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The Ferrar Diaries: William Moore Ferrar and his Books

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Ross indeed possesses very few resources, intellectual or social, and on the whole, must be considered as awkward a place as could possibly be selected for a young gentleman of polite tastes and social accomplishments!

Thomas Meagher
Van Diemen's Land, 1849¹

Recent studies have revealed that books, reading and libraries were all-important to the European settlement of Tasmania, as a means of providing learning, entertainment, connection with the homeland, and a means of recreating society as they had known it; few if any settlers, however, documented their reading as explicitly as William Moore Ferrar, who settled in the Tasmanian midlands in 1842.² Recently, his descendants made available his diaries and farm journals, commencing in 1840 with his youth and departure from Ireland, through to 1897. These, though incomplete in span, record his life and farming practices in Tasmania, books he owned or read, his reactions, and original poetry and prose writing.

William Moore Ferrar was born in Dublin in 1823, the son of a medical practitioner. He attended Dr. Geoghan's School, after which he commenced employment as a bank clerk. At the age of nineteen he immigrated, first to Sydney and then to Tasmania, having accepted the invitation of his Dickson cousins to take up residence and assist with farm duties at their pastoral estate, Plassy, on the outskirts of Ross, in the northern midlands. After only a few months, in 1843 he was appointed assistant superintendent of the Salt Water River Probation Station on Tasman's Peninsula. He returned to Plassy in 1847, marrying the eldest daughter, Eliza Dickson, and subsequently taking ownership of Plassy, where he and Eliza lived for the remainder of their lives.³

¹ Quoted in Patsy Adam-Smith, *Heart of Exile* (Melbourne: Nelson, 1986), 205. Thomas Meagher, Irish political activist, convicted and transported in 1849, was granted a ticket-of-leave soon after his arrival and permitted to live on parole in the Campbell Town/Ross district.

² Keith Adkins, *Reading in Colonial Tasmania: The Early Years of the Evandale Subscription Library* (Melbourne: The Ancora Press, Monash University, 2010); Van Diemen's Land was settled by the British as a penal colony in 1803, it was officially renamed Tasmania in 1855.

³ Bassett Dickson, a cotton-mill proprietor, of Limerick, immigrated to Tasmania with his wife Elizabeth and five children, arriving 16 February 1830 with capital of £1200 and £200 in furniture; they were granted 2000 acres in the Ross district, which they named Plassy. The family lived for the first seven years in the three room hut they built on the property. The present homestead was completed by 1837. William's reasons for leaving Ireland were likely a failed love affair, alluded to in his diaries, and knowing of his cousins' success in the colonies. At the time of William's arrival in 1842 the two Dickson sons, Bassett junior and Samuel, had left home, pursuing farming ventures

Four of Ferrar's diaries and farm journals have survived; gaps in time suggest that others have been lost. The first spans the years 1840–53, the second 1859–63, the third 1866–73, and the fourth the 1890s. While there is little uniformity in the bindings or the arrangement of Ferrar's diaries, they are consistent in recording personal, family and farming matters. Although life at Plassy revolved around farm duties and the companionship of friends and neighbours, literature was a serious and regular endeavour for Ferrar, with Sundays mostly reserved for Christian worship, recreation and reading. It is not clear always if the books he lists were owned, borrowed or always read. This study examines the books he owned, borrowed or read, but also reveals fresh evidence surrounding his published works.⁴

The diaries commence in Dublin on 20 May 1840; they contain copies of letters, record thoughts and emotions, notable events, and poetry he composed and verses of others that he transcribed. By all appearances he was an affectionate young man, studious and conscientious,⁵ restless, sometime employed in clerical duties, regularly frustrated and melancholic, yet displaying a passion for the literary pursuits that were to define his later life. He records his sea journey to the Australian colonies only briefly: "On the tenth of October 1841 I set sail from Liverpool in the bark Hope. Captain Duncan McLachlan, bound for Sydney, and on the tenth of October 1842 I entered my cousin Bassett Dickson's house in Van Diemen's Land."

Books and Reading

William Moore Ferrar is best known to students of Australian literature as the author of *Artabanzanus: The Demon of the Great Lake*, published by Elliot Stock of London in 1896.⁶ Less well known is his serialised fiction, and his poetry, much of which remains unpublished. Peter Pierce, whose description of Ferrar is the

elsewhere in the Tasmanian midlands. Elizabeth Dickson died at Plassy aged fifty-three on 27 November 1843. William Moore Ferrar and Eliza Dickson were married at Plassy 24 February 1847. Details of the transfer of ownership of Plassy are unclear but Bassett Dickson senior continued for some years to live at Plassy. For William and Eliza, see *The Cyclopaedia of Tasmania* (Hobart: Maitland and Krone, 1900), 1:445. For the Dickson and Ferrar families see Russell Atkinson and Estelle Campbell, "Eliza and the Blacks: The Story of Two Tasmanian Pioneer Families," unpublished typescript, undated, in the possession of the family.

⁴I am indebted to Dianne Green, a direct descendant of William Moore Ferrar, for making his diaries available; to Professor Michael Bennett, School of History and Classics, University of Tasmania for suggesting the study, reading the draft and making helpful suggestions; and to Kaye Dimmack, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston for assisting me while transcribing and for reading the original draft.

⁵In December 1840 he refers to himself working as a clerk and to scientific lectures he is attending. The diary also contains transcribed chemical tables.

⁶William M. Ferrar, *Artabanzanus: The Demon of the Great Lake. An Allegorical Romance of Tasmania* (London: Elliot Stock, 1896).



