

Beaufoy Merlin: showman and photographer, 1840-1873

Paper presented by Geoffrey Barker at Heritage in the Limelight, the magic lantern and and world, Symposium at ANU, 4-6 September 2018.

In 1951 one of Australia's most significant collections of nineteenth century photographs was found in a garden shed in Chatswood, Sydney.¹ The 3700 glass plate negatives had been gathering dust for some 80 years after being moved from the North Shore mansion of Bernard Holtermann by his son Leonard.²

Most of the negatives were taken between 1872 and 1876 and, although owned by Holtermann, the bulk of them were made by Henry Beaufoy Merlin, Charles Bayliss and perhaps other unidentified photographers working for the American and Australasian Photographic Company (AAPC).³

It was Merlin, the founder of the AAPC, who took most of the earlier landscape views and who, over an incredible ten years between 1863 and 1873, transformed himself from a theatrical showman into a landscape photographer, acknowledged by his contemporaries as one of the most important in Australia.⁴ At the time of his death, the photographs he was taking for Bernard Holtermann's Exposition were acknowledged as being:

*as remarkable for their beauty of finish as they are commendable for the good taste in regard to the selection of each locality represented.*⁵

Figure 1. Henry Beaufoy Merlin, [attributed] American and Australasian Photographic Company, digital copy from collodion quarter plate glass negative, ca. 1872, State Library of New South Wales, ON 4 Box 30 No 68

Henry was the son of Frederik and Ann Harriett Merlin (Murlin) and was probably born in London in 1830. He appears to have had an association with the theatre from an early age and there is some evidence suggesting he worked at the Royal Olympic Theatre in London when he was 17.⁶ After the death of his father in 1845, he came to Australia with his mother, arriving in Sydney in December 1848.⁷

¹ Unknown, 'Old Photographs Tell Story of Gold Rush', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (28 February 1951), 2.

² Unknown, 'Family Notices', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (12 October 1951), 18.

³ Nearly half of the collection of negatives are studio portraits which appear to have been taken at Hill End and Tambaroora. It is reasonable to assume these were taken on the premises of the AAPC established in both New South Wales towns. Less certain is Merlin's role for although he was a renowned landscape photographer he is also known to have employed professional portrait photographers at his Sydney Offices. Unknown, 'Advertising', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (24 August 1877), 1.

⁴ Unknown, 'Intercolonial News', *The Queenslander* (19 January 1873), 9.

⁵ Unknown, 'General News', *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* (5 August 1873), 3.

⁶ R. Bradshaw, 'The Merlin of the South', *Australasian Drama Studies*, no 7, Oct 1985, 87.

⁷ Richard Bradshaw, 'Henry Beaufoy Merlin', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2005, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/merlin-henry-beaufoy-13096/text23693>.

In 1851 Ann married Henry John Forster.⁸ The *Sydney Morning Herald* records that the bride's name was Anne Harriett Murlin, daughter of Benjamin Beaufoy.⁹ After his mother's marriage to Foster, Merlin took to using a number of different names before finally settling on Beaufoy Merlin, leading to some confusion around his early history.¹⁰

Figure 2. *Bombastes Furioso*, George Cruickshank, *Burlesque plays and poems / with an introduction by Henry Morley*. (Morley's universal library), 1885, London: George Routledge and Sons.

In August 1852 *Freeman's Journal* announced the opening of the Royal Marionette Theatre, in the saloon of the Royal Hotel, Sydney. These shows, popular in London, were a mixture of technology, farce and music incorporating live actors, puppets, panoramas, magic lantern shows and song.¹¹ It is possible Merlin was involved in this project because in May 1853, records show that a Henry Murlin took out a licence to establish a Marionette theatre, 'executed with mechanical figures,' in the old *Olympic Circus* building in Castlereagh Street, Sydney.¹² A month later Murlin went on the road with the 'burlesque theatre' and held successful shows, which included a performance of *Bombastes Furioso* by William Rhodes.¹³

Merlin appears to have found new opportunities in Maitland where he set up an amateur theatre and started referring to himself Henry B. Muriel.¹⁴ By 1855 Mr Muriel's mechanical theatre had settled in Maitland, where they performed a show featuring paintings and scenes from the Crimea.¹⁵ Around the middle of 1856 Merlin opened a 'beautiful little' theatre in High Street, Maitland. Named the 'Queen's Theatre' Merlin erected the boxes in a way that would allow it to accommodate 300 people and booked a number of 'old stagers' for the opening.¹⁶ The following year, after the Maitland theatre burned to the ground, Merlin moved to Newcastle and worked as manager, actor and painter of scenery for 'The Newcastle Theatre.'¹⁷ This new project was bankrolled by Mr. Croft, of the Commercial Hotel, and once completed seated 350 people.¹⁸

After a few shows Merlin decided to leave Newcastle and, in May 1857, he applied for a license to exhibit panoramas in Sydney.¹⁹ A year later he was still in Sydney and in June 1858, he opened:

⁸ Bradshaw also notes that Merlin's step-father, Henry Forster, had sometimes appeared in reports as 'Foster'. Richard Bradshaw, 'Henry Beaufoy Merlin', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2005, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/merlin-henry-beaufoy-13096/text23693>.

⁹ Unknown, 'Family Notices', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (12 March 1851), 3. and R. Bradshaw, 'The Merlin of the South', *Australasian Drama Studies*, no 7, Oct 1985, 87.

¹⁰ R. Bradshaw, 'The Merlin of the South', *Australasian Drama Studies*, no 7, Oct 1985, 87.

¹¹ Unknown, 'Opening of the Royal Marionette Theatre Sydney', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (14 September 1852), 1.

¹² R. Bradshaw, 'The Merlin of the South', *Australasian Drama Studies*, no 7, Oct 1985, 89.

¹³ Unknown, 'Classified Advertising', *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, (1 June 1853), 3.

¹⁴ R. Bradshaw, 'The Merlin of the South', *Australasian Drama Studies*, no 7, Oct 1985, 84.

¹⁵ Richard Bradshaw, 'Henry Beaufoy Merlin', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2005.

¹⁶ Unknown, Hunter River District, *Empire*, (26 May 1856), 3.

¹⁷ Unknown, 'Newcastle', *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, (3 February 1857), 2.

¹⁸ Unknown, 'Newcastle', *The Empire*, (4 February 1857), 4.

¹⁹ R. Bradshaw, 'The Merlin of the South', *Australasian Drama Studies*, no 7, Oct 1985, 119.

