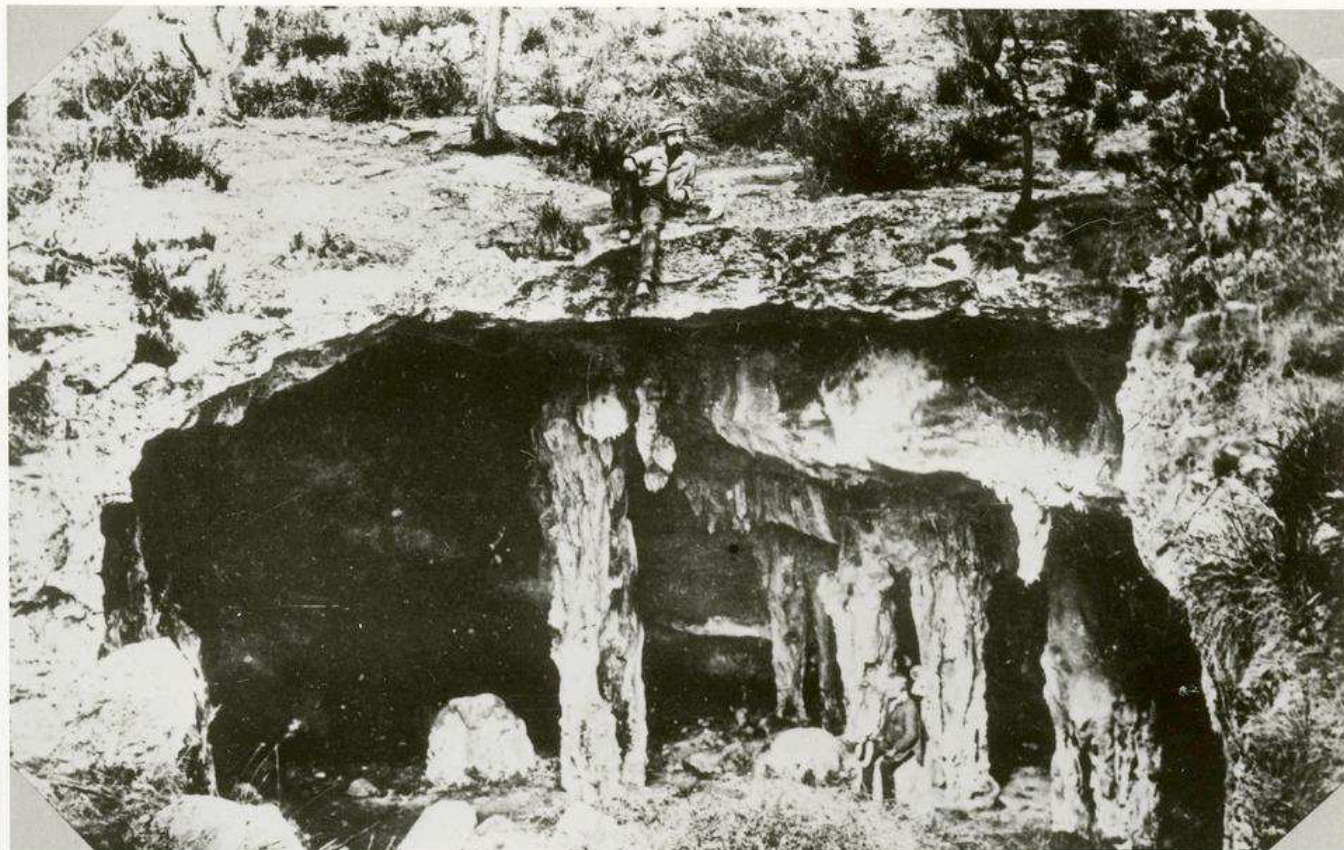


# THE MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPHER AND THE UNKNOWN ENGRAVING: NEW INFORMATION ON THE FIRST PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE NARACOORTE CAVES.

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**Figure 1.** Blanche Cave, 1860, photographer Thomas Hannay. Julian Tenison-Woods figured (State Library of South Australia, B36858).