William and Eliza Ferrar

(By kind permission of Dianne Green)

most penetrating, in his 1993 Eldershaw Memorial Lecture locates Ferrar among exponents of the Tasmanian Highlands, in literature and art.⁷ Pierce describes Ferrar's first published novel, "The Maxwells of Bremgarten," serialised in the *Launceston Examiner* during 1867–68 and the first full length Tasmanian novel to appear in a local newspaper, as

deeply indebted to the romantic fiction of Sir Walter Scott, whose tales of border outlawry, and of honour precariously maintained, are transported to Van Diemen's Land at the time of Governor Arthur, when murderous blacks and the rampaging bushrangers Brady and Howe threaten the peace.⁸

Pierce suggests, doubtless referring to *Artabanzanus: The Demon of the Great Lake*, that the "Highland region of the colony would soon afford Ferrar still riper occasion for romance."⁹

Ferrar's diaries confirm that Scott was his most read author and that fiction accounted for 42 percent of his reading, beginning with *Rob Roy* in 1851 and ending with *Woodstock* in 1863.¹⁰ In 1859 he read series two of *Tales of a Grandfather*, about which he said: "I have not derived much pleasure from this volume. The historical events are jumbled together in a particularly dry and uninteresting style. Scott's manner of writing history is far from being attractive."¹¹ Ferrar's copy, dealing with the history of France, was published in 1831; an earlier series, a history of Scotland from the earliest period to the close of the Rebellion of 1745–46, was published in 1827. The introduction to a later edition suggests that the "Tales" were written first for the author's grandson but he [Scott] claimed to "make, if possible, a book that a child shall understand, yet a man will feel some temptation to peruse should he chance to take it up."¹² While Scott's particular style of writing may have contributed towards Ferrar's comments, clearly he was not deterred from Scott's novels: in 1859 he read *Old Mortality*, in 1860 *Waverley*, and in 1861 *The Fortunes of Nigel*, each a second time,¹³ without further comment.

It is not surprising that Ferrar should be receptive to Scott. At the time of the author's death, in 1832, he had endeared himself to a generation of readers. In Britain, his *Waverley Novels*, beginning with *Waverley*, published in 1814, were a publishing phenomenon, giving much distinction to fiction. Scott was

⁷ Peter Pierce, "Literature and the Art of the Tasmanian Highlands," *Papers and Proceedings, Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, 40, no. 3 (1993): 85–96.

⁸ Pierce, "Literature and the Art of the Tasmanian Highlands," 92–93.

⁹ Pierce, "Literature and the Art of the Tasmanian Highlands," 92–93.

¹⁰ Ferrar's books total 148, listed in the Appendix.

¹¹ Diary 2, 23 March 1859.

¹² Quoted in F. W. Farrar's Introduction to Sir Walter Scott, *The Tales of a Grandfather* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1898), v.

¹³ Ferrar regularly read books and articles a second time. In 1859 he stated "I do find that to convey anything like a permanent impression books and articles need to be read twice."

the most popular author in the Australian colonies in the 1850s.¹⁴ In Tasmania, a study of the loan records for the Evandale Subscription Library, located in a neighbouring district to where Ferrar was then living, reveals that in the period 1847–61, Scott was the most represented author and the *Waverley Novels* the most borrowed titles.¹⁵

The diaries suggest that Ferrar did not readily adjust to farming life at Plassy; his early years were marked by periods of melancholy during which he invariably turned to books and reading, particularly Byron. Soon after his arrival, he writes:

I have this day read Lord Byron's Beppo and Corsair. The former tells a story that could be told in a newspaper paragraph of twelve lines, and I thought myself a small poet until the Corsair told me to be silent. I never read anything so beautiful for its size ... the whole poem is lovely.¹⁶

Ferrar was soon put to farm duties: "December 21, Got up at 5—made hay—a little sulky took breakfast—worked—sulking increasing—fell off the cart—dined—hardly spoke a word—worked harder—thought myself the most miserable of human beings—no appointment—took tea ... read Byron." He shared Byron with his future wife Eliza:

Dec. 23, Byron, said I to my cousin Eliza, was a beautiful poet was he not? Undoubtedly, she replied he was when he lived, but he is dead now—dead said I, you have struck me dumb Eliza—the author of Child Harold is dead—and is this his fame and glory! His ambition! They are all here, said Eliza laying her hand on the book, but the rest is in the grave—But forget Byron—said she in a tone of reproof, forget him? said I, I fear he will make me mad.

On 8 January 1843 he wrote:

This morning at 9am hurt my back while trying at a lift, not well yet, though 9 p.m. it annoys me much. Part of the day nothing to do and begin to wish for some

¹⁴ Scott's impact is visible in publishing statistics: *Waverley* sold 6,000 copies in its first six months; *The Antiquary*, published in 1816, sold 6,000 copies in its first six days. Between 1829 and 1849 the *Waverley Novels* sold 78,270 sets. Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader. A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800–1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 383. John Ruskin's father "was a devotee of Scott, and as a child Ruskin himself knew the *Waverley* novels and Pope's *Iliad* better than any other book except the Bible." Altick, *The English Common Reader*, 116. In the 1840s, John Murray, the publisher, "read no novels except those of Scott." George Paston, *At John Murray's 1843–1892* (London: John Murray, 1932), 39. Elizabeth Anne Webby, "Literature and the Reading Public in Australia 1800–1850: A Study of the Growth and Differentiation of a Colonial Literary Culture during the Earlier Nineteenth Century" (PhD diss., University of Sydney, 1971), 2:2.

¹⁵ Adkins, *Reading in Colonial Tasmania*, 176–84.

¹⁶ Diary 1, date uncertain.

good books. Cannot bear to note down this little trifling memorandum of my daily employment—read part of Byron's *Corsair* for the second time.



