

Philosophical Institute of Victoria

The ordinary general meeting was held in the Hall of the Mechanics' Institution on Wednesday evening last. The attendance of members was numerous. Dr. Wilkie occupied the chair.

The minutes of the previous meeting having been read and confirmed, several new members were introduced by the chairman, and the following gentlemen were elected members of the Institute, by ballot,-viz. : John Wilkins, Esq, M.D., J.P., District Surgeon and Coroner, Williamstown; Joseph Geary. Esq., Inspector of Denominational Schools, Melbourne; Arthur Davitt, Esq. Principal of the National and Model . Training Schools; Patrick Whyte, Esq, B.A., of Trinity College, Dublin, National Model School, Melbourne; Henry Elder, Esq., Jeweller, Bourke-street east; Robert Mackay, Esq., Tide Inspector, H. M. Customs, Williamstown ; J. S. MacKenzie, Esq., H.M. Customs, Williamstown; Joseph Bosisto, Esq., Chemist, Richmond; Robert Wharton, Esq., J.P., 8 Queen-street Melbourne; Lieut. W. C. Bancroft, A.D.C , H.M. 16th Regiment, Toorak; Richard Thomas Tracey, Esq, M.D., Brunswick-Street, Collingwood; Robert Graham Gilmore, Esq., (of Messrs. G. W. Cole and Co.,) Merchant, Melbourne ; Lewis Vieusseux, Esq., Principal Ladies' College, Victoria-parade; John Cairns, Esq, Merchant 21 Queen-Street; Thomas Bibbs, Esq., Draughtsman, Government Survey Office.

The following committees were appointed viz. the Museum Committee, the Committee for Superintending the Introduction of the British Song birds into Victoria, and the Murray Codfish into the Yarra; the Mining Committee, and the Committee to carry out the Establishment of an Astronomical and Magnetical Observatory.

Mr. RAWLINSON (on behalf of G. Verdon, Esq.) nominated as a Committee on the subject of the union of the Scientific Societies throughout the colony. Drs. Eades, Macadam, Maclean and Macgillivray, Messrs. Sinnett, Ellery, Rawlinson and Vendon, and Rev. Mr. Henderson. This committee was agreed to.

The chair having been taken by Dr. Iffla, Dr. WILKIE moved that a Committee, be appointed to consider and report on the practicability of fitting out, in Victoria, a geographical expedition for the purpose of carrying out the great idea of the lamented Leichhardt, of exploring the vast interior of Australia from east to west, and for the purpose, if possible of gathering some tidings of the fate of Leichhardt and his party. The proposed expedition to start from Curtis Bay on the east coast, and to make a direct course westward in the latitude of the tropic of Capricorn to Sharks Bay, on the west coast, embracing at the same time any fitting opportunity of exploring the interior both to the north and south of the line.

The committee nominated included upward of thirty of the most influential of the members.

Dr. WILKIE thought that the geographical exploration of the interior was a subject of great national importance. On scientific grounds it was peculiarly the province of the institute to promote this great object.

The proposed search for Leichhardt would he felt assured, command their warmest sympathies. In no part of the world was there so wide an extent of available country for the future settlement of the surplus population of the Old World. The exploration of the interior was, therefore, fraught with the most important results. He referred to the indomitable courage displayed by Dr. Livingstone, in Africa, and to his extraordinary success as an explorer. He referred to the valuable result of the exploring expeditions of Sturt, Leichhardt, Mitchell and Gregory. He recommended that the proposed expedition should follow

the northern boundary of Sturt's desert, which he believed would be found not far north of the tropic of Capricorn ; the beautiful country of the Victorian River near this latitude favoured this opinion. There was every probability of gaining some tidings respecting Leichhardt's fate by exploring this route. £6,000 would be necessary to organise and maintain a suitable exploring party for a period of two years, which would suffice for the proposed objects. New South Wales had fitted out many exploring expeditions. South Australia and Swan River had also had their exploring parties. The Royal Geographies Society of London and the Home Government had contributed largo sums for the same end; Victoria alone, had hitherto seemed to forget the claims of science, and the future interest of Australia, but ought, from her unexampled wealth, and her large and rapidly increasing population, to take the lead in geographical discovery. The present was the mos auspicious occasion for Victoria to contribute her share in this honorable work. Her Majesty's representative, Sir Henry Barkly, was the friend and patron of science, and he ventured to hope that his Excellency would aid the cause of geographical discovery. Sir W. Denison was at present organising an exploring party in search of Leichhardt. This expedition, being equipped for this month only, ought not to interfere with the Victorian expedition, which was intended to embrace far wider objects. He had no doubt that Victoria would now endeavor to emulate the noble example of the other colonies. If the proposed expedition should be successful in exploring the central regions of Australia, from east to west, this disinterested contribution of Victoria to the cause of science would be honorably remembered in Australian history.

Dr. MACADAM moved an amendment, to the effect that the subject be postponed until the results of the expedition now being organised by the Government of New South Wale for a similar purpose should be known.

The motion was, however, carried.

W. BLANDOWSKI, Esq., read a paper o: " Extensive Infusoria Deposit in the Malle Scrub near Swan Hill, on the Lower Murray River, in Victoria "

Excerpt from The Argus, Friday 13 November 1857

Melbourne Athenaeum Inc. history website: <http://www.mahistory.org.au>

THOMAS E RAWLINSON, Esq, C.E. read a paper entitled " Observations on the Saw-Fish with Young, taken in Hobson's Bay, near Gellibrand's Point, in October 1857, with specimens of the young."

The meeting of the Institute terminated shortly after ten o'clock.

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