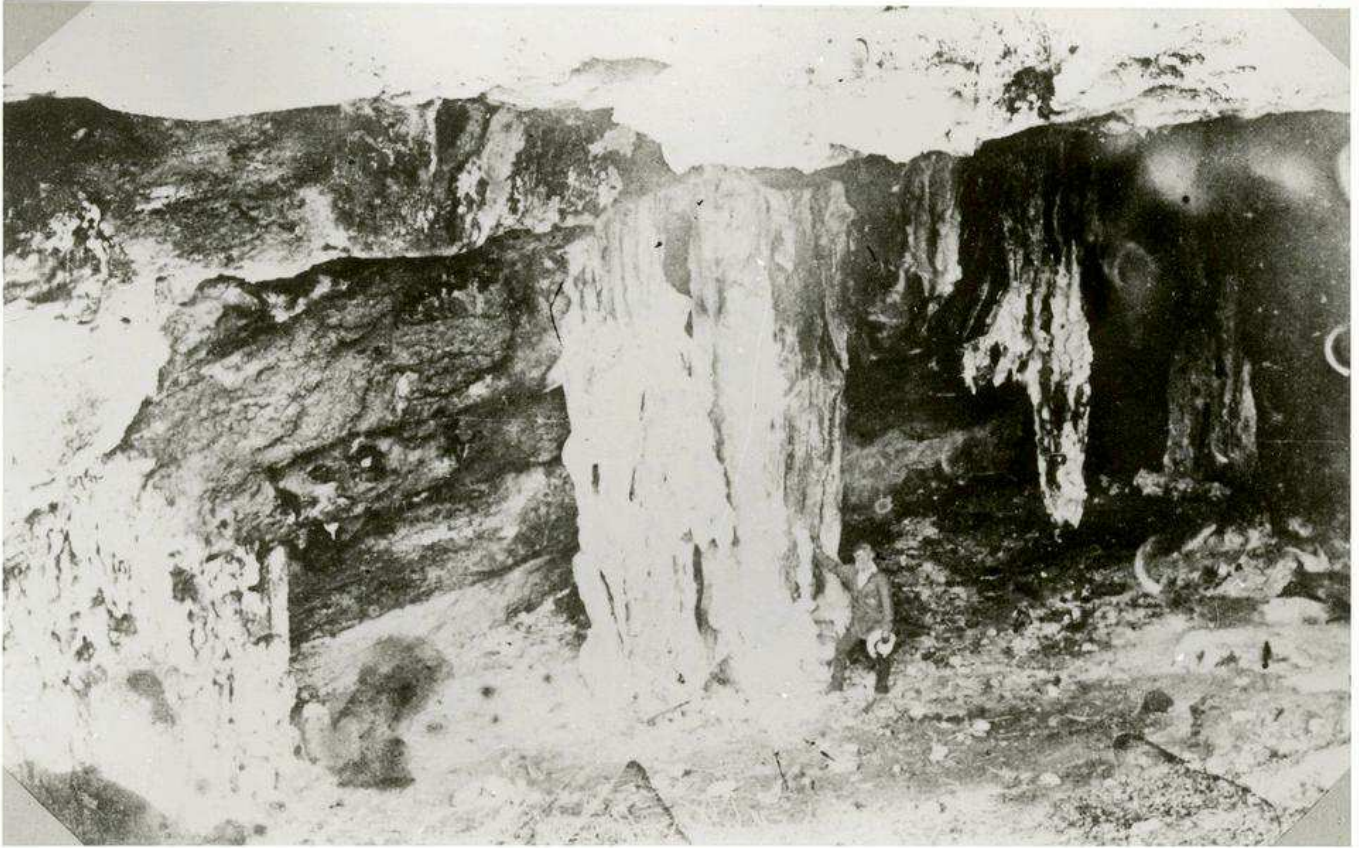
## The 'early' photographers: 1860 to 1880

The caves of Naracoorte have been popular photographic subjects for well over a century (Hamilton-Smith, 1986, 1997a; Reed & Bourne, 2013). The work of several photographers was reproduced for tourist postcards and stereo-views (Hamilton-Smith, 1997a; Reed & Bourne, 2013). The most famous were produced by William Augustus Francis, whose images centred on reproducing popular scenes of cave decorations from the show caves. Earlier photographs, captured between 1860 and 1880, revealed the caves in a more 'natural' state prior to tourism development. During this time, three separate photographers produced images of Blanche Cave, namely Thomas Washbourne, Samuel White Sweet and a 'mystery' photographer.