Photograph of the Plassy Homestead, October 2010.
(By kind permission of Luke and Michelle Rapley)

After seven months employed as a “shepherd” he describes himself as “running away” from Plassy, or more correctly, undertaking “a harassing walk of 70 miles to Hobart Town” and in May 1843 accepting the appointment at the Salt Water River convict probation station.¹⁷ While there he witnessed a fellow officer’s life threatened by a convict “who rushed at him with an axe,” and punishment including 100 lashes inflicted on a prisoner “for absconding.”¹⁸ His experiences may have contributed to him signing, at Plassy, in 1852, a petition for the abolition of convict transportation; on 25 August a “boy from Mackerseys called with a petition against transportation signed it.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Diary 1, date uncertain. For convict probation stations see Ian Brand, *The Convict Probation System: Van Diemen's Land 1839–1854* (Hobart: Blubber Head Press, 1990). Also Keith Adkins, “Convict Probation Station Libraries in Colonial Tasmania,” *Script and Print* 34, no. 2 (2010), 87–92; Adkins, *Reading in Colonial Tasmania*, 47–48.

¹⁸ Diary 1, 25 February 1845, 1 May 1845.

¹⁹ The Rev. John Mackersey was a Presbyterian minister, at Kirklands, Campbell Town. See J. Heyer, *The Presbyterian Pioneers of Van Diemen's Land* (Launceston: Presbytery of Tasmania, 1935), 34, 112. The transportation of convicts and its abolition in 1853 was a dominant issue in colonial Tasmania, one that divided society on social and economic grounds. See Lloyd Robson, *A History of Tasmania* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983), 1:483–512.

Ferrar was a prolific reader while at Salt Water River. In September 1843 he read *Eugene Aram*, by English novelist, playwright and statesman, Edward George Earl Bulwer Lytton (1803–73): “I have only now read Bulwer’s Eugene Aram and I think it is a delightful novel but like most others it leaves a strange & stupid languor which seems to swallow up activity.”²⁰ In his role as a probation station officer—also at times “sinking into despondency”—his reading included Plutarch; Byron; Pope (“I have borrowed Pope’s works from Dr Agnew, now for reading with a vengeance ... Pope was an honest poet”); *The Bivouac*, by W. H. Maxwell (“a well written and fascinating book”); *The Children of the Abbey*, by Regina Maria Roche (“a very nice novel truly”); *Incidents of travel in Egypt ... and the Holy Land*, by J. S. Stephens (“like it extremely”); *The Roman History from the building of Rome*, by Nathaniel Hook; and *A translation of the works of Virgil* (“I do not like Hook much, quite in love with Virgil”); *Fireside Education*, by Samuel Goodrich (“a very excellent book”); *Blanche and Osbright*, by Matthew Lewis (“horrid and revolting”).²¹

Both at Salt Water River Station and thereafter, Ferrar was a committed reader of the Bible and theology. At Salt Water River he “read thru chapters in the Acts.”²² In 1850, at Plassy, he wrote: “Finished reading the fourth volume of D’Aubigne’s History of the Reformation ... I have been delighted with this work, one which a man cannot read without being much enlightened in spiritual as well as temporal matters.”²³ Soon afterwards he wrote: “In everything I read and see and hear I recognise the goodness and power of almighty God, may my light increase and my heart be solely devoted to Him my creator and my saviour.”²⁴ For the remainder of his life, his diaries record the family in Christian worship with prayers often held in the home or homes of neighbours.

Only occasionally does Ferrar indicate from where he obtained his books. Certainly booksellers and auction houses were established in both Hobart and Launceston in the 1840s and 1850s, offering books and periodicals, both new

²⁰ Twenty years later he read *My Novel* and in 1864 *The Caxtons*, noting that *The Caxtons* was “lent by Mr Blythe.” Blyth’s identity is not known but the diaries reveal a regular habit of borrowing from friends and neighbours.

²¹ Diary 1, 28 September 1843, 10 March 1844, 30 July 1844, 10 September 1844, 10 November 1844, 3 September 1850, 27 Sept 1850. Dr. J. W. Agnew was a medical practitioner and public servant who was born in Ireland in 1815 and arrived in Van Diemen’s Land in the early 1840s. Lloyd Robson, *A History of Tasmania* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1991), 2:63. Agnew’s painted photograph, painted in the studio of R. J. Nicholas, is held by the QVMAG, Launceston. *The Bivouac* was among the three most borrowed titles from the Evandale Subscription Library in the period (the others being *Ten Thousand a Year* by S. Warren and *Rory O More* by S. Lover). Adkins, *Reading in Colonial Tasmania*, 176–83.

²² Diary 1, date uncertain.

²³ Diary 1, 13 November 1850.

²⁴ Diary 1, Sunday 26 January 1851.

and second-hand, in their own right and as agents for London booksellers.²⁵ In addition to those brought on the voyage out or later supplied by friends and relatives in Britain, it was common practice for colonists to have books forwarded by London booksellers. In 1868 Ferrar notes writing to “Samson Low, Son and Marsden, booksellers of London.”²⁶ Unfortunately he gives no details; perhaps he was contacting them not so much to buy books as to see whether they would publish “The Maxwells of Bremgarten,” which had recently been serialised in Launceston’s *Examiner* newspaper! In the mid 1890s he lists books “to get” from Cassell and Co. of London including children’s books, also Samuel Lover’s *Handy Andy* which he had read earlier, in June 1845—possibly a borrowed volume.²⁷ The Appendix, which includes original dates of publication of titles published no more than ten years prior to Ferrar reading or possessing them, indicates some were within two years of their publication in Britain.