*a new exhibition on Monday, with a private view at the Lyceum [Lyceum Theatre, Sydney], of what he terms an Indian Panorama a la Mont Blanc. I hope it will be in, and not after, the style of Albert Smith.*²⁰

This last comment was a reference to the English showman whose account of his ascent of the mountain had taken London by storm after it opened in 1852.²¹ Merlin's Indian panorama, painted by himself and a Mr. Guy, seems to have followed a similar formula.²² This involved a series of scrolling panoramic scenes and projections over which a narrator would recount tales, offer scientific snippets, sing songs and offer humorous vignettes.²³ All of which was enhanced by lighting effects and sometimes musical accompaniment.²⁴ Within a few weeks of its opening Merlin added a new scene to the production titled *The Storming of Delhi, from the Cashmere* [sic.] *Gate*, presumably highlighting events from the Indian rebellion the year before.²⁵ After opening in mid-June the last performance was advertised just a few weeks later, for Saturday 26 June, 1858.²⁶ Subsequently it was performed, for one night only, at Parramatta in the King's School.²⁷

In September, after retouching the 'Indian Panorama' and adding some new scenes, Merlin started touring it again, but on a smaller scale outside the main theatres. The first showing was for 'one night only' at the School of Arts on 27 September 1858.²⁸ This was followed on the 4 October with another performance at the School of Arts and later that week another in Wollongong with Mr. Packer on the grand organ, Miss Flora Harris singing, and H. Merlin giving the 'illustrative lecture'.²⁹ From third to the fifth of November Merlin presented the panorama at the long room of the old barracks in Windsor alongside a series of lectures on phrenology given by Mrs. Beer.³⁰ It is interesting that this event also mentions that Guy was, 'well known as a photographic and scenic artist in this city for some years past,' and given Merlin's later photographic work it is worth considering what role Guy may have played in introducing him to the medium.³¹

The 'Indian Panorama' seems to have been at the centre of Merlin's business from the time it opened in Sydney, but at the end of November 1858 this advertisement appeared in *Bell's Life*:

²⁰ Unknown, 'Sydney', *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle*, (19 June 1858), 2.

²¹ Raymond Fitzsimons, *The Baron of Piccadilly*, Geoffrey Bles, London, 1967.

²² 'Indian Panorama -Painted by Mesrs. Gny and Merlin. The proprietors of the Indian Panorama have much pleasure in announcing that the whole has been carefully and elaborately re-touched, new scenes added, and the descriptive oration recast, so as to render it not only a popular commentary on the recent tragic events in India, but an accurate description of the prominent characteristics of Indian scenery, manners, io. The Panorama will, prior to its removal from Sydney, be exhibited in a few days for one night only.' Unknown, 'Indian Panorama', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (13 September 1858), 1.

²³ Unknown, 'The Grand Indian Panorama', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (15 June 1858), 1.

²⁴ Shortly after closing in Sydney a 'Grand Moving Panorama of the Indian War' opened in Melbourne which appears to have been like the one shown in Sydney. Unknown, 'Advertising', *The Argus*, (16 July 1858) 8.

²⁵ Unknown, 'Advertising', *Empire*, (21 June 1858), 1.

²⁶ This advertisement also contains a complete breakdown of the scenic and musical programs. Unknown, 'Advertising', *Empire*, (26 June 1858), 1.

²⁷ Unknown, 'Advertising', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (26 June 1858), 1.

²⁸ Unknown, 'Indian Panorama', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (13 September 1858), 1.

²⁹ Unknown, 'Indian Panorama', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (4 October 1858), 1.

³⁰ Unknown, 'Lecturers', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (6 November 1858), 4.

³¹ Unknown, 'Panorama of India', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (15 June 1858), 5.

For unreserved sale (privately) in consequence of the ill health of the proprietor ... Mr Robert Muriel, has received instructions from the owners to sell privately, the well-known Indian Panorama, which has attracted thousands on each presentation. The whole is comprised in a small compass very conveniently arranged for shipment or the transmission into the interior of the colony, as follows:

- No. 1. - *A case containing the panorama and fittings*
2. - *2400 square feet of canvas*
3. - *Frame dovetailed together, can be put together in an hour*
4. - *Various set pieces, also packing in a small compass*
- 5 - *Reflectors and looking glasses*
- 6.- *85 yards of purple velvet, trimmed and curtains for fitting up*
7. - *Printing block of the word India, the cutting alone cost [pounds] 20*³²

This description of the panorama is careful to highlight the ease with which it could be travelled and the fact that there was still an audience for the entertainment outside of the major cities. The advertisement also refers to the illness of the proprietor as the main reason for the sale. While this may have been true it could also be a ploy to help sell the panorama. Just a month earlier Merlin was well enough to appear at a mayoral ball in Sydney. His Mephistopheles costume was singled out as being the best in the room, and it was mentioned that he, ‘made an equally distinguished appearance as Bluebeard at Mr. Thornton’s Ball last year.’³³

Regardless, it is interesting to speculate on whether Merlin was suffering from some illness, given details of his life over the next few years are hard to find. Possibly this was a reason for leaving the theatre, or even Australia.

Figure 3. Louisa Eleanor Merlin, with Brewster stereo-viewer, [attributed] American and Australasian Photographic Company, digital copy from collodion quarter plate glass negative, ca. 1872, State Library of New South Wales, ON 4 Box 28 No 1507

While details of Merlin’s general movements are sketchy, over the next few years we do know that in 1863 he was back England. In January Henry Beaufoy Merlin married Louisa Eleanor Foster at the church of St Mary in Bow, Middlesex, and it was under this name he and Louisa moved back to Australia.³⁴ By July they were settled in Melbourne where Merlin embarked on a new enterprise.³⁵ This was based on a theatrical sensation which had swept through London in the months prior to their departure:

³² It is interesting to note that the auctioneer Robert Muriel shares the same last name being used by Merlin over this period. Even given the range of names already identified by Richard Bradshaw it may be that there is still more research needed to identify why Merlin took on various pseudonyms. Robert Muriel, ‘The Indian panorama’, *Bell’s Life in Sydney and Sporting Reviewer*, (27 November 1858), 1.

³³ Unknown, ‘Notes of the Week’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (4 October 1858), 3.

³⁴ R. Bradshaw, ‘The Merlin of the South’, *Australasian Drama Studies*, no 7, Oct 1985, 121.

³⁵ Bradshaw notes that Louisa’s father is also listed as being Henry Foster. “... a Commander of the P & O Company, so we have the remarkable situation that ‘Henry Foster’ could refer to Merlin’s father-in-law, step-father or step-brother. Perhaps there was some family connection.” Richard Bradshaw, ‘Henry Beaufoy Merlin’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2005, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/merlin-henry-beaufoy-13096/text23693>

*on the 22nd day of July, 1863. Edward Wollaston, chemist, Henry Beaufoy Merlin, artist, and Louis Laurence Smith, medical practitioner, all of Melbourne, have applied for a patent for 'An invention for the production of phantoms and apparitions,' and have deposited their specifications and drawings at this office, on the 6th. day of August 1863.*³⁶

Figure 4. Illustration of Pepper's Ghost used for theater performance, wood engraving, 1862, Le Monde Illustré

This spectral illusion, popularly known as 'Pepper's Ghost', used a series of angled sheets of glass to project a ghost onto the stage alongside the actors. A provisional patent had been lodged in England by John Henry Pepper and Henry Dircks in February 1863, and over the following months the performance took the London by storm.³⁷ Unfortunately for Dircks, the initial terms of the agreement cut him out of the profits and the unexpected success earned Dr. Pepper general acclaim as well as thousands of pounds.