Thomas Jeston Washbourne (1832 – 1905) of Geelong in Victoria, was an itinerant photographer who worked around Victoria and South Australia in the 1860s and 1870s. Well known for his stereo-views of landscapes, towns and settler life, he also made several studio portraits of Aboriginal people. His work is currently held in the State Library of Victoria, The National Portrait Gallery and various other Australian

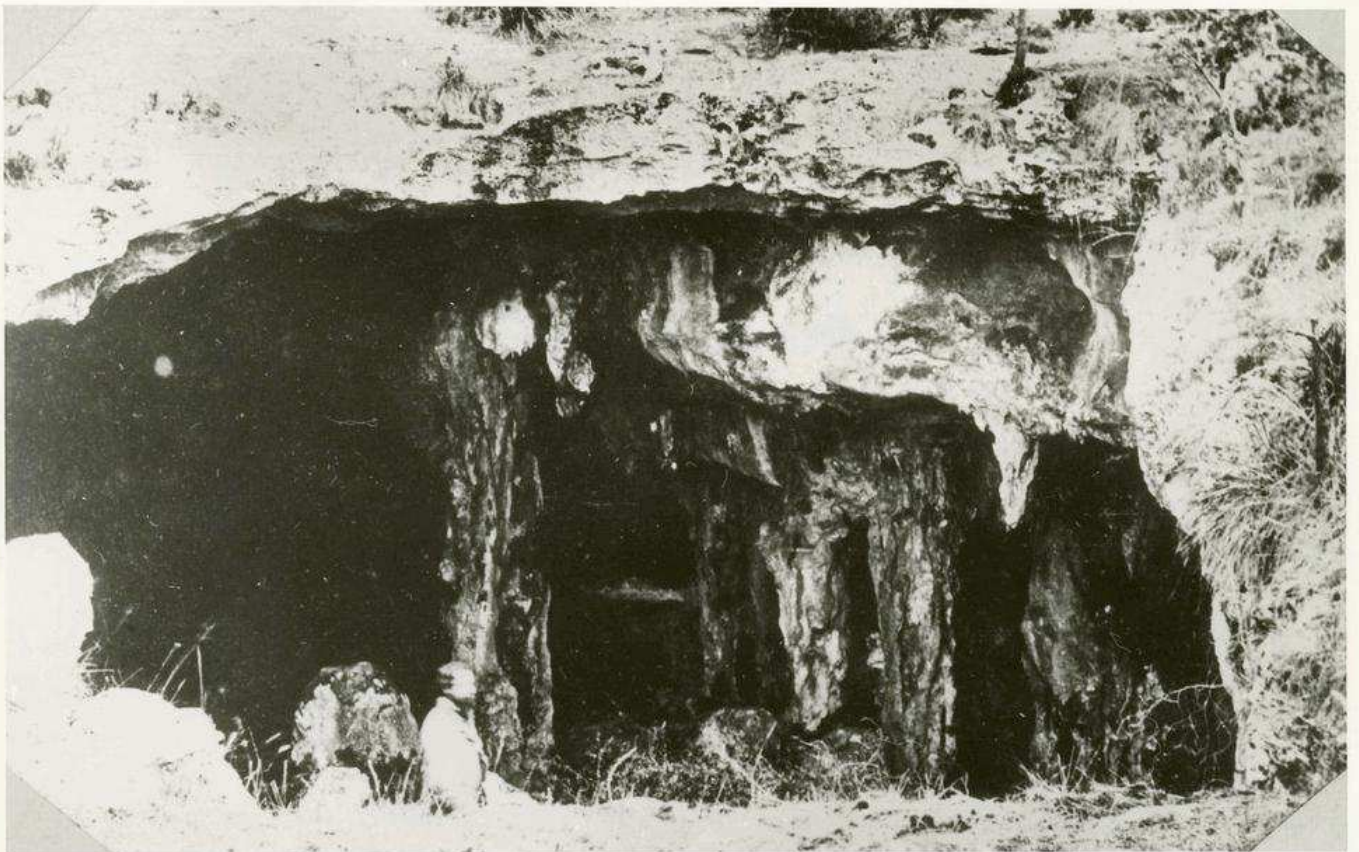
collections. In 1879 he took a series of five images of Blanche Cave (State Library of Victoria - H96.160/227, H96.160/228, H96.160/229, H96.160/230, H96.160/231). These provide rare insight into the appearance of the cave prior to heavy modification undertaken by William Reddan in the late 1880s and 1890s. The Washbourne photographs were later used as the basis for illustrations that appeared in books, journals and *The Naracoorte Herald* in 1889 and 1895 (Hamilton-Smith, 1997b; Reed & Bourne, 2013).