The earliest evidence of Ferrar borrowing from community or subscription libraries is during 1896, at Ross, when he borrowed Prescott’s *History of Ferdinand and Isabella* “from library.”²⁸ Also at Ross, is evidence of him first selling books, on 1 April 1897, when he drove “to Ross, got parcels of books, left 6 at library for sale.”²⁹

Ferrar regularly borrowed and bought books from friends and neighbours. His diary entry for 9 March 1868 records:

Started in dogcart with Eliza and Janey to pay a visit to Mr Robert Bayles at Vaucluse, called at Eggleston, got to Vaucluse in time for dinner. It is a princely residence. Mrs Bayles played on the harmonium, rowed in a boat on the South Esk with Miss Williams, Eliza and Janey. Mr and Mrs Joseph Bayles were there. Turned over some of the books in the library, where there are several thousand volumes, slept there.³⁰

²⁵ Adkins, *Reading in Colonial Tasmania*, 22–25. See also Wallace Kirsop, “Books and Readers in Colonial Tasmania,” *The Flow of Culture: Tasmanian Studies* (Canberra: Australian Academy of the Humanities, 1987), 102–21; Wallace Kirsop, “Bookselling in Hobart Town in the 1840’s,” *Books for Colonial Readers—The Nineteenth-Century Australian Experience* (Melbourne: BSANZ, 1995), 59–76.

²⁶ Diary 3, 19 May 1868.

²⁷ Diary 4, 25 May 1895. Listed also are volumes from Murray’s Home and Colonial Library: “to get ... when I can.” For this period, towards the end of his life, and certainly after his having published his major works, Ferrar’s shopping lists, where given, are not included in the Appendix, reserved for books recorded as owned or read.

²⁸ No details concerning this library are forthcoming at this time. For circulating and subscription libraries in colonial Tasmania see Adkins, *Reading in Colonial Tasmania*, 36–47.

²⁹ The latter coincided with him relinquishing control of Plassy from 1 January 1898 and leasing the farm and livestock to his sons Edward and William junior.

³⁰ Joseph Bales farmed the neighbouring property of Auburn, Ross. For the Bales family, see Frank L. Rigney, *A Midlands Odyssey: A Journey through Parts of the Northern Midlands of Tasmania* (Launceston: Bokprint, 2008), 156–59, 295–96. The University of Tasmania library holds a number

Two years earlier, in April 1866 he borrowed a volume of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* “from Robert Gatenby and read the lives of Nelson, Necker, Newton and Niebuhr.”³¹ In March 1863 he borrowed *Travels and Researches in South Africa* and *Westward Ho* from George Clark, of Ellenthorpe Hall.³² (Mrs. Hannah Clark had in earlier years run a school for girls at Ellenthorpe Hall, considered the best in Tasmania.) In 1864, Ferrar borrowed books from a number of lesser known individuals: *The Prince of Wales and the United States* (“Lent by Mr Crawford”); *Lady Lee’s Widowhood* (“Lent by Arthur Corney”); and *The Caxtons* (“Lent by Mr Blythe”).³³ In Sept 1873 again he wrote of dining at Vaucluse and returning home the following day with 10 volumes including Plutarch and Virgil. Later, he bought “Swift’s works in 13 volumes from Christopher Gatenby”³⁴; and in 1895 “some of James Bayles’s books [including] Chambers Miscellany 10 volumes.”

The diaries include few titles for agriculture or horticulture. One recent commentator—of farming persuasion—suggests that Ferrar “ran the property with little success ... he became more interested in writing and produced a number of books with historical themes.”³⁵ The diaries, however, provide an account of family life, on a modest working farm: tending livestock, cropping, planting, gathering and drying tobacco (today surprising for the region), tending the kitchen garden and providing firewood for the household. His use of instructional literature was doubtless influenced by seasonal differences with Britain, the source of most of his books. In an entry dated 24 January 1843 on *The Quarterly Journal of Agriculture* Ferrar writes: “[It says] that wheat should be reaped before it is quite ripe, when the grain is soft and pulpy but not in a milky state ... but how far this theory is applicable to such a dry country as Van Diemen’s Land I cannot tell.” Ten years later an entry listing book titles and publishing details, suggestive of a shopping list of books, includes *An Improved System of Farm Keeping*.

Ferrar’s books include three Australian titles. In 1859 he read Charles Rowcroft’s *Tales of the Colonies*. Ferrar commented:

It is an interesting book, though written in the simplest style imaginable, but it contains a few incongruities as coming from a colonist. The incidents are related in an able manner though certain weakness is betrayed by the author in finding

of volumes with Vaucluse bookplates. I am grateful to Professor Michael Bennett for alerting me to these volumes.

³¹ For Robert Gatenby, of View Point, see Rigney, *A Midlands Odyssey*, 294.

³² For the Clark family and Ellenthorpe Hall, see Rigney, *A Midlands Odyssey*, 301–2, and *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1969), 3:403–4.

³³ The Mr. Crawford was likely the farm manager of Ellenthorpe Hall following the death of George Carr Clark, in England, on 19 December 1863.

³⁴ For Christopher Gatenby, see Rigney, *A Midlands Odyssey*, 291. In May 1868 Ferrar wrote: “Christopher in a great passion with his sons for attending dancing class, he will not let them get away from their work.”