Pepper was based in Middlesex so it is possible that Merlin saw some of the early demonstrations and, given his theatrical background, picked up a good idea of the secrets behind the illusion. Thus it is perhaps no surprise to see Merlin returning to Australia to cash in on the success he had witnessed. The first play chosen by Merlin and his partners for unveiling the ghost was a popular drama entitled 'The Castle Spectre' and:

*the ghost scenes - for the apparition has three appearances - were successful. So good indeed is the illusion, that those not learned in what passes behind the foot-lights, might easily have fancied that a visitant from the spirit-world had actually held possession of the stage for a time.*³⁸

Given the sums at stake, Merlin's rights were challenged by other illusionists like Mason and Martin, who registered a similar invention for creating spectral illusions in Victoria and New South Wales.³⁹ In the end, however, it seems to have been Merlin's consortium that was first to successfully perform the trick for the theatre here in Australia.⁴⁰

It is unclear if it was his restless spirit, local patent challenges, or the granting of the full patent to Dr. Pepper and Dircks in September 1863, which account for Merlin's short involvement in this theatrical run.⁴¹ In late September he was presenting 'The Ghost' in Castlemaine. But this time it was with no theatrical accompaniment and, instead, the illusion was presented by Merlin himself a part of a lecture on spiritualism.⁴² When a presentation of 'The Ghost' arrived at the Victoria Theatre in Adelaide in October 1863, it was Woolaston and a Mr. Solomon who were being credited as the main instigators.⁴³

³⁶ Unknown, 'Parliamentary Intelligence', *The McIvor Times and Rodney Advertiser*, (14 August 1863), 3.

³⁷ Professor Pepper, *The True Story of the Ghost*, Cassell and Co., London, 1890, 4.

³⁸ Unknown, 'News and Notes', *The Star*, (10 August 1863), 2.

³⁹ New South Wales, Parliament Legislative Assembly, 'A.D. 1863, 5th September. No. 79. Improvements in the Method of Producing Spectral Illusions', *Letters of Registration of Inventions*, Sydney Government Printer, Vol. 2, Nos. 63-122, 1855-1901.

⁴⁰ Unknown, 'News and Notes', *The Star*, (10 August 1863), 2.

⁴¹ Professor Pepper, *The True Story of the Ghost*, Cassell and Co., London, 1890, 4.

⁴² Unknown, 'The Ghost Again', *Mount Alexander Mail*, (29 September 1863), 2.

⁴³ Unknown, 'Topics of the Day', *The South Australian Advertiser*, (17 October 1863), 2.

By 1865 Merlin had moved away from theatrical presentations and started on the path that would bring him more lasting fame. On the 21 January 1865, under the name of H. Merlin, he opened the 'Kyneton Photographic Studio' in Piper Street, Kyneton, a small town in northern Victoria. The studio was completed at considerable expense and advertised instantaneous portraits, landscape and stereoscopic views, enlargements from *carte de visites* in crayon and in oil as well as an operating room, 'constructed on the principle recently designed by Mr Matheson of the Crystal Palace, and until the present occasion, never introduced to this colony.'⁴⁴

Importantly, he was already advertising his services to take photographs of public buildings and private residences, 'at moderate terms and on the shortest notice', as this would become one of the features of American and Australasian Photographic Company.⁴⁵ However it seems Merlin had dangerously extended his credit to set up the studio and without enough customers was, by May 1865, filing for insolvency. In particular he pointed out how, 'he had been deprived by the owner of the use of certain necessary implements he had on hire for the purpose of carrying on his business.'⁴⁶

By December 1865 the insolvency proceedings had been resolved and, with no more creditors, Merlin appears to have moved to Ballarat where his mother, now a widow, was also living.⁴⁷ Included in a description of the Ballarat District Exhibition for 1866, photographs by Roberts and Merlin of Ballarat are mentioned alongside Mrs. Forster's wax flowers and fruits which were described as being, 'so beautiful that it is difficult to wish for anything better.'⁴⁸

Merlin seems to have applied his great capacity for work to his newly found profession. By February 1869 his contemporaries were touting him as a successful travelling landscape photographer and his hectic schedule is described in the following newspaper article:

*We draw attention to an advertisement in another column announcing the arrival here of Mr Merlin, an artist and landscape photographer, of Victorian fame, who will stay here for a few days only. We understand Mr Merlin is at present engaged in filling up an album of landscapes for His Excellency the Governor of Victoria, which is now drawing near completion and is under engagement to be in Sydney during the visit of the Prince to take a series of sun pictures of the leading incidents connected with that visit. We may further state that Mr Merlin is highly spoken of by the press in the Western District of Victoria.*⁴⁹

A few days later the same paper recorded the speed and quality of Merlin's work:

⁴⁴ H Merlin, 'Advertising', *The Kyneton Observer*, (26 January 1865), 3.

⁴⁵ H Merlin, 'Advertising', *The Kyneton Observer*, (26 January 1865), 3.

⁴⁶ It is also notable that the total deficiency sought by creditors was £23 0s 6d which indicates Merlin had by this time not accumulated any great wealth from his various enterprises. Unknown, 'New Insolvents', *The Age*, (6 May 1865), 7.

⁴⁷ Although she was travelling under the name of Mrs Forster her husband had died in 1856. R. Bradshaw, 'The Merlin of the South', *Australasian Drama Studies*, no 7, Oct 1985, 106.

⁴⁸ R. Bradshaw in his article on Merlin mentions how his mother was a talented artist in wax flowers this is also mentioned in notices after Merlin's death in 1873. Unknown, 'Ballarat District Exhibition', *The Ballarat Star*, (3 September 1866), 4.

⁴⁹ Unknown, 'Landscape Photography', *Border Watch*, (17 February 1869), 2.

*We mentioned in our last that Mr Merlin was here on a photographic tour. It is evident he has not allowed the grass to grow under his feet, for we had the pleasure of inspecting a large number of very superior views of the lakes, of our streets, and principal public buildings yesterday.*⁵⁰

Merlin had not completely given up on the theatre as during his travels he still gave lantern slide lectures. In June 1869, he was at Emerald Hill giving a, 'highly-interesting and instructive lecture *The Pilgrim's Progress*, illustrated with beautiful dissolving views.'⁵¹ His experiences over this period must have convinced him that there was money to be made taking landscape and architectural views but the failure of his studio in Kyneton and his prior experience as a travelling showman seems to have encouraged him to set up a different kind of photographic business. On 21 June 1869, he formed the American and Australasian [sometimes recorded as Australian] Photographic Company (AAPC).

*A company called the American and Australian Photographic Company has been formed, for the purpose of carrying out photographic operations on an extensive scale. The company have an office in the city, but the headquarters of the landscape department is at Emerald Hill. The company commenced business on Monday.*⁵²

Initially the office in Melbourne was located at 73 Little Collins Street but it seems Merlin opened a second office, at 4 Barrack Street, Sydney, in September 1869.⁵³ Although the AAPC offices were located in the city, much of the business was being done in country areas.⁵⁴ The AAPC business model adopted a new methodology to increase the efficiency and mitigate the costs of travelling to country towns. And this seems in part shaped by the many years Merlin had spent promoting his theatrical escapades.

Firstly, advertisements in local papers would alert the residents that a representative of the company would be arriving. Once there, the photographer would take a photograph of every house and building. The negatives would then be sent back to head office where they could be stored. As orders came in, either through the AAPC photographer or AACCP representatives in the town, prints were made and sent to the purchaser. This process, and the quality of his work is clearly outlined in the following quote:

*Mr. Merlin has armed himself with a beautiful frame of pictures to use as his credentials on making his first professional tour through this district and it is only common justice to say of these that they are pictures in the artistic sense of the word. The negatives he has taken have been forwarded to Melbourne to be printed, and will then be sent up for sale.*⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Unknown, 'Local Intelligence', *Border Watch*, (20 February 1869), 2.

⁵¹ 'Fire', *The Record*, (17 June 1869), 4.

⁵² 'Fire', *Hamilton Spectator and Grange District Advertiser*, (23 June 1869), 3.

