although disinterested in running a cattle station, he speculated on some property investment but did not return to full employment. He lived at Yarra Glen quietly for several years. He rarely if ever saw Mary, and it is not known how often he saw Anna Maria.

The Gold Rush prompted John Gardiner to begin planning to leave Australia permanently. It caused property values to finally trend upwards and he could liquidate his holdings

for some profit. Having no grounds for divorce, he made arrangements for an annuity of £200 for Mary to live on until her death. Anna Maria received an annual sum of £100. On 19 August 1853, four months before Anna Maria's wedding to John Peerman, John Gardiner departed Australia alone, never to return.

Mary stayed at the house in Bourke Street. She stopped writing regularly in her diary, noting only the death of her father in August 1848. When she did write, she was consumed by what Wilmoth called 'religious mania' and wrote long passages of religious prose. At some stage, she moved to Fitzroy where she died on 13 March 1863 at the age of 61, of 'exhaustion' and 'asthma' according to her death certificate. Anna Maria and her husband John buried her in the old Melbourne cemetery in Parkville.

On the receipt of the news of Mary's death, John promptly married his cousin, Sarah Fletcher. The couple lived quietly in Leamington Spa until his death on 16 November 1878, aged 80.

CHAPTER 13
Mary the Anti-capitalist

At the conclusion of Gardiners of Gardiners Creek, Wilmoth struggled to reconcile his feelings about the 'sad and strange' woman that Mary Gardiner became. He is at times sympathetic to her unsuitability for the Australian colonies and her husband's dismissive attitude to her feelings. Yet he is also deeply critical of her 'difficult nature' and what he viewed as a lack of support for John's ambitions. He posits that her strong attachment to the Eagles and inability to recover from the mysterious disappearance of her brother Edward meant she 'refused to be a Gardiner'.

But what was a 'Gardiner'? To Wilmoth, Mary married a man with a strong religious faith, principles and loyalty. But he also described Gardiner showing mediocre decision-making and business skills, and a habit of uprooting his family for whimsical flights of fancy over money-making schemes. Wilmoth's biographies show John Gardiner constructed his entire identity around becoming a successful capitalist. Mary refusing to be a 'Gardiner' was because she rejected these ideological principles.

In John Gardiner's time in Australia, words like 'settler', 'pioneer', and 'colonist' were all subtly differentiated by class, respectability and wealth, underpinned by the emerging ideology of capitalism. Capitalists of this era were not just entrepreneurs, they were political agents. By combining their ideology with religious principles, they could morally reconcile with themselves the impact their insatiable acquisition of land had on Australia's indigenous people. Unfortunately, this is not an area of historical study explored much so we cannot know for sure.

Wilmoth's biographies show that John Gardiner's primary motivator for being in Van Diemen's Land, then Port Phillip, was wealth accumulation. He may even have surreptitiously or unconsciously brought the Eagle family out as labour for his personal wealth-building goals. Thinking of Gardiner as a capitalist

instead of a settler helps explain the paradox of how he could be a man of pious religious faith yet be so committed to his ideological agenda he would actively participate in an initiative as brutal as the Black Line.

Of course, he was certainly not alone in pursuing these principles. In fact, it seems other men trusted and regarded him highly because of them. But these men were not married to Mary. Wilmoth seems to forget that married women of that era, especially in a convict settlement like Van Diemen's Land, lived very domestic lives with very few alternate options available to them. Even if they were inclined to pursuing commerce or publican life, they could usually only do so through the necessity created by widowhood.

Mary's diary entries showed a woman frustrated by the shallowness of such enterprise and horrified by the treatment inflicted on indigenous people because of it. To Mary, being a settler was an opportunity to build and develop something lasting. As one example, her delighted observations about the improvements to the township of Ross after six years revealed her preference for contributing to the colony and improving it, rather than merely extracting from it as John did. Even her initially disappointed reaction to the Yarra River mentions the potential of the place in the years to come.