³⁵ Rigney, *A Midlands Odyssey*, 297.

everything ready to hand for his heroes when they are in want of them. I believe if Thornley was lost in the bush and suddenly wanted a blacksmith's anvil he would find one in some concealed pocket. It also appears ridiculous to suppose that a party of fugitives could be tracked in snow for above a hundred miles. In these days snow never lies on the ground for above a couple of hours except in the lake country. The climate of Tasmania must be greatly changed. However the author was evidently an amiable man and deserves credit for his work.³⁶

Ferrar also commented on Governor Arthur's granting of land within the colony, which he thought inappropriate; Hobart's unsatisfactory water supply; the dissatisfaction caused by the impounding laws; cattle stealing; and the conviction of newspaper proprietor Henry Melville over the publication of legal proceedings in the colony.³⁷ A second Australian title, Caroline Leakey's *The Broad Arrow*, was bought during a trip into Ross on 21 September 1860, the year of its publication by Walch and Sons in Hobart, without further comment. A third Australian book, Rolf Bolderwood's *Robbery Under Arms*, was received by Ferrar as a family gift, on 14 December 1897, about which he also makes no further comment. Perhaps it was not of his choosing (or liking), and set in mainland Australia, was of lesser interest.

Ferrar was a frequent reader of periodical literature,³⁸ particularly *The Quarterly Review* and *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*. Founded in 1809, *The Quarterly* was renowned for the quality of its literary criticism; politically it supported the landed aristocracy.³⁹ *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, first published by William Chambers in 1832, was a weekly with an issue price of three halfpennies. In the colony, it was the most borrowed periodical from the Evandale Library between 1847 and 1861.⁴⁰ After reading *The Quarterly* in October 1860 he wrote: "I am enchanted with these articles and can hardly look at anything else ... all these articles should be read two or three times."⁴¹ Repeat reading was a habit regularly noted in the diaries.

The year 1860 was notable for his reading Shakespeare. Between February and April he read "Othello, Hamlet, King Lear, Romeo and Juliet, Taming of the Shrew, Macbeth, Timon of Athens, Merchant of Venice, Merry Wives of Windsor, Julius Caesar, King John, Winter Tale, Midsummer-Night's Dream,

³⁶ Diary 2, date uncertain.

³⁷ Diary 2, date uncertain.

³⁸ In nineteenth-century Britain the circulation of periodicals and newspapers is thought to have been larger and more influential than that of books, for reasons including lower prices, accessibility, topicality and newsworthiness. In the Australian colonies, periodicals from overseas were carriers both of news from "home" and of British customs and traditions. Adkins, *Reading in Colonial Tasmania*, 8–11.

³⁹ *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals 1824–1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 1:697.

⁴⁰ Adkins, *Reading in Colonial Tasmania*, 187.

⁴¹ Diary 2, 2 October 1860.

As You Like It and Love’s Labour’s Lost.” By the end of September he had read “all of Shakespeare’s plays except part of the first part of King Henry VI” and read “some of [the] sonnets.”⁴²

Despite the prevalence of fiction, a comparison of Ferrar’s books with library loans for Evandale library borrowers suggests he had fewer works of fiction than other readers of his time, place and social disposition. The variances may be accounted for by the gender difference, with the Evandale figures including, implicitly if not explicitly, more female readers. This table compares his books with loans for the Evandale Subscription Library 1847–61, in percentage terms.⁴³

Category	Ferrar	Evandale
Fiction	42	49
History, biography, voyages and travels	33	24
Theology, moral and natural philosophy	5	3
Encyclopaedias	3	6
Magazines	10	13.5
Other	7	4.5

It could be expected, given the extent to which life on the land is regulated by the seasons—and the length of evenings—to find evidence of seasonal differences in Ferrar’s reading. The diaries are not particularly reliable on this point. For the period of this study, references to books and reading, by month of entry, are: January (13), February (17), March (12), April (8), May (4), June (18), July (16), August (17), September (20), October (13), November (13), December (4).

Of the Wigtown Subscription Library, in southwest Scotland, for the years 1795–99, Mark Towsey reported that “book borrowing was, for the majority of users, a seasonal activity. Within each year loans peaked consistently during winter months [and] least intensive during the most crucial period in the farming calendar.”⁴⁴ However, subscription library loans are invariably for a limited, prescribed period, and Ferrar’s data, while there is a certain correlation, with consistent recordings over winter months, also includes books listed, but not necessarily read at that time.⁴⁵

⁴² Diary 2, various dates.

⁴³ Ferrar’s books total 148. The Evandale Library books total 1910. Figures taken from Adkins, *Reading in Colonial Tasmania*, 175 (condensed for comparison).

⁴⁴ Mark Towsey, “First Steps in Associational Reading: Book Use and Sociability at the Wigtown Subscription Library, 1795–1799,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 103, no. 4 (2009), 455–95.

⁴⁵ At Evandale, the data show that peaks in library borrowing were the result of new books arriving by boat from Britain, rather than determined by the seasons. Adkins, *Reading in Colonial Tasmania*, 196.

Authorship

Ferrar's first novel, "The Maxwells of Bremgarten," was published in the *Launceston Examiner* in fifty-one chapters between 6 April 1867 and 17 October 1868. Ferrar writes, in March 1859: "Finished the thirty-sixth chapter (41 pages) of the Maxwells of Bremgarten. I must with the help of God get up at an early hour everyday and write a few pages or this work will never be finished."⁴⁶ His entries suggest that by July 1860 it was completed, copied and sent to England through Mr. Birchall the Launceston bookseller. In September 1860 he sent an "order on London for £300 for publication of work."⁴⁷ The previous year, in April 1859 he listed names to "whom copies ... are to be presented by the author" including James Aikenhead, Dr. Valentine and the Rev. John Mackersey.⁴⁸ Details then become unclear. In February 1866, he "Got parcel from Mr Birchall containing ms of novel, from England." In April the following year he "revised a portion of my novel now being published by the Launceston Examiner," and on 22 August 1867 he "saw Henry Button, newspaper proprietor "about remuneration for letting my novel be published in the Launceston Examiner. Saw Mr Birchall, had tea with him." There is no mention of the £300!