⁵³ On 16 September 1869 an advertisement for the American and Australasian Photographic Company records the sole main office as being 73 Little Collins Street. A second advertisement from 28 September adds a second city office at 4 Barrack Street Sydney. Unknown, 'Advertising', *The Record*, (16 September 1869), 7 and 'Advertising', *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, (28 September 1869), 3.

⁵⁴ As the business expanded Merlin found it impossible to do all the work himself and he employed experienced landscape and portrait photographers to work for the company. The best known of these was his protege Charles Bayliss.

⁵⁵ It is important to note here that Merlin must have had a photographic partner working from the Melbourne studio where negatives would have been stored, printed and packaged for distribution. Presumably this arrangement was extended to the Sydney studio as by 1870 Sydney services included taking of local views,

This approach appears to have been set in place almost from the inception of the company. In September 1869, a number of advertisements were placed in the *Oven and Murray Advertiser* one of which stated:

According to a notice in our business columns, the residents of Beechworth will soon have the satisfaction of seeing the whole of their residences photographed. A company known as the American and Australian Photographic Company, having offices in Melbourne and Sydney, is about to send a representative to this district, for the purpose of securing our shadows ere our substances fade.⁵⁶

As the year drew to a close, Merlin still appears to have been handling the bulk of the photography work.⁵⁷ The AAPC advertisements from this period also make it clear he was making his way towards Sydney through Emerald Hill (June), Beechworth (September), Shepperton (October) and Wangaratta (November). In December, he was at the El Dorado Goldfields where he photographed the turning of the sod for the Devon Company's first mine shaft.⁵⁸

By February 1870 he was in New South Wales visiting Yass where he made good on his advertised promises:

'Our readers were doubtless somewhat surprised to notice in our last Friday's issue that the American and Australian Photographic Company intended "to photograph every house in Yass." Unusual as was that announcement, next morning proved that it was seriously made, for Mr Merlin, the representative of the company, was all that day busily engaged taking the photographs. The work is done rapidly, and to judge by specimens we have seen it is done with more than usual excellence. A large number of the buildings have already been taken, and yesterday afternoon Rossi street was being transferred to the plates.'⁵⁹

The same article clearly laid out the company's objectives and in doing so outlined how a profit was made:

'seeing that their representative does not press the sale of the photographs-in any way, although they are procurable at a very moderate cost! By stating what has been done in Victoria we will solve the problem. Every building of any importance in every town in Victoria has already been taken, and very carefully arranged and displayed at the company's offices, so that if an insurance or an investment is desired to be effected, or any other object in which the importance or knowledge of the actual appearance of the town would be an advantage, the necessity of a personal visit is rendered unnecessary, as a call at the company's rooms will just as well secure the object in view. To afford this information the company charges a small fee, we believe, one shilling. Having completed the neighbouring colony, the

portraits, as well as distributing and printing material sent in by travelling photographers. Unknown, *The Benalla Ensign and Farmer's and Squatter's Journal*, (8 October 1869), 2.

⁵⁶ 'Advertising', *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, (25 September 1869), 2.

⁵⁷ Although Merlin is the photographer mentioned in the advertisements it is presumed that Charles Bayliss was also travelling with him as his assistant. I have not come across a specific reference to Bayliss from this time but Keast Burke in *Silver and Gold* mentions Bayliss had taken up with Merlin to learn the photographic trade sometime around 1865.

⁵⁸ 'El Dorado', *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, (7 December 1869), 4.

⁵⁹ 'Extracts', *The Queanbeyan Age*, (24 February 1870), 2.

company purpose [sic] extending their operations to New South Wales, and we understand Yass (owing to Mr Merlin desiring to rest his horses for a few days before resuming his journey to Sydney) has the advantage of being the first town taken. As several photographers will shortly be at work in the various towns, the company's offices in Barrack-street, Sydney, will shortly become one of the sights of the Metropolis.⁶⁰

Merlin certainly seemed to be in no rush to get to Sydney, as by the end of May he was staying in Goulburn having passed through Braidwood, where he had made a large sized panorama of that town.⁶¹ In September, a representative of the AAPC, presumably Merlin, photographed, by the instantaneous process, the HMS *Galatea* in Farm Cove, Sydney.⁶² Two months later AAPC representatives were in Newcastle taking photographs of every building there, 'both in the city and the suburbs.'⁶³

By early 1871, he had employed William H. Clarke, a Melbourne photographer (who had worked at both Batchelder & O'Neills and Johnstone & Shaughnessy's) for his Sydney business, which had expanded into new studios at George Street and Riley Street.⁶⁴ He was also employing people to work on commission selling sets of photographs taken by the company, although this was at times a complicated business. In April 1871, Henry Lucas, who Merlin had employed a month before, was charged with embezzlement. Employed to canvas for orders on a 10% commission he said he was given:

*'a set of ten pictures of Sydney, taken from the tower of St. James's Church, and witness delivered him a set; defendant made out a bill to Mr. Cowlishaw for the pictures, £4, and witness receipted the bill for Mr. Merlin; the defendant should have brought either the money or the pictures and the bill, but witness did not see him again until now; the pictures were the property of Mr. Merlin.'*⁶⁵

Figure 5. Street scene with tripod and photography cart, New South Wales, American and Australasian Photographic Company, digital copy from albumen carte-de-visite, ca. 1870-1871, State Library of New South Wales, PXA 933

As it turned out, Merlin was unable to prove his case and it was thrown out of the Quarter Sessions, but the incident highlights the complexity of the business he was running by this time.⁶⁶ It is also clear he was entrusting more of the view work with Charles Bayliss, his one-time assistant. On 2 May 1871, Bayliss was in Liverpool photographing every house in the township.⁶⁷ Six days later, he was scheduled to be in the Illawarra as,

*'Owing to a pressure of business Mr. Merlin will be unable to leave Sydney as last week advertised. Mr. C. BAYLISS will, in his place, represent the company in Wollongong.'*⁶⁸

⁶⁰ 'Extracts', *The Queanbeyan Age*, (24 February 1870), 2.

⁶¹ 'Local and District News', *The Queanbeyan Age*, (26 May 1870), 2.

⁶² 'The Sports of the Albert Ground', *Evening News*, (19 September 1870), 2.

⁶³ 'Local and general News', *The Newcastle Chronicle*, (5 November 1870), 2.

⁶⁴ 'Parramatta Revisited', *Evening News*, (11 August 1871), 3 and 'Central Police Court', *The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, (1 April 1871), 139.

⁶⁵ 'Central Police Court', *The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, (1 April 1871), 139.

⁶⁶ 'Quarter Sessions', *Evening News*, (11 April 1871), 2.

⁶⁷ 'Advertising', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (2 May 1871), 1.

⁶⁸ 'Advertising', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (6 May 1871), 1.