Captain Samuel White Sweet (1825-1886) was a sea captain and surveyor who upon retirement, opened a photographic studio in Adelaide and produced numerous landscapes and studies of Adelaide. He travelled around the state with his horse-drawn dark room in tow, and became the Colony of South Australia's leading documentary photographer during the 1870s (Sierp, 1976). He was one of the first to use the dry-plate (or gelatin) process, invented in 1871 (Sierp, 1976). This process allowed plates to be transported, exposed and processed at a subsequent date, which was ideal for a travelling photographer. Around 1880, Captain Sweet produced two images of Blanche Cave, likely made using the dry-plate



Above. **Figure 2.** Blanche Cave, 1860, photographer Thomas Hannay (State Library of South Australia, B36859).

Below. **Figure 3.** Blanche Cave, 1860, photographer Thomas Hannay. Julian Tenison-Woods figured (State Library of South Australia, B36860).



process. The photographs were taken adjacent to the second and third roof window entrances of the cave (State Library of South Australia - B 72111/143 and B72111/144). Sweet also produced an image of Umpherston's Sinkhole in Mount Gambier (State Library of South Australia - B7211/168).

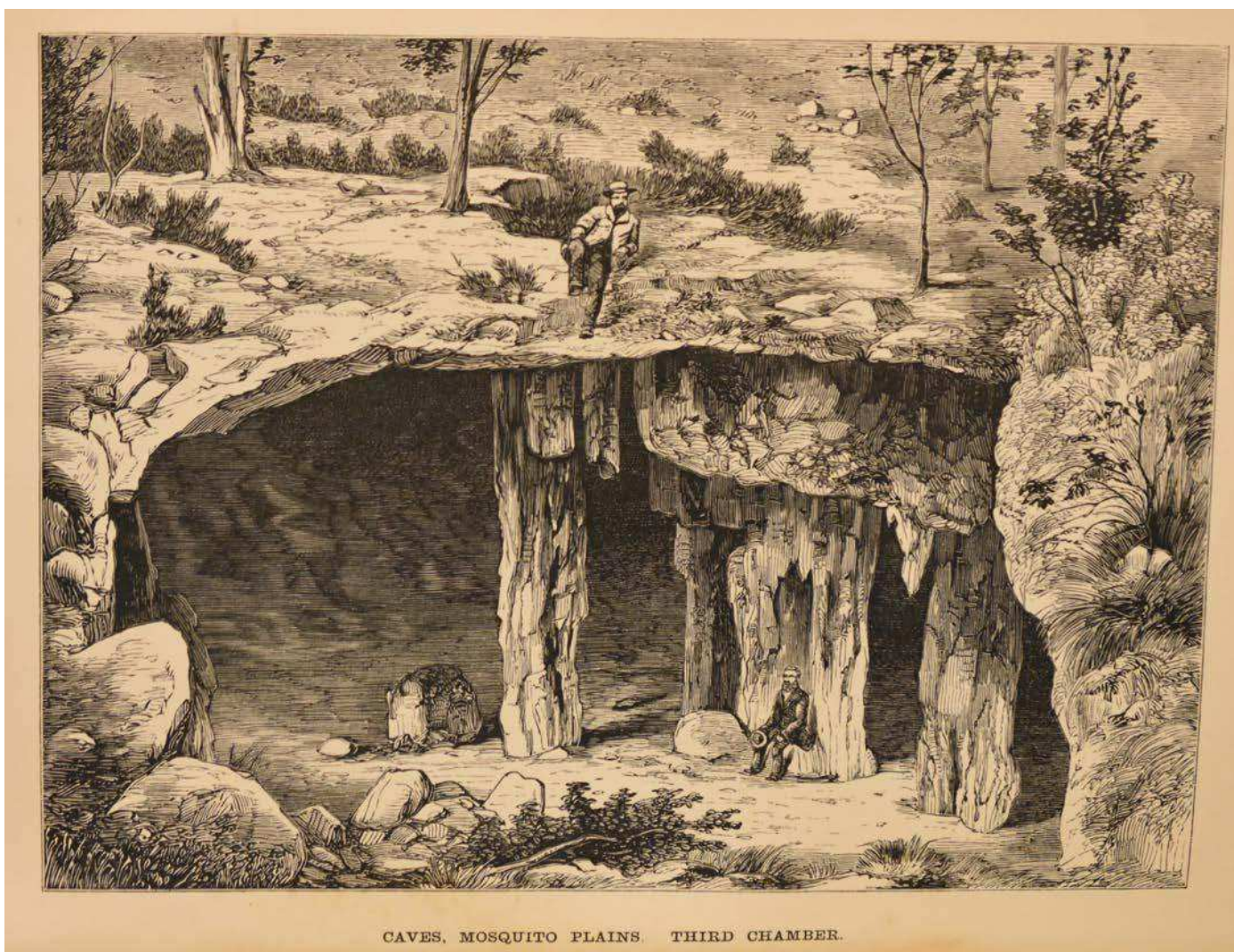
However, the most singular early photographs of the Naracoorte Caves were also the first. In 1860 an unknown photographer recorded three images of Blanche Cave (Hamilton-Smith, 1986, 1997a; Reed & Bourne, 2013). They are significant as Reverend Julian Tenison-Woods is present in two of the images. There is also the strong likelihood that they were the first photographs taken in an Australian cave (Hamilton-Smith pers. comm. 2004).

