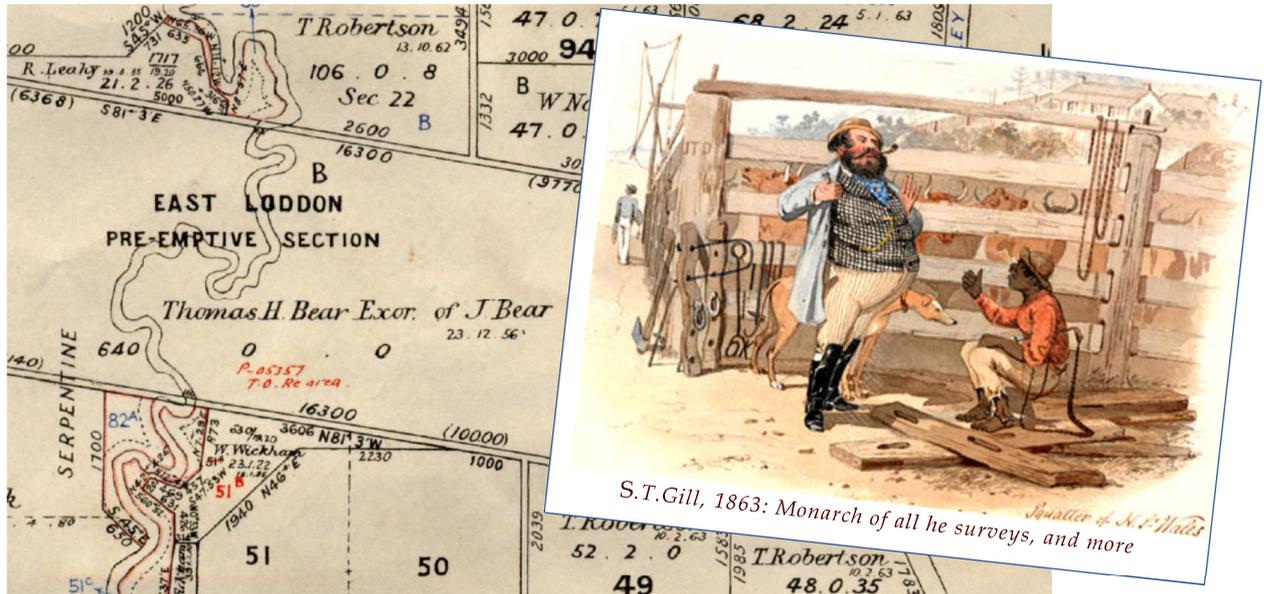


LEX LOCI'S TRAVELS

10 JULY 2017

Lex joins the Squattocracy



As Lex heads up the Loddon Highway to Kerang, he ponders the plight of poor Squatter Bear – his run cut in 1856 from 30,000 acres to a mere 640.

As he gets around Victoria, Lex comes across them all the time. Not the squatters themselves, but their land.

Tracts of land whose history is different, and known as Pre-emptive Rights. There are about a thousand of them across the State, and nearly every one is exactly 640 acres in area.

To a casual observer they look just like any other tract of freehold land. To the people who live on them, or subdivide them, or buy and sell land within them, they are just freehold land. But history tells us they are different.

Our social image of the squatter comes from *Waltzing Matilda*: mounted on his thoroughbred, and backed up by the law in the form of troopers, one, two, three.

In reality, the squatters' vast runs could hardly be described as authorised by law. Their pastoral licences were issued in far-away Sydney, under the authority of the

Colonial Secretary in even further-away Westminster.

White-fellas' rule of law was established later, in the personage of the mounted policeman, the magistrate, the surveyor, and the 'Protector of Aborigines.'

Other settlers were entitled to bid for Crown Allotments, but only after the squatters had claimed their 'pre-emptive right' to one square mile of their run.

Invariably, they chose the most fertile one square mile (640 acres) in the river valley. The gazettals make interesting reading: each squatter didn't *apply* for their PR but *demand*ed it.

Lex plans to put in a few demands. To demand his right to pre-empt everybody else. Trouble is, he isn't mounted on a thoroughbred. Bad luck, Lex.

See you there! Lex Loci