In May, Bayliss was in Richmond and, in June, Windsor where he photographed both towns.⁶⁹ Merlin's connections with the Melbourne branch of the AAPC seem to have remained strong enough for this branch to ship a buggy, presumably a photographic cart, to Brisbane in July.⁷⁰ In August the *Brisbane Courier* announced:

*'Mr. E. H. Foster, the operator of the Sydney Branch of the American and Australian Photographic Company, has arrived, and will at once proceed to take photographs of all the public and private buildings in and about the city, depending on the sale of the photographs for remuneration.'*⁷¹

August 1871 also saw the *Evening News* describe the AAPC's studio at 324 George Street as one of the marvels of the city where:

*'The rooms are elegantly fitted up and hung with a series of original oleographs [chromolithographs], copies of the ancient and modern masters, and the principal saloon is fitted up with desk for the reception of portfolios, which form a complete pictorial description of the colony, embracing views in Braidwood, Yass, Goulburn, and other towns of the Southern districts, Windsor, Richmond, Liverpool, Newtown, suburbs of Sydney, Parramatta, Maitland, and Morpeth, to which will shortly be added, by the enterprise of the proprietors, the scenery of the Western districts, where their staff is now travelling. The company have probably the largest camera in use in the colonies, producing views of the dimensions of 2 feet by 2 feet. Of those, Randwick Asylum and the Australian Museum, are first-class specimens; and among them are a set of ten views of Sydney, taken from the tower of St James's Church, sketches of the harbour etc. ... There is a very numerous selection of cartes-de-visite comprising most of the celebrities of the colony; family groups and exquisite portraits of children (plain and coloured) posed in the most effective manner and executed in the highest style of art. It may also be mentioned that the company, which has, since its formation, chalked out for itself a course at once novel and enterprising by means of its travelling corps, have spared no expense in fitting up their rooms to suit the convenience of the public. A boudoir and dressing room is set apart for the ladies, and by an ingenious combination of perfect ventilating apparatus and a sliding roof of wood which covers the operating-room in hot weather, have contrived, while preserving the light and airy appearance of a drawing-room, to obviate inconvenience from the heat in sultry weather—a desideratum which, although indispensable to the comfort of sitters, has seldom been achieved in some of the best galleries. The furniture and fittings are also chaste and ornate, and the general arrangements are such as ought to command public confidence, more especially as the company have arrived at the determination to share some portions of their profits with their patrons. The company propose to effect this object in the following manner By gratuitously distributing amongst them a collection of photographic portfolios, albums, special studies and panoramas, valued at L200 under conditions which will bring the privilege within the reach of any person who may order a set of cartes-de-visites from the company. This distribution takes place in the month of October.'*⁷²

⁶⁹ 'Advertising', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (2 June 1871), 1.

⁷⁰ 'Shipping', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (2 June 1871), 1.

⁷¹ 'The Courier', *The Brisbane Courier*, (2 August 1871), 3.

⁷² 'Parramatta Revisited', *Evening News*, (11 August 1871), 3.

Clearly the AAPC had, within a few short years, become a large and complicated business with Merlin at its centre. Their large format camera used to take panoramic views of the city, the high-end finish of their painted photographs, the area covered by their workers and the scale of production required for the number of photographs all suggest a company pushing both the boundaries of the technology and the methodology traditionally used by photo studios in Australia. And the busy year for Merlin was far from over.⁷³

Figure 6. 'Eclipse Island', Northern Queensland, Beaufoy Merlin, digital copy from albumen print, December 1871, presented by H. C. Russell, 1926, State Library of New South Wales, PXA 933

In October, Merlin left Sydney to take photographs of Wollongong and Kiama leaving Charles Bayliss in charge of the 'supervision of the Landscape Department' and attending to all orders, weather permitting.⁷⁴ This arrangement may have been a way to shore-up the company before Merlin's final adventure for 1871. On 27 November, Merlin left Sydney on the steamship *Governor Blackall* as a part of the Australian Solar Eclipse Expedition bound for Northern Queensland. Accompanying him on board were a 'who's who' of Australia's natural historians and scientists all of whom were travelling to Cape Sidmouth to view the solar eclipse on 12 December. Unfortunately, after they had set up their instruments on Eclipse Island the day proved too overcast and, even though he continued to expose the plates Merlin described how:

'We all realised, about the same moment, that we had come in vain; and disappointment silenced every tongue for several minutes, broken only by the monotonous announcements of the zealous individual who was calling out the seconds from the chronometer. "It is all over," somebody at last cried out, but still the indisposition to speak about the event continued.'⁷⁵

On the return journey, Merlin experimented with taking a series of coastline views of the Whitsunday Passage and succeeded in recording a considerable portion of it. These he thought would prove useful to the mariner as they reproduced the, 'elevations, depressions, projections, &c, with an accuracy impossible in hand-drawings.'⁷⁶ Merlin arrived back in Sydney on Christmas Eve, 'in time to hear the joyous Christmas bells ring out.'⁷⁷

The new year initially seemed to be business as usual for the AAPC, with operators at work in Wagga Wagga and Gympie.^{78 79} But Merlin was about to drop a bombshell, on 5 February he announced:

'Mr. MERLIN, in retiring from the management of the N. S. Wales branch of the above Company, desires to tender his hearty thanks to the public for their liberal patronage during

⁷³ On October 7, 1871, Charles Bayliss was photographing Rookwood Cemetery. Advertising', *Evening News*, (4 October 1871), 3.

⁷⁴ 'Advertising', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (17 October 1871), 1.

⁷⁵ Although the party decided on 6 December to land at Island No. 6 Claremont Group as shallow waters would make landing with all their scientific equipment at Cape Sidmouth too difficult. 'The Eclipse Expedition', *Australian Town and Country Journal*, (6 January 1872), 25.

⁷⁶ Beaufoy Merlin, 'The Eclipse Expedition', *Australian Town and Country Journal*, (6 January 1872), 25.

⁷⁷ Beaufoy Merlin, 'The Eclipse Expedition', *Evening News*, (2 January 1872), 3.

⁷⁸ 'Advertising', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (5 February, 1872), 1.

⁷⁹ 'Local and General News', *Gympie Times and Mary River Mining Gazette*, (24 January 1872), 2.

the last 15 months, and avails himself of this opportunity of introducing to his late patrons his successor, Mr. CARLISLE, under whose management in future (assisted by a picked photographic staff) this well-known studio will be conducted.⁸⁰

He then packed up his camera and equipment and headed off to the newly discovered goldfields at Hill End, Tambaroora and Gulgong near Bathurst, New South Wales. This arrangement does not mean Merlin left the company, in fact he continued to supply Carlisle with negatives of Hill End to print:

‘Mr. Merlin begs to inform the mining community, and others interested in the above locality, the series of photographs taken by him during the last few weeks are this day on view at the A. and A. Photo. Rooms, 324, George Street. Mr. Carlisle will receive orders for the above.’⁸¹

Alluvial gold had been discovered in this region in the 1850s but was soon exhausted. It was not until the late 1860s that the second rush began, and this time miners were not panning for gold but rather digging for the precious metal embedded in reefs of quartz, often deep below the surface. This form of mining required months or even years of digging to find the leads, as well machinery and chemicals to crush the quartz and extract the gold.

The increase in time, costs and the complexity of extraction forced many miners to form business consortiums and in some cases even employ miners at a set rate. As a result this rush required more permanent infrastructure than the previous one and by February/March of 1872 the shops, hotels, quartz crushing batteries, mining cottages, and other entertainments in Hill End, Tambaroora and Gulgong were in the midst of a boom.