The Dream of Ubertus was published, anonymously, by J. Walch and Sons of Hobart in the 1870s. Morris Millar describes the work as "a short fantastic tale, built around the city of Sparta and its military volunteers."⁴⁹ Earlier, in April 1859 Ferrar wrote: "Read article Sparta in the English Cyclopaedia. I have derived much pleasure and instruction from it." In his diary for 29 March 1861 he states:

Good Friday. In Launceston. At ½ past 1 the Artillery Volunteers were called out by bugles and fought a sham battle outside the town for 4 hours and a half. Drove part of the way to Corra Linn with Mr and Mrs Birchall and family in the dog cart. On leaving Perth the next day the mare fell near the bridge, cut her knee but did not harm herself, and threw me out on the road. After leaving Robert Taylor's I conceived the idea of writing the Dream of Ubertus, a Volunteer romance, and wrote it when I came home, in 12 days. 82 pages closely written. Sent it to Launceston for publication.

The book was dedicated to the officers, non-commissioned officers and members of the Volunteer Corps in Tasmania.

In 1885 he published *The Sun of Righteousness and the Dark River: An Essay on Christianity and Freethought*, jointly by Elliot Stock of London and J. Walch and

⁴⁶ Diary 2, 30 March 1859.

⁴⁷ Diary 2, 17 September 1860.

⁴⁸ James Aikenhead was editor of the *Launceston Examiner*. Dr. Valentine was a Campbell Town medical practitioner with whom Ferrar regularly associated. For Mackersey see n. 19 above.

⁴⁹ E. Morris Miller, *Australian Literature from its Beginning to 1935* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1940), 2:612.

Sons of Hobart. The book, of 362 pages, was dedicated to his brother, Rev. Edward Ferrar, Prebendary of White Church, Diocese of Ferns, Ireland. Unfortunately no diary survives for this period. However, the work clearly comes within the ambit of his books and reading and his Christian practice.

A twenty-eight line poem, "From 'A Jubilee Ode'," was published in Douglas Sladen's *Australian Poets 1788–1888*.⁵⁰ Ferrar's diaries contain much poetry, both unpublished, original works and those transcribed from books that he was reading.

Ferrar's final and arguably his most ambitious work, *Artabanzanus: the Demon of the Great Lake* was published by Elliot Stock in London in 1896. The book, of 314 pages, was dedicated to a British statesman, the Right Honourable Arthur Balfour, MP. Morris Millar describes the work as "a moral allegory of the nether kingdom, dealing with the follies and vices of mankind; associated with the region of the Great Lake on the central tableland of Tasmania. Refers also to Tasmanian history and politics and to Christianity; includes a story of the Civil War in England as well as some original poems."⁵¹

Ferrar's diaries include transcripts of his correspondence at this time. In March 1892 he wrote to Elliot Stock in London:

Dear Sir, Your note of Jan 26 has duly come to hand. I have made up my mind to send my revised MS to you as soon as I can possibly send money with it, which I have been hindered from doing by the low price of wool and unexpected changes in my family's intent to send the sum of £70 as soon as I can, thinking that probably that amount will be sufficient to cover the expenses of issuing five or six hundred copies in the form you recommend. I will send the MS at once by weekly instalments to guard against loss by sea, and you will have time to give it more ample consideration. From what I can gather I am almost sure that it will be well received in these colonies. I have made a good many improvements, and have marked every page with red pencil [on the] revised copy. The poems in the concluding chapter I leave to your discretion: you will find them in the first copy. I will be glad to hear from you again and to have your final instructions respecting the amount you require, but you will be good enough to bear in mind that my means are limited and my family's expenses large in proportion.⁵²

He wrote to Stock again, in April 1892:

I am sorry that I cannot get an advance on my rent for the current year, money being tight everywhere, wool being very low and surplus stock nearly unsaleable. My sons have however agreed to send you the enclosed document and I on my part bind myself to carry out that agreement if spared.

⁵⁰ Douglas Sladen, *Australian Poets 1788–1888* (London: Griffith, Farran, Okeden & Welsh, 1888), 149–50.

⁵¹ E. Morris Miller, *Australian Literature from its Beginning to 1935*, 2:612.

⁵² Diary 4.

It rests with you now whether you will go on with the work or not on these terms. I have been advised to get a cheap 2/6 edition published if possible like the enclosed specimen. You are the best judge however as to what form the publication should take. It is said here that the price should not exceed 5/- . I have also been advised to get 250 copies sent out here. I am writing to Sir E. Braddon to try and get him to take an interest in the book. Awaiting your reply – I am &c. ⁵³

He had, on 15 March, written to Sir Edward Braddon, Tasmania's Agent General in London:

Sir, I am sorry to have to trouble you again on the subject of my book which I formerly called the *Star of Victory*, but now *The Demon of the Great Lake, An Allegorical Romance of Tasmania*. I do so because I have no friend in London to whom I can apply for assistance apart from the publisher Mr Elliot Stock.⁵⁴

Almost three years later, in January 1895, he wrote to Stock again:

Dear Sir, I beg to inform you that I shall be in a position in April next to pay the expense of the publication of the publication of my work *The Demon of the Great Lake*, to the amount of £70, if no hitch occurs, the executor of a deceased sister who resided in Belfast, having written to me informing me that I was named in her will residuary legatee. I have thought of taking a trip to England, but under present circumstances cannot decide to do so as yet. Will you kindly let me know how many copies you will print and publish for that sum, half the number to be sent out here. I am anxious to give the work a thorough and final revision before publishing and with that object in view request you will kindly send me back the first MS which I sent to you; observe, not the revised second copy which I wish you to retain. The improvements I contemplate making I will send when I hear again from my sister's executor, together with a letter from the manager of the Bank of Australasia, Launceston securing to you payment of the stipulated sum on completion of your undertaking. I enclose a [postal order] for one pound to pay postage, also to send order to Times Office for a copy of the Weekly Edition from the beginning of the year, if practicable, the balance if any in Illustrated papers.⁵⁵

The following month when corresponding with his cousin in Ireland, he wrote:

I am about to publish another book through Elliot Stock, Paternosters, London, an *Allegorical Romance of Tasmania* entitled *The Demon King of the Great Lake*, and will tell him to send you a copy ... PS. If you can make an arrangement with Marcus Ward & Co. they might be able to sell a good many copies of the work. It

⁵³ Diary 4.