Mary could do nothing but watch as her family sacrificed themselves to achieve the capitalist dream that John constructed for them. No doubt, the resulting series of personal tragedies inflicted on her and the impact on her mental health affected her capacity to function as a wife and mother to a man like John. But Mary refused to reconcile her religious principles to capitalism the way that John did so easily. Perhaps this fundamental ideological difference between the couple is what proved the downfall of their relationship.

CHAPTER 14
The Gardiner Legacy

Despite only living in Boroondara for three years, the Gardiner name remains prominent in the area. Most significant is its application to Kooyong Koot Creek. Where other Melbourne creeks retained their indigenous names (see Merri Creek, Darebin Creek, Dandenong Creek, Moonee Ponds Creek, and Mordialloc Creek, among others) Kooyong Koot assumed the Gardiner name colloquially soon after his departure. Although private maps drawn by real estate developers used “Gardiners Creek” in their flyers for new building estates in Glen Iris, it was not formally used by the Government until the Melbourne Metropolitan of Works gave the creek the name “Gardiners Creek” on a map from 1907. After this, Kooyong Koot Creek still sporadically emerged in Government records until the 1950s, when it began to disappear entirely.

Today, the Victorian State Government records name it as “Gardiners Creek” with “Kooyong Koot” listed as its historical name. In its effort to recognise that using traditional names for places in Victoria is an important step in realising self-determination for Victorian Traditional Owners, both names are now used on official correspondence. The local councils also refer to it by both names.

Another major contributor to the longevity of the Gardiner name was “Gardiners Creek Road” (the precursor to Toorak Road), a road through South Yarra that headed towards Boroondara. By 1856, the Gardiner Road District emerged and it spanned the area around present-day Burke Road in Malvern. This turned into the Shire of Gardiner in 1871 but it was subsumed into the Shire of Malvern seven years later.

Throughout the 1800s, the Gardiner name adorned a few other streets in the area but it was the 1890 decision to name a railway station on the Glen Iris Railway Line “Gardiner” that solidified the name permanently in the Glen Iris area. The station was

geographically quite far from Gardiner's homestead in the Hawthorn area. The Railway Board gave the name more in recognition of the nearby "Gardiner's Creek" than the man himself. Another station further up the line had already been named Kooyong in recognition of the Wurundjeri name for the creek.

A settlement quickly sprung up around Gardiner station and it also became known as Gardiner. In 1915, Gardiner State School opened on Nash and Kent Streets becoming Gardiner Central School a year later. Highly regarded for many years as a feeder school to the prestigious Melbourne Boys School and MacRobertson Girls, the school closed in 1992.

In 2026, over 20 places carry the Gardiner name associated with John and Mary Gardiner:

1. Gardiners Creek (Kooyong Koot)

2. Gardiners Creek Trail (a walking/cycling path following the approximate course of the present day creek)

3. Gardiner Railway Station (on the Glen Waverley line at Glen Iris)

4. Gardiner Ward (a Boroondara Council jurisdiction covering most of western Glen Iris)

5. Gardiner Hotel (Glenferrie Road, Malvern)

6. Gardiner Road, Hawthorn

7. Gardiner Street, Hawthorn

8. Gardiner Parade, Glen Iris

9. Gardiner Primary Reserve Playground (Kent Street, Glen Iris)

10. Gardiner Park Playground (St Edmonds Grove, Glen Iris)

11. Gardiners Reserve (Burwood)

12. Gardiners Creek Reserve (Box Hill South)

13. John Gardiner Reserve (Hawthorn)

14. Gardiner Preschool (10 St Andrews Lane, Glen Iris)

15. St Andrews Gardiner Uniting Church (1560 Malvern Road, Glen Iris)

16. Gardiner Lodge (Retirement village at 205 Burke Road, Glen Iris)

17. Gardiner Tennis Club (2/14 Kyarra Road, Glen Iris)

18. Gardiner Dental (43 High Street, Glen Iris)

19. Friends of Gardiners Creek Valley (volunteer landscape maintenance group)

20. The Glen Iris Scouts had a Rover group named for John Gardiner.

21. John Gardiner Ski Club and Lodge (Mt Baw Baw)

Former names:

1) John Gardiner High School (now Auburn High School)

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