Figure 7. Mayne Street, Gulgong, Merlin’s photographic cart is visible on the left, Beaufoy Merlin, digital copy from quarter plate glass photonegative, 1872, presented by Mr Holtermann [grandson of B. O. Holtermann] in 1952, State Library of New South Wales, a2822282

Australian historians are remarkably lucky that one of Australia’s best known landscape photographers, whose methodology was to photograph every building in a town, should arrive at the height of the boom with his cameras and equipment. For his part, Merlin seemed to have been captivated by the hustle and bustle of the towns, as well as the characters he met. He stayed in Hill End and documented the town and surrounding area for most of 1872 and returned off-and-on in 1873 to add to the collection. These images are truly unique, for by the end of 1873 the boom was already fading and, as the gold dried up, these towns were consigned back to the sleepy by-ways of history.

Merlin’s photographs of shops, hotels, theatres, mines and batteries were supplemented by more traditional portraits of the townsfolk taken in the AAPC studio set up in Tambaroora and the temporary one set up at Hill End.⁸² The earlier work of the AACP photographers, including Merlin, had focused on landscape views. While these sometimes-included people in the streets and outside their houses this feature became even more obvious in Merlin’s goldfield photos. Here people seem to have been actively encouraged to pose in front of their

⁸⁰ ‘Advertising’, *Wagga Wagga Advertiser and Riverine Reporter*, (20 January 1872), 3.

⁸¹ ‘Advertising’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, (8 May 1872), 1.

⁸² Unknown, ‘Bathurst’, *Freeman’s Journal*, (26 October 1872), 10.

cottage, mine or shop and, thus, most of these 1872 views include owners, families and managers posed in front of their buildings.

While almost all articles from the time refer to Merlin as the photographer of the images taken on the western New South Wales goldfields he also set up AAPC studios at Hill End and Tambaroora which took advantage of the money to be made from studio portraits. How big a role Merlin played in taking these portraits is unclear, but it is possible he followed his earlier business model and employed others to manage the studios, freeing him up to do landscape work. Certainly, photographers like W. Norton, were working in Hill End and Tambaroora, and may have been approached by Merlin to do the studio work.⁸³

There were also changes happening at the Sydney office of the AAPC where Merlin was sending his goldfield image. By June 1872, Carlisle and his wife (who had worked for Oswald and Allen as Miss Turner) appear to have taken over the photography work at the Sydney studio.⁸⁴ It is interesting to speculate as to whether these changes may have forced Merlin's existing employees in Sydney to move on and whether they played any role in Merlin's new enterprise. The role Charles Bayliss played is particularly significant, for Keast Burke has claimed he not only visited the goldfields but was Merlin's cameraman.⁸⁵

While this is a possibility, it is important to remember that Bayliss, by late 1871, was no longer working as Merlin's assistant and that by the time Merlin left for the goldfields Bayliss had managed the AAPC landscape department and conducted his own view work in and around Sydney. Given the specialised nature of portrait photography, and the lack of examples in Bayliss's work, it seems unlikely he would have managed the AAPC portrait studios in the goldfields. The photograph of Bayliss outside the AAPC studio in Hill End makes it clear he visited the goldfields, but in what role remains uncertain. Given contemporary newspapers clearly cite Merlin as the photographer responsible for the 1872 landscape views, it seems reasonable to credit him as the photographer.⁸⁶

⁸³ 'Advertising', *Sydney Morning Herald*, (14 February 1872), 3.

⁸⁴ 'Photography Alexander Carlisle', *Sydney Morning Herald*, (15 June 1872), 2.

⁸⁵ Keast Burke in his 1953 article stated that when Merlin travelled to Sydney around 1869 Bayliss had been left in charge of his studio in Victoria. This may have possibly been the case but by early 1871 Bayliss was working for Merlin in Sydney. Burke also mentions that it was Holtermann that brought Bayliss back to Sydney and there is some merit in thinking this may have been the case if Bayliss had returned to Victoria sometime after Merlin left the business in February, 1872. Confusingly, Keast Burke also published a correction in the *Australian Photo Review*, 1 July 1953, in which he states, 'Contrary to first indication, it now appears that Charles Bayliss did not remain behind in Melbourne for very long, or if at all. Fresh evidence has come to light showing that Bayliss accompanied Merlin to Gulgong and Hill End as his cameraman and photographed many of the sequences. In the face of this new evidence, it is only possible in a few instances to state with accuracy whether an exposure was made by one or the other photographer.' Unfortunately, Burke does not cite the source of this new evidence and given contemporary newspapers only mention Merlin as the photographer it seems appropriate to assume this was the case until the 'new evidence' cited by Burke is found. Keast Burke, 'Charles Bayliss', *Australian Photo Review*, (1 July 1953) Vol. 60 No. 7, 396 and 'Correction', *Australian Photo Review*, (1 September 1953). Vol. 60 No. 9, 543.

⁸⁶ While there is still some speculation around when Bayliss started working independently for Holtermann it is clear is that by 7 March 1874 Bayliss was in Melbourne working for Holtermann and was still there in July making a panorama of Ballarat. By October 1875 he was living in Sydney with Holtermann and had completed the large Sydney panoramas. 'Advertising', *The Argus*, (7 March 1874), 10. 'The Nepean and the Warragamba', *Sydney Morning Herald*, (22 October 1875), 8.

These goldfield images remain Merlin's most lasting legacy and by 4 May he had taken over 100 views some of which made their way to the Metropolitan Intercolonial Exhibition in Sydney.⁸⁷ Less than a week later the *Evening News* was effusive in its praise of:

'nearly 100 magnificent photographic views illustrating various scenes in Hill End and its vicinity, including the most celebrated claims on Hawkins' Hill. The views, which are of great artistic excellence, were executed by Mr. Beaufoy Merlin, who sojourned at Tambaroora for several weeks for the express purpose of depicting everything worthy of note in the remarkable locality; and for clearness and perspicuity have never been excelled. ... here are also upwards of twenty well executed large views, and about one dozen lesser views, together with sixty smaller photographs, descriptive of not only the above-mentioned claims, but of every scene of interest in the neighbourhood, and also of the principal machinery at work. The whole series comprise a valuable, as well as an interesting collection portraying the extensive mining operations as at present existing, and which are exciting such unbounded interest in the public mind. The demand, for these splendid photographs will, we hope, reimburse the spirited artist for the great difficulties undergone and expense he incurred in carrying out his object in so mountainous and broken a country. So far as we are aware nothing of the like nature has ever before been successfully accomplished in similar circumstances.'⁸⁸

Figure 8. Panorama of Hawkins Hill, Hill End, Beaufoy Merlin, digital copy from 10 in x 12 in glass photonegative, 1872, presented by Mr Holtermann [grandson of B. O. Holtermann] in 1952, State Library of New South Wales, a2825324

While many of the shots were taken of the buildings and streets others taken in the goldfields themselves required a great deal more effort. One of these, depicting the mines at Hawkins Hill, was reproduced in the *Town and Country Journal* on 18 May 1872, where the journalist, possibly Merlin himself, describes how the:

'engraving is copied from a photograph taken by Beaufoy Merlin, Esq., being one of a series of views which that gentleman has succeeded in producing under difficulties owing to the extraordinary nature of the country-such as it is believed were never before overcome in the prosecution of the photographic art. These difficulties may be imagined when it is known that the surrounding gully's are nearly a thousand feet deep, and from beyond which-only at two miles distant and amid thickly timbered ranges-was a view possible. It was only by the erection of stages and appliances in highest trees that the photographic apparatus could be brought into use. The result, although attained with great difficulty, was eminently satisfactory and mining readers and shareholders in those celebrated claims may depend that they have before them a picture which shows not only the general appearance of the hill, but the exact position and relative bearing of each company's shaft and works.'⁸⁹

The mines in this image were among the most productive on the goldfields and one of these, the Star of Hope Gold Mining Company, was producing enough to make all its shareholders wealthy. One of the main beneficiaries was its manager Bernard Holtermann, who also owned the building rented by the AAPC in Hill End. It is not clear how early the friendship

⁸⁷ 'Metropolitan', *Empire*, (4 May 1872), 2.