⁵⁴ Diary 4.

⁵⁵ Diary 4.

is against Home Rule in humorous fashion. If you could get it reviewed in some Unionist papers in Belfast and Dublin so much the better. Any money you get for it less your commission will be welcome to me.⁵⁶

In March 1897, in Hobart, the *Mercury* reviewed the novel suggesting:

Many fables have been told about the Great Lake, but none on such a scale as this one, and for once a decided attempt has been made to do justice to a most attractive topic. It will appeal in very different ways to different minds, but of the honest labour bestowed on a congenial task there cannot be the slightest doubt, and for that alone the work should have some support in the island where the scene is laid in the main.⁵⁷

William Moore Ferrar died 14 August 1906. Eliza died at Plassy 5 September 1907. They are buried together in the Anglican cemetery at Ross.

Conclusion

Ferrar's diaries record both the mundane and the exceptional. Fiction was to readers of his generation a national pastime, one to which he subscribed—often with frustration—and tempered with his passion for events of the past. It was in his writing that he sought to reconcile his life and the world he encountered, with his love of literature and history. Today, the land of the Great Lake about which he fantasised in his final novel has become a mecca for fishermen and holiday makers—so different from that which he describes but nevertheless possessing the mystery upon which his novel relies. While it has been suggested that Ferrar ran the property with little success, being more interested in writing books with historical themes, for Ferrar, writing and reading was a passion and farming a practical necessity. The diaries record both, and their difficulties, but it was in literature that he expressed his energy and imagination.

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⁵⁶ Diary 4.

⁵⁷ *The Mercury* 30 March 1897. See also E. Morris Miller, *Australian Literature from its Beginnings to 1935*, 2:612.

Appendix

Books and Authors Named by William Moore Ferrar in his Tasmanian Diaries

In order to provide some measure of the speed with which Ferrar obtained access to new works, I have noted in square brackets original dates of publication of titles published no more than ten years prior to Ferrar reading them.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Author /Title</u>
1842	Lord Byron, <i>Childe Harold</i>
1842	Lord Byron, <i>Beppo</i>
1842	Lord Byron, <i>The Corsair</i>
1842	Geoffrey Keating, <i>History of Ireland</i>
1843	George Buchanan, <i>History of Scotland</i>
1843	Philip Stanhope, <i>Chesterfield's Life and letters</i>
1843	<i>The Quarterly Journal of Agriculture</i>
1843	John Russell, <i>The Geography of Palestine</i> [1835]
1843	William Robertson, <i>The History of the Emperor Charles V</i>
1843	Bulwer Lytton, <i>Eugene Aram</i>
1844	Thomas Moore, <i>The Complete Works of Lord Byron</i>
1844	John Langhorne, <i>Plutarch's Lives</i>
1844	<i>Holy Bible</i>
1844	W. H. Maxwell, <i>The Bivouac; or Stories of the Peninsula War</i> [1837]
1844	<i>The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope</i>
1844	Frederick, Marryat, <i>The Phantom Ship</i> [1839]
1844	Mrs. Ross, <i>Paired—Not Matched; or, Matrimony in the Nineteenth-Century</i>
1844	Henry Fielding, <i>The Adventures of Joseph Andrews</i>
1844	Regina Maria Roche (previously Dalton) <i>The Children of the Abbey</i>
1844	John L. Stephens, <i>Incidents of Travel in Egypt ... and the Holy Land</i> [1837]
1844	Johann Schiller, <i>The Ghost-Seer</i>
1844	C. B. Brown, <i>Edgar Huntley; or, the Sleep-Walker</i>
1845	Nathaniel Hook, <i>The Roman History from the Building of Rome</i>
1845	John Dryden, <i>A Translation of the Works of Virgil</i>
1845	Tobias Smollett, <i>Peregrine Pickle</i>
1845	Richard Cumberland, <i>Henry, a Novel</i>
1845	Mary Collyer (trans), Gessner, <i>The Death of Abel</i>
1845	Samuel Lover, <i>Handy Andy</i> [1836]
1845	Edward Gibbon, <i>The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire</i>
1850	Dr. Watts, <i>Sermons</i>
1850	Samuel Goodrich, <i>Fireside Education</i>
1850	Samuel Goodrich, <i>Life of Louis Phillipe, late King of the French</i> [1848]
1850	<i>Toussaint Louverture and the Republic of Haiti</i> [184-?]
1850	<i>Time Enough</i>
1850	Mrs. H. F. Lee, <i>The Log Cabin</i> [1844]
1850	Matthew Lewis, <i>Blanche & Osbright</i>