In this paper, I outline information regarding the identity of the 'mystery' photographer, and provide some context for the 1860 Blanche Cave photographs. I also highlight a previously unrecorded engraving, derived from one of the 1860 images, and created in 1862 by one of the most renowned engravers of the time.

### Australia's first cave photographs?

A series of three photographs, taken in 1860, depict different views of Blanche Cave at 'Mosquito Plains' (now known as Naracoorte). These images are part of the collection of the State Library of South Australia (catalogue numbers - B36858, B36859 and B36860). One photograph shows Reverend Julian Tenison-Woods reclining at the surface near the second roof window, with his leg draped casually over the lip of the entrance (Figure 1). Another shows a view looking down into the the cave from the surface above the third roof window, with an unknown gentleman leaning against a large column (Figure 2). The third image captures a scene of the second roof window with a gentleman who looks to be Tenison-Woods, standing in the foreground (Figure 3).

The photographs provide important historical images of Tenison-Woods at a time when he was actively writing about the geological and palaeontological aspects of the cave; just three years after his original visit in 1857 (Reed & Bourne, 2013). Importantly, the photos were taken only two years prior to the publication of his book "Geological Observations in South



**Figure 4.** "Caves of Mosquito Plains Third Chamber", woodcut by Alexander Burkitt, photographed from a copy of Woods (1862).

<sup>1</sup> There are two of Burkitt's woodcuts presented in Woods (1862). The first is on the frontispiece, captioned "Caves, Mosquito Plains Third Chamber" (Figure 4). This image is actually from the second roof window entrance at the end of the first chamber as it is known today. Reed & Bourne (2013) indicated this was the third entrance, following other publications and the caption on the image, but on closer inspection it is the second. The other woodcut is shown on Page 325, with the caption "Caves, Mosquito Plains Second Chamber" (Figure 5). It is important to note that while the image shows part of what is now known as the second chamber, the entrance shown is the third roof window.

Australia: principally in the district South-East of Adelaide” (Woods, 1862). Hamilton-Smith (1997a) suggested the photographs were commissioned by Tenison-Woods to provide a reference for Alexander Burkitt to produce illustrations for Woods’ 1862 book:

*“The remarkable Father Julian Tenison Woods had three photographs taken of the Blanche Caves at Naracoorte in South Australia. These were then used as the basis of Burkitt’s illustrations in Woods’ 1862 monograph Geological Observations in South Australia. Although copies of the photographs exist, the location of any original prints is unknown, and the identity of the photographer similarly remains a mystery. It may have been Burkitt himself, or perhaps one of the itinerant photographers who toured rural areas at the time”.* Hamilton-Smith (1997a).