⁸⁸ 'Photographs of Hill End and Hawkins' Hill', *Evening News*, (7 May 1872), 2.

⁸⁹ 'Saturday, November 16', *The Armidale Express and New England General Advertiser*, (16 November 1872), 4.

began, but clearly Merlin and Holtermann recognised in each other a like-minded soul or at least new business opportunities.

Figure 9. The largest specimen of reef gold in the world, Hill End, 1872-1876, Beaufoy Merlin, digital copy from 10 in x 12 inch glass photonegative, 1872-1876, presented by Mr Holtermann [grandson of B. O. Holtermann] in 1952, State Library of New South Wales, a2822899

Their relationship came to the fore when the largest piece of reef-gold in the world was discovered in the Star of Hope mine on 19 October 1872. Holtermann approached Merlin, who photographed it before it was sent to the crusher and took several photographs of Holtermann and his partner Beyer. Then on 30 October, Merlin wrote a long biographical article praising Holtermann's hard work and persistence, which had kept the mine running in the years before they struck gold.⁹⁰ In November,⁹¹ he photographed the cakes of pure gold made from crushing the huge piece of reef gold.

The gold from the Star of Hope mine had made Holtermann a very wealthy man and, by the end of December, he had left the Hill End to set himself up in his new home on the North Shore of Sydney. It was also around this time that Merlin seems to have inspired Holtermann to start a new project.⁹² On 1 January 1873 a number of advertisements appeared in papers across the country describing a new and ambitious scheme to promote Australia to the world:

‘Holtermann’s Intercolonial Exposition of the Australian Colonies. ... The undersigned, in directing public attention to the above outline of a projected display of the country’s industrial resources, cannot lose the opportunity of bearing testimony to the liberal spirit in which Mr. Holtermann has entered into this undertaking.

Having observed with regret the apathy that exists in drawing European attention to the products of the colonies, more especially to their vast mineral wealth he has, with a generosity that deserves unqualified praise, come himself to the rescue, and the Exposition announced above will be the result of his enlightened zeal. ... the New South Wales Branch will be open in about eight months from the present time. Communications in reference to it are requested to be addressed to Mr. Holtermann, North Shore, Sydney. Beaufoy Merlin.’⁹³

A few weeks later, the Holtermann met with the Commissioners of the 1873 London International Exposition. At this meeting in Bridge Street, Sydney, he told them he would be willing to lend, on reasonable terms, large mineral specimens and photographs of his claim at Hawkins Hill for the purpose of having them made into a model.

For Merlin, 1873 was also shaping up well. As with many of his previous enterprises he had a partner and this time it was a man of immense wealth who, like himself, was hard working and entrepreneurial.⁹⁴ Even though demonstrating the vast mineral wealth of Australia

⁹⁰ ‘Hawkins’ Hill’, *Australian Town and Country Journal*, (18 May 1872), 16.

⁹¹ ‘Correspondence’, *The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, (16 November 1872), 628.

⁹² Holtermann, ‘Biographical Note’, *Holtermann Papers*, State Library of New South Wales, ZML MSS 968 item 1.

⁹³ Beaufoy Merlin, ‘Advertising’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (1873, January 3), 1.

⁹⁴ This was made clear in many ways. Not only had Holtermann worked as a ferryman and borrowed heavily to keep the mine afloat, he nearly killed himself when 12 lbs of gunpowder exploded next to him, six weeks later

appears to have been the main object of the exposition photographers were also being employed to take views from across Australia. And Merlin's substantial role was outlined in *The Queenslander*:

'Mr. Holtermann has entered into an arrangement with Mr. Beaufoy Merlin (whose great fame as a landscape photographer is generally acknowledged), by which the latter gentleman is to take panoramas and views of all the towns and gold-fields in the colonies, in order to form a gallery which will give those at a distance a vivid and life-like representation of our homes and cities. The views taken by Merlin will be presented to the public in the form of magnificent transparent pictures - a new invention in photography, of which Mr. Merlin possesses the secret. There will be also albums of each town and gold-field, containing statistical information and other valuable matter.'⁹⁵

Given Merlin's past experiences setting up AAPC branches around Australia, it seems likely that he would have drawn on his connections and involve them in this new project. Certainly, Bayliss was working for Holtermann's Exposition in Victoria, although this appears to have been after Merlin's death.⁹⁶

One of the first things the 'Exposition' project invested in was a set of new photographic carts, and these are visible in outdoor views taken in New South Wales and Victoria from early 1873 onwards. Given Merlin had already accumulated many photographs from the goldfields, it is no surprise to find some of his 1872 images of the goldfields in the Holtermann collection, perhaps slated to be re-used in the Exposition displays.⁹⁷ Certainly, Holtermann himself used them for publications years after Merlin's death.

Holtermann's hopes of opening his displays in 1873 appear to have been thwarted, in part perhaps due to his naivety in hoping all the state administrations would join to support an Australian display. It must have become increasingly clear to Holtermann that the Australian states were in competition at the international exhibitions and preferred to display their wares in their own courts. But, as the year progressed Holtermann remained optimistic and continued to support Merlin in his photographic endeavours. In March, the Governor of New

he was back at work. Even though Holtermann was the mine manager his promotional work with Merlin saw him become, in the eyes of the public, the man who discovered the world's largest nugget. The Exposition itself was divided into five sections: photography; minerals; agriculture; machinery; and fauna. Merlin was only employed to work on photography while the other parts appear to have been under Holtermann's control. Even after Merlin died Holtermann continued the project and in 1874 commented: 'I am at the present time no less 'terribly earnest', than I was at first, nor am I less energetic in this pursuance of my original plan than I ever was; nor have I flagged or relaxed in my exertions to perfect it since I first commenced it. I have had photographic artists searching this colony for all objects of interest to represent. I have unceasingly though unobtrusively been collecting mineral specimens and geological representations of the strata of the colony. I have, at a large expense obtained artificial but perfect specimens of the flora of New South Wales.' Holtermann, Holtermann's Exposition, *Evening News*, (23 March 1874), 3. Holtermann later introduced German lager beer and the Davis Sewing Machine to Australia and spruiked a popular medicine under the name of 'Holtermann's Life Drops' using the image of himself with the gold specimen to promote them. Unknown, 'Judged by His Works', *Glen Innes Examiner and General Advertiser*, (20 January 1914), 3.

⁹⁵ 'Intercolonial News', *The Queenslander*, (18 January 1873), 9.

⁹⁶ Holtermann, 'Biographical Note', *Holtermann Papers*, State Library of New South Wales, ZML MSS 968 item 1.

⁹⁷ Unknown, 'A Surveyor's Camp', *Illustrated Sydney News and New South Wales Agriculturalist and Grazier*, (5 October 1878), 10.

