



von Bibra Coat-of-Arms

**THE
VON BIBRA
STORY**

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and
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Metric Equivalents

1 foot	=	305 millimetres
1 acre	=	0.4 hectare
1 mile	=	1.6 kilometres
1 square mile	=	259 hectares
1 ton	=	1.01 tonnes

Currency

1/-	=	10 cents
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When decimal currency was introduced in 1966, two Australian dollars equalled one pound; but this gives little indication of nineteenth century values in terms of today's.

Illustrations

Front cover: Part of Bibra Castle, Bavaria.

Frontispiece: von Bibra Coat-of-Arms.

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Back cover: (1) Lois Nyman (2) Graeme von Bibra.		

Foreword

by Sir Guy Green,
Governor of Tasmania

ON 10 JANUARY 1823 Franz Ludwig von Bibra, his wife Eliza and their eight children arrived at Hobart Town aboard the convict transport ship "Morley". It was not Franz Ludwig's first visit to Van Diemen's Land, he having worked his passage on a convict ship in 1816 with a view to possibly settling here. Although he liked what he saw on that visit he did not immediately resolve to emigrate but returned to Europe where amongst other things he collaborated in the writing of a book on Van Diemen's Land and joined the English Royal Household as the tutor to two of George IV's nieces. But eventually he returned, took up a grant of 1000 acres, was appointed Chief District Constable and enthusiastically looked forward to a new life for himself and his family in the "refuge of peace and independence" he had found here. Unhappily it was not to be: eight months later while on a shooting expedition he drowned in the Macquarie River. Although Eliza eventually returned to Europe five of their children remained in Van Diemen's Land. Thus began the remarkable history of the von Bibras in Australia which is the subject of this well researched and most interesting book.

It contains stories straight out of a Nineteenth Century adventure magazine: the account of the morning when the widow Eliza and her children were visited by the bushranger Matthew Brady and his gang who, pretending to be constables, treated the family with great courtesy and assured them that they would see to it that the bushranger Brady would not trouble them; the expedition led by her son Francis Louis von Bibra when he set off from Launceston for Port Phillip Bay but was beaten in the race to be the first settlers of that region by John Batman because his Captain mistook Western Port for Port Phillip; and the story of another ill-fated venture when Francis Louis at the age of 70 found a "hill of gold" in Western Australia, registered his claim but on his return was never able to find it again.

As well as colourful episodes like that, this book records the remarkable mosaic of activities and enterprises in which members of the family have

engaged over the years. They included farming of all kinds, pursuing various skilled trades, running hotels, mining coal, managing a general store, conducting a Sunday School, starting a pearling industry, serving in both World Wars and giving distinguished public and community service in all sorts of ways through the RSL, the National Trust, the Australian Shipping Commission, the Australian Wool Board, Local Government and as Tasmanian Agent-General in London to name just a few.

Tasmanians have an impressive history of enterprise, community service, hard work, courage and imagination of which we can all feel proud. Much of that history has been made by families like the von Bibras who settled here last century and made and continue to make a great contribution to our society in every field of endeavour. Conventional social histories do not always adequately reflect that contribution. This book not only tells the von Bibra story but enlarges and enriches our understanding of the character of Tasmanian society and what has helped to shape it.

Editorial Note

In Germany the family name is always known as 'Bibra' without the 'von' preceding it, e.g. 'The Bibras lived at Bibra Castle'; but when it applies to someone's name the 'von' is used, e.g., Lorenz von Bibra. They are quite correct in this usage, for in German 'von' means 'of', so to say, "The von Bibras were a powerful family", is tantamount to saying, "The of Bibras were a powerful family". In the book this customary use is applied to the first chapter, which deals exclusively with the German family. In Australia, however, custom has altered this, so that it is recognised that the 'von' is used with both the surname and the christian name. It is therefore accounted correct to say, "An early pioneer in the von Bibra family was Frank von Bibra". This form is used for the remainder of the book.

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Lois Nyman