The commission of the photographs by Tenison-Woods, for the purpose of illustrating his book, may explain why he is posed so conspicuously in the images (Figures 1 & 3).

Elerly Hamilton-Smith asserted that these photographs were the first to be taken in an Australian cave and emphasised many times that the photographer was unknown:

*“.....the unknown photographer who provided the pictures of Tenison-Woods at the caves was also the first to photograph an Australian cave”* (Hamilton-Smith, pers. comm. 2004 from an unpublished manuscript).

Indeed, the collection records of the State Library confirm that there is no record of the photographer’s identity. My recent research sheds new light on this mystery.

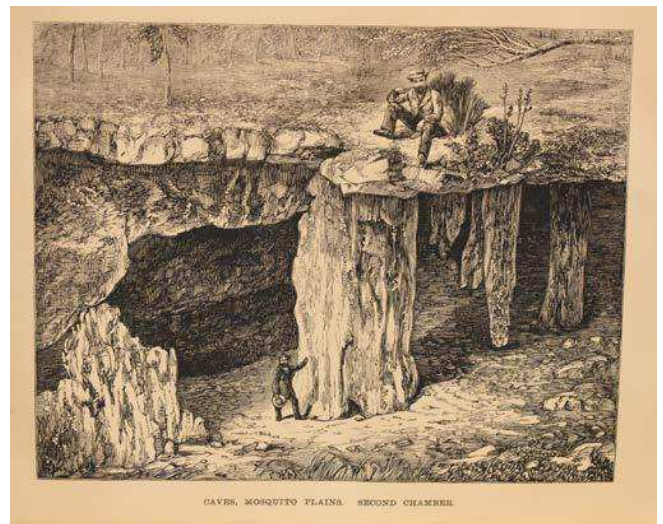
### The ‘mystery’ photographer revealed

At least two artists produced works based on the 1860 photographs of the cave entrance. Alexander Burkitt combined elements from the photographs in his woodcuts, two of which featured in the 1862 book by Woods<sup>1</sup> (Figures 4 & 5). A later engraving faithfully reproduces the photo of Woods sitting on the edge of the cave entrance (Figure 6) and was published in *The Leader*, a weekly journal of news, politics, literature and art (Melbourne, Saturday, March 22, 1862, page 1 No. 325, Volume 10). The accompanying story, titled “The Mosquito Plains Caves”, is a very entertaining account of a visit to Blanche Cave in 1862. The caption for the artwork reads: “Mosquito Plains Caves. From a photograph by Thomas Hannay, Maldon”.

The most important revelation from this article is the identification of the original photographer as Mr. Thomas Hannay of Maldon, Victoria. However, tracking down the correct Mr. Hannay has not been straight forward. Two gentlemen sharing the same name lived in Maldon at the time the photographs were taken and they were father and son. Thus, it is not precisely clear exactly which of the two was the photographer responsible for the Blanche Cave photographs. It is tempting to speculate that it may well have been Thomas Hannay Senior, as the junior Hannay was very prominent in the Maldon community as a marksman yet there is no mention linking him to photography.

Charles Thomas Hannay (known as Thomas Hannay) was born in 1805 and passed away in Maldon on 6<sup>th</sup> of December 1883, aged 78. He was formerly of Barwhirran, Wigtownshire, Scotland. News of his passing appeared in several papers including *The Mount Alexander Mail*, Friday 7<sup>th</sup> December 1883:

*“Great regret was expressed at Maldon yesterday when it became known that Mr Thomas Hannay, father of the well-known marksman, had died at half-past two o’clock in that morning. The deceased had not been in the best of health lately, and the cause of death is attributed to breaking up of the constitution. Mr Hannay was a very old and respected resident of Maldon, and he leaves behind him a great number of friends, who lament his demise.”*



**Figure 5.** “Caves of Mosquito Plains Second Chamber”, woodcut by Alexander Burkitt, photographed from a copy of Woods (1862).