South Wales, Hercules Robinson, visited Hill End and Merlin captured the banners strung across the street to welcome him.⁹⁸

In April, Merlin was in Bathurst photographing the town for Holtermann.⁹⁹ And, on 5 July, the *Town and Country Journal* posted an article by the 'Photographic Artist of Holtermann's Exhibition,' presumably Merlin, which extolled the beauty of the countryside, and the described the main buildings in the town as well as the character of its inhabitants.¹⁰⁰ By the end of July he was back in Sydney, taking more photographs for the exhibition and working on the large three foot transparent photographs for the Exposition.¹⁰¹ These he had created by enlarging his original negatives and according to the *Empire* magazine were clearly something special:

'We had the pleasure on Saturday last of examining a few of Mr. Beaufoy Merlin's transparent landscapes, intended to illustrate this display of colonial progress. We understand several hundred, of these transparencies will form an attractive feature of the undertaking. By an original mechanical process the scenes stand out before the eye clear and sharply defined. There is none of the chalky ghastly appearance of the ordinary stereoscopic view about them. Sharp outlines, combined with shadows full of halftone, form their chief characteristics. The size of these plates is also remarkable, presenting a surface of nearly three feet. We had hardly believed photography, even aided by the highest artistic skill, was capable of producing such vivid effects. Should the whole of the scenes be equal to what we have seen, and we have no doubt they will be, the public will be greatly gratified at the treat that is about to be offered to them.'¹⁰²

One reason for the coverage in the news may have been due to a deputation of the New South Wales Commissioners for the International Exhibition, who were meeting with the Colonial Secretary to discuss setting up a permanent exhibition building in London. This proposal fell through, even though it was potentially a good fit for Holtermann's Exposition collection.¹⁰³ Being of German origin, Holtermann may have been looking to display at the Vienna Exhibition but when this opened in September 1873 there were no displays from New South Wales.¹⁰⁴ Regardless of these setbacks, Merlin worked with his normal diligence preparing his collections for the Exposition without knowing when they would finally open. His primary focus continued to be the work for Holtermann but he also found time to write journalistic articles for the papers. In August 1873 he produced a series of articles on the recent discoveries made by the expedition of the HMS *Basilisk* to New Guinea.¹⁰⁵

At the same time, he continued with his photographic work and his image of the French warship *Atalante* at Fitzroy Dock on Cockatoo Island, Sydney, is one Merlin himself acknowledged as among his best works:

⁹⁸ Unknown, 'Visit of the Governor to Hill End', *The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, (22 March 1873), 374.

⁹⁹ Unknown, 'From Our Correspondents', *Empire*, (5 April 1873), 2.

¹⁰⁰ The article also reproduced a wood-cut view of Summer Street, Bathurst, from a negative still held by the State Library of New South Wales. Merlin [attrib.], 'Rough Notes by the Photographic Artist of Holtermann's Exhibition', *Australian Town and Country Journal*, (5 July 1873), 19.

¹⁰¹ Unknown, 'Notes of the Week', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (2 August 1873), 5.

¹⁰² Unknown, 'Holtermann's Exhibition', *Empire*, (23 July 1873), 2.

¹⁰³ Unknown, 'Social', *Empire*, (9 August 1873), 5.

¹⁰⁴ Unknown, 'Exposition', *Australian Town and Country Journal*, (27 September 1873), 10.

¹⁰⁵ Merlin, 'Recent Discoveries in New Guinea', *Empire*, (14 August 1873), 4.

‘Probably there is no one more difficult to please in procuring a picture of this kind than the landscape photographer himself. I may therefore be permitted to say in behalf of the one referred to, that it gave me satisfaction.’¹⁰⁶

Soon after this, Merlin left Sydney to photograph the townships of Orange and Dubbo. His account of this journey, which appeared in the *Town and Country Journal*, praised the people and the climate and reads almost like a caption for one of the proposed album of views for Holtermann’s Exposition.¹⁰⁷ In a strange twist of fate, this account and the article on the absence of a New South Wales presence at the Vienna Exhibition both appeared on the day he died.

On Saturday 27 September, 1873 Merlin died after a very short illness at his home in Little Abercrombie Street, Leichhardt, Sydney.¹⁰⁸ The cause was an, ‘inflammation of the lungs supervening upon the epidemic (a kind of influenza) which has lately been so general in Sydney.’¹⁰⁹

After such a long and career as a showman and photographer in Australia his death must have come as a shock to the many people he had met in his travels. The *Evening News*, which recorded his death, also gave an insight into the character of this highly motivated and successful man:

‘Mr. Merlin had won the esteem of a wide circle of friends by his kindness of heart, and singularly unpretentious, straight-forward, and genial character. Energetic, temperate, and active to a remarkable degree, his unexpected decease [sic.] will surprise as well as grieve all to whom he was known. As a photographic artist he was almost without rival, while his talents as a writer were of a superior kind, although want of leisure greatly interfered with his literary tastes.’¹¹⁰

Merlin left behind a wife and four children, and his mother, but little in the way of money. Instead, his legacy resided in the theatre shows, lectures, entertainments, articles and photographs seen by thousands of Australians in his lifetime. Importantly, his establishment of the American and Australasian Photographic Company, which was born out of his experiences as a theatrical impresario, helped to promote and expand his business to a scale not seen before in Australia. By the time of his death, his status as one of Australia’s most eminent photographers was unquestioned by his contemporaries and significantly he had also trained and nurtured the talent of another in Charles Bayliss.

It was Merlin who initially inspired Holtermann to conceive of the scheme for encouraging migration by promoting the wonders of the growing colony.¹¹¹ But it would be Bayliss who

¹⁰⁶ Merlin, ‘The French Ironclad’, *Australian Town and Country Journal*, (23 August 1873), 242.

¹⁰⁷ Merlin, ‘From Orange to Dubbo’, *Australian Town and Country Journal*, (27 September 1873), 10.

¹⁰⁸ Richard Bradshaw, ‘Henry Beaufoy Merlin’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2005, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/merlin-henry-beaufoy-13096/text23693>

¹⁰⁹ Unknown, ‘The Death of Mr. Merlin’, *Evening News*, (29 September 1873), 2.

¹¹⁰ Unknown, ‘The Death of Mr. Merlin’, *Evening News*, (29 September 1873), 2.

¹¹¹ Holtermann, ‘Biographical Note’, *Holtermann Papers*, State Library of New South Wales, ZML MSS 968 item 1.

took up the reins where Merlin left off and, together with Holtermann, would gain fame touring the world's largest photographic plates at exhibitions in Europe and America.¹¹²

Perhaps naively Merlin, and Holtermann thought the Australian state administrations would welcome an exposition which covered all Australia's wonders in one place. Instead they continued showing their wares at separate courts at all the International Exhibitions which limited any possibility of Holtermann touring the five sections which he and Merlin had conceived in late 1872. Also never seen at the International Exhibitions were Merlin's magnificent three-foot by three-foot coloured glass transparencies, and unfortunately the secret for making these appears to have died with him.¹¹³

Instead, it was the unique record he created of the New South Wales goldfields over 1872 and 1873 which, while unused in Holtermann's exhibitions, has since been recognised as being one of the most significant photographic records made in Australia. A fact illustrated by its listing on UNESCO's Memory of the World.

¹¹² *He had the late Mr. Beaufoy Merlin in his employ as a photographer, and at Mr. Merlin's death engaged Mr. Charles Baylis[sic]. 'The Nepean and the Warragamba', Sydney Morning Herald, (22 October 1875), 8.*

¹¹³ The examples shown at the beginning of 1873 have yet to be located.