- 1850 Augustus Mayhew, *The Greatest Plague of Life* [1847]
 1850 *Sir Stamford Raffles and the Spice Islands*
 1850 *A Short History of Poland*
 1850 J. H. Merle D'Aubigne, *History of the Reformation*
 1851 *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*
 1851 William Romaine, *The Walk of Faith*
 1851 *The Life of ... Frederick, Baron Trench*
 1851 *Curiosities and Wonders of the Vegetable Kingdom* [1849]
 1851 *Intelligent Negroes*
 1851 Charles Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge* [1841]
 1851 Julia Pardoe, *The River and the Desert*
 1851 Walter Scott, *Rob Roy*
 1851 William Coxe, *Memoirs of John, Duke of Marlborough*
 1851 Charles Rollin, *Ancient History*
 1851 Katherine Thomson, *Memoirs of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough*
 1851 C. H. Lever, *Roland Cashel* [1850]
 1851 Walter Scott, *Autobiography*
 1851 Franz Kugler, *The Pictorial History of Germany ... reign ... Frederick the Great* [1845]
 1851 *A Memoir of the Rev. Thomas Robinson*
 1851 *Glimpses of New Zealand*
 1852 *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*
 1852 *Bell's Weekly Messenger*
 1852 Washington Irving, *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*
 1853 *Uncle Tom's Cabin* [1852]
 1853 *Chronicles of the Bastille. First series* [1845]
 1853 *An Improved System of Farm Keeping* [1851]
 1853 Archibald Alison, *History of Europe from the Commencement of the French Revolution*
 1853 *A Dictionary of Medicine and Surgery*
 1853 *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana*
 1853 *History of England*
 1853 Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*
 1859 Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit* [1857]
 1859 Jacob Abbott, *The History of Darius the Great* [1850]
 1859 Jacob Abbott, *The History of Cyrus the Great* [1850]
 1859 Jacob Abbott, *The History of Mary Queen of Scots*
 1859 William Brock, *A Biographical Sketch of Sir Henry Havelock* [1858]
 1859 Jacob Abbott, *The History of King Charles the First of England*
 1859 *The English Cyclopaedia*
 1859 Walter Scott, *Tales of a Grandfather*
 1859 *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*
 1859 Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* [1850]
 1859 *All About It! or; The History and Mystery of Common Things* [1858]
 1859 *The Quarterly Review*
 1859 Washington Irving, *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon*
 1859 Washington Irving, *Bracebridge Hall*
 1859 Walter Scott, *The Talisman*
 1859 W. H. Prescott, *The Life of Charles Brockden Brown*

- 1859 Longfellow
 1859 Walter Scott, *Old Mortality*
 1859 Thomas B. Macaulay, *History of England* [1849]
 1859 Charles Rowcroft, *Tales of the Colonies*
 1860 *English Cyclopaedia*
 1860 Walter Scott, *Waverley*
 1860 Walter Scott, *Chronicles of the Canongate*
 1860 Tobias Smollett, *History of England*
 1860 Thomas Hayward, *The Rape of Lucrece*
 1860 Eliot Warburton, *The Crescent and the Cross*
 1860 Jacob Abbott, *The History of Queen Elizabeth*
 1860 William Shakespeare
 1860 Caroline Leakey, *The Broad Arrow* [Published London 1859, Hobart 1860]
 1860 *The Quarterly Review*
 1860 Benjamin Disraeli, *Vivian Grey*
 1861 Benjamin Disraeli, *Coningsby*
 1861 Benjamin Disraeli, *Tancred*
 1861 J. W. Goethe, *The Sorrows of Werter*
 1861 Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe*
 1861 *Life of Sheridan*
 1861 Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*
 1861 Walter Scott, *The Fortunes of Nigel*
 1862 *Chambers' Information for the People*
 1862 Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White* [1860]
 1862 Wilkie Collins, *The Dead Secret*
 1862 Ellen Wood, *Danesbury House* [1860]
 1862 C. H. Lever, *The Daltons* [1850–52]
 1862 Benjamin Disraeli, *Venetia*
 1862 *The Quarterly Review*
 1862 *Chambers' Information for the People*
 1862 William Shakespeare
 1862 Charles Kingsley, *Westwood Ho* [1855]
 1862 W. M. Thackeray, *Henry Esmond* [1852]
 1863 David Livingstone, *Travels and Researches in South Africa* [1857]
 1863 Walter Scott, *Woodstock*
 1863 W. M. Thackeray, *The History of Pendennis*
 1863 W. H. Prescott, *History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella*
 1863 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*
 1863 Bulwer Lytton, *My Novel* [1853]
 1864 Thomas B. Macaulay, *Biographies* [1860]
 1864 N. A. Woods, *The Prince of Wales and the United States* [1861]
 1864 Bulwer Lytton, *The Caxtons*
 1864 M. E. Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* [1862]
 1864 J. L. Motley, *History of the United Netherlands* [1860]
 1864 W. H. Russell, *The British Expedition to the Crimea* [1858]
 1864 Henry Kingsley, *The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn* [1859]
 1864 Charlotte Bronte, *Shirley*

- 1864 E. B. Hamley, *Lady Lee's Widowhood*
1864 *The Quarterly Review*
1864 *Cornhill Magazine*
1864 *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*
1866 J. B. Walker, *The Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation*
1866 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*
1871 Joseph Milner, *The History of the Church of Christ*
1871 William Robertson, *The History of America*
1873 *Plutarch*
1873 *Virgil*
1873 *Xenophon*
1873 Jonathan Swift, *Works*
1895 Chambers Miscellany
1895 Louis A. Thiers, *The History of the Consulate and Empire of Napoleon*
1895 Sam Slick
1895 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Kidnapped* [1886]
1896 W. M. Thackeray, *The Great Hogarty Diamond*
1896 W. H. Prescott, *History of Ferdinand and Isabella*
1897 Rolf Bolderwood, *Robbery under Arms* [1888]