His son, Thomas Hannay, was born in 1834 and became well known in Maldon. He served as a Councillor, Justice of the Peace, member of the Board of Management for Maldon Hospital (1872-1873), and later as a Magistrate for the Maldon District (from 1882). Renowned as an expert marksman and a member of the successful ‘Maldon Rifles’, he won many prizes for shooting. The following appeared in *The Age* in 1878 with regard to a contest between the Maldon Rifles and Southern Rifles:

*“The return match between these corps was fired at Maldon on Good Friday, the first of the rub having taken place at Castlemaine as far back as July, 1876, when the Southern were victorious by fourteen points. On that occasion the weapons used were the old Enfield rifles. The conditions of this one were Martini-Henry rifles, 400, 500 and 600 yards, one sighter and seven rounds each. .... At an early stage of the match it was very apparent that the visitors were completely overmatched, ..... Hannay’s score of 96 points, with a miss at 600 yards, is simply magnificent.”*

*The Age* (Melbourne), Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 1878, page 4.

Thomas Hannay passed away in Melbourne on September 22nd 1897 after a long illness. He remained fairly active until just days before his death

*“The death of Mr. Thomas Hannay, J.P., superintendent of the Immigrants’ Home, Royal Park, took place on Wednesday at the institution, over which the deceased had had control for the past five and a half years. Mr. Hannay was well known at Maldon for over a period of 30 years, where he occupied the position of councillor. Probably his career as a prominent member of the volunteer force 20 years back will be well remembered, his skill as a marksman enabling him to win many valuable prizes. For the past seven months Mr. Hannay had suffered from a painful illness, but until a few days back was enabled to perform his duties. He then was compelled to take to his bed, and was attended up to the time of his death by Dr. Louis Henry. The remains of deceased will be removed to Maldon to-day for interment.”*

*The Age* (Melbourne), Friday 24<sup>th</sup> of September 1897, page 6.

The photographer known as Thomas Hannay was particularly active around Portland and regional Victoria in the late 1850s. He recorded images of important properties and businesses in the district and nearly 100 of his photographs are curated as part of the State Library of Victoria’s photographic collection. Many of these relate to rural localities around Victoria,



THE MOSQUITO PLAINS CAVES.  
FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY THOMAS HANNAY, MALDON.

**Figure 6.** *The Leader: a weekly journal of news, politics, literature and art*  
(Melbourne, Saturday, March 22, 1862, page 1 No. 325, Volume 10).

including some particularly interesting images of local Aboriginal people. Hannay appears also to have been a keen photographer of horses, and several images depict draught horses proudly displayed by their owners.

Hannay was considered to be an amateur photographer, and may have also been known as H. H. Hannah who exhibited photographs in Geelong in 1857 (Design & Art Australia Online [www.daa.org.au](http://www.daa.org.au)). He caused a stir in 1859 when his photographs were chosen for publication in *The Portland Chronicle* over those of the district's professional photographer John Richardson, who was fresh from studying at the Royal Academy in London.

#### **A tale of two artists...**

This story does not end with the identification of Thomas Hannay (Senior or Junior) as the 1860 photographer. The 1862 engraving is itself a new source of information, and appears to be a previously unrecorded work. It was not listed in Hamilton-Smith (1997b), and I have not seen any mention of it elsewhere. The signatures of two artists are apparent on the engraving. The single word 'CALVERT' appears at the bottom centre and the initials 'NC' on the far left. After comparison with signatures from multiple artworks, I have found the identity of these artists. The central signature is that of renowned engraver Samuel Calvert and the initials belong to the well-known artist Nicholas Chevalier.

Calvert and Chevalier were contemporaries, who produced work for the same periodicals. Many examples exist in Australian collections of engravings produced by Samuel Calvert from drawings and paintings by Nicholas Chevalier. It would appear then, that Chevalier produced a drawing or painting from Hannay's 1860 photograph, and this was used by Calvert to create a wood engraving. The presence of both signatures suggests some element of collaboration between the two artists. Work by Calvert and Chevalier was exhibited in Melbourne in 1873 as part of an exhibition of wood engravings published in Victoria. Interestingly, a piece by Robert Bruce called Stalactite Caves was also exhibited. It represents another image of Blanche Cave and appeared in *The Illustrated Australian News* in 1869 (Reed & Bourne, 2013).

Samuel Calvert was born in Brixton, England on November 21, 1828 and was the son of renowned engraver Edward Calvert. He was surrounded by art from a young age and his father taught him painting, engraving and etching. He left London in 1848 for South Australia, arriving in November and gaining employment at a printers on King William Street in Adelaide. By 1850, Calvert had set up a studio and was producing illustrations for *The Monthly Almanac and Illustrated Commentator*, of which he was co-proprietor (Darragh, 1992).

He moved to Melbourne in 1852 and continued as a wood-engraver, creating illustrations for several periodicals in partnership with his brother William. Calvert later had success tendering for the engraving and printing of Victorian postage stamps, but a subsequent legal battle to receive payment for these and his effort to fund the project by selling the stamps to raise funds, saw him convicted of fraud and narrowly escaping a prison sentence. He declared bankruptcy in 1858 (Darragh, 1992). At the time of completing the engraving of Blanche Cave in 1862, Calvert was once again completing commissioned work for periodicals including *The Leader*. He was renowned for being a prolific worker, publishing in nearly all of the Melbourne papers. Over the next 20 years he maintained his excellent reputation as an artist, and throughout his career produced work that was exhibited in Australia and London. He was also an accomplished painter and was active in the Victorian Academy of Arts until 1887 (Darragh, 1992). He died in Berkshire, England on the 1st of January 1913.

Nicholas Chevalier was born on the 9th of May 1828 in St Petersburg, Russia. He studied painting and architecture in Switzerland, Germany and Italy before moving to London in 1851 where he enjoyed success as a painter, lithographer, illustrator and designer (Tipping, 1969). In 1852 he became well-known for designing the setting for the Koh-i-noor diamond (now featured in the Queen Mother's Crown), and a fountain for Queen Victoria (Tipping, 1969). Chevalier was sent to Melbourne by his father in 1855 to join his brother in attending to their family's business interests. He worked as a painter and illustrator, producing work for *Melbourne Punch* and *The*

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*Illustrated Australian News*. In 1864, an oil painting by Chevalier titled *The Buffalo Ranges* was selected as the best piece in an exhibition of Victorian painters and was purchased by the New National Gallery of Victoria for £200 (Tipping, 1969). It was the first Australian painting added to the collection. Chevalier was also the first to introduce chromolithography to Australia, with a selection of 12 of his works published in 1865.

Biographers note that Nicholas Chevalier was a charming, handsome man, whose personality was probably more influential than his art (Tipping, 1969). He spoke six languages and was also an accomplished violinist. Upon returning from travels in New Zealand during 1865-1867, he joined the Duke of Edinburgh and party in Tasmania in 1868 and impressed all with his illustrations. He again joined the royal party the following year, sailing to London via the East and Pacific islands, producing over 100 artistic works for Queen Victoria (Tipping, 1969). Once back in London he spent many happy years completing royal commissions and produced various scenes from his travels. He maintained ties with Australia as adviser to the National Gallery of New South Wales. Chevalier died in London on 15 March 1902.

## The mystery continues

The discovery of Calvert's 1862 Blanche Cave engraving has highlighted synergies between several important artists who were active during the 1850s and 1860s in Victoria and South Australia. Further research will hopefully reveal which of the Messrs. Thomas Hannay is the photographer responsible for the 1860 Blanche Cave photographs, commissioned by Julian Tenison-Woods. Hannay's images are significant not only as the first photographs of Naracoorte Caves and likely of an Australian cave, but also for their association with important figures such as Tenison-Woods, Samuel Calvert and Nicholas Chevalier.

The scientific and humanitarian contribution of Tenison-Woods to the South East of South Australia is immense and widely recognised. The artists Thomas Washbourne, Samuel White Sweet, Samuel Calvert, Nicholas Chevalier and Thomas Hannay also left behind an important legacy, and one for which we owe a debt of gratitude for their insightful documentation of early life in the colonies.

## Acknowledgements

I dedicate this paper to the late Elery Hamilton-Smith, who fueled my interest in the history of Naracoorte Caves. I remember many wonderful discussions with Elery regarding Tenison-Woods and various aspects of cave history. Elery would have enjoyed the new discoveries revealed in this paper. Thanks also to the National Library of Australia for Trove, which is nirvana for the history obsessed.