THOMAS GANGE: FROM CONVICT TO BELLARINE COMMUNITY LEADER

Early History - England and Tasmania

John Thomas Mitchell Gange (usually known as Thomas) was born in 1809 at Eldene (now a suburb of Swindon), Wiltshire, England. His father, James Gange, and mother, Susannah Mitchell were subsistence farmers and by 1830, Thomas was working as a farm labourer.¹ A brother, William, was born in 1807 at Langford, Wiltshire.² On 3rd December, 1830, he was arrested on a charge of Machine Breaking, and convicted to transportation for seven years on 27th December, arriving in Van Diemen's Land on the 28 May 1831 on the *Eliza* (2).³ He described as born in Earldom[sic], fair complexion, brown hair and grey eyes, 5'61/4" in height.⁴ This incident was part of the 'Swing Riots' which were a widespread uprising in protest of the mechanisation of agriculture and other conditions including low wages and tithe payments throughout southern England. Threshing machines displaced the labour intensive process which employed around 25% of agricultural workers in the autumn and

winter months.⁵ His British prisoner reports were good and he had no incidences mentioned on his convict conduct record. On arrival in VDL, he was assigned to John Darke Snr as a ploughman.⁶ John Darke Snr was the father of John Charles Darke, a surveyor and explorer. John Darke Snr arrived in VDL in 1827 and received a grant of land at Mill's Plains which is located near Evandale and Longford south of Launceston. It was also the home of Tasmanian painter, John Glover.⁷ John Thomas Gange probably worked at Darke's Mills Plains property. Thomas Gange was given a Free Pardon on 3 February 1836.



Fig. 1 A view of the artist's house and garden, in Mill's Plains, Van Diemen's Land, John Glover, 1835, Art Gallery of South Australia

Marriage and Family

John Thomas Gange applied to marry Margaret Ismay Robinson, a free woman, on 28 January 1836 just before he received his free pardon. He married on 2 March 1836 in Launceston,

¹ David Rowe, About Corayo: A Thematic History of Greater Geelong, City of Greater Geelong, p. 898.

² William Genge[sic], born 28 March 1807, Longford, Wiltshire, Church of England Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1538-1812, Ancestry, accessed 8 April 2023. No record of Thomas John Gange's birth found.

³ Tasmanian Archives Convict Records, Conduct Record CON 31/1/16, p. 52.

⁴ Tasmanian Archives Convict Records, Description CON 18/1/6, p. 40.

⁵ Jeremy Norman, History of Information.com, accessed 8 April 2023.

⁶ Tasmanian Archives Conduct Records, Appropriations List CON 27/1/5.

⁷ G. H. Stancombe, Darke, John Charles (1806-1844), Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 1966, accessed online 8 April 2023.

VDL, as a free man⁸. Margaret was born in 1810 at Bowness, Westmorland and emigrated to VDL with her family in 1834. Her parents were Thomas Robinson and Jane Bacchus. The couple's first two sons were born in Launceston in 1837 and 1838 respectively, where Thomas was listed as a labourer. Twins were born in Melbourne in 1840 indicating they had moved to the Port Phillip District by then. Their remaining children were born in the Bellarine (Indented Head) area from 1842. John Charles Darke had moved to the Port Phillip area and had taken up land in the Barrabool Hills by 1836 which may have inspired the Gange's move to the mainland, although John Charles Darke had moved on to South Australia by 1838. Early settlers in Port Phillip were continuously advertising for shepherds and farm labourers which again may have been the attraction for the move as well as an attempt to outdistance the convict stain.

The children of Thomas and Margaret Gange were.9 -

- James Thomas (known as Tommy), born 7 March 1837, Launceston, VDL, died 12 November 1849, Drysdale, aged 12 years. Drowned at the water holes while bathing.¹⁰
- Frederick William, born 7 September 1838, Launceston, VDL, married Mary Bennett 1861, reg. 2126/1861. Frederick became insolvent in 1863.¹¹ He was sued for a small debt in 1864.¹² In 1866, he was appointed pound keeper in Drysdale. Frederick deserted Mary in 1868 and he was sued for not supporting his children.¹³ Frederick was again charged with a felony break-in at the Buck's Head Hotel in Drysdale in 1872.¹⁴
- Robert John, born 13 July, 1840, Melbourne, married Ellen Pryke, 6 March 1865, reg. 117/1865. Robert died 11 May 1921 aged 81.¹⁵ No children are mentioned.
- Susan Eliza, born 13 July 1840, Melbourne, married Albert Emery, 1865, reg. 2140/1865.
- Jemima Susannah, born 27 November 1842, Bellarine / Indented Head, married Joseph Ball of Murradoc, 25 March1869, reg. 126/1869.¹⁶ Children: Margaret Ada.

George Mitchell, born 1845, Bellarine / Indented Head, reg. 7883/1845, married Mary

- ¹⁰ Anon., 'Local Intelligence', *Geelong Advertiser*, 15 November 1848, p.2.
- ¹¹ 'Geelong Insolvent Court', *Geelong Advertiser*, 6 May 1863, p.3.
- ¹² 'Drysdale Petty Sessions', *Geelong Advertiser*, 21 November 1864, p.3.

- ¹⁴ 'Drysdale Police Court', *Geelong Advertiser*, 26 August 1872, p.3.
- ¹⁵ 'Married', Geelong Advertiser, 8 March 1865, p.2; 'Deaths', Argus, 17 May 1921, p.1.
- ¹⁶ 'Married', Geelong Advertiser, 29 March 1869, p.2.

⁸ St. John's Anglican Church, Launceston, Marriage 2 March 1836, Reg. No. 2377/1836.

⁹ Data from Family History files, Bellarine Historical Society.

¹³ 'Coroner's Inquest: Extraordinary Disclosures', *Geelong Advertiser*, 3 June 1870, p.2. Mary Gange had delivered a child fathered by a Mr. Peevor and given the child to Mrs. Fairbrother for adoption. The child had subsequently died of neglect; 'Newtown Police Court', *Geelong Advertiser*, 7 December 1869, p. 3.

Loxton 1869, reg. 258/1869. Charged with robbery in 1865 but charge dismissed.¹⁷ George died on 19th October 1919 at his property 'Corrong', Westmere, aged 76, children: George, Harold, Norman, Ada (Mrs. Price), Clement, Julia (Mrs. Thomas), Edith (Mrs. McIvor), Clarence.¹⁸

- Kezia Frances, born 1847, Bellarine / Indented Head, reg. 10341/1847, unmarried, died 10 September 1912, at 26 River Terrace, Ascot Vale, Melbourne.¹⁹
- Kerenhappuch Margaret, born 1849, Bellarine / Indented Head, reg. 32288/1849, married Robert McDonald of Swan Bay, 24 April 1878, reg. 1367/1878, later grazier of Mannerim, Victoria.²⁰ 'Keren' had been the harmonist and Sunday school teacher at St. James Anglican Church in Drysdale.²¹ Children: Ronald, Vernon, Lewis, Percy, Olive, Viola, Gwendolyn.
- Thomas James, born 4 June 1851, Bellarine / Indented Head, reg. 32446/1851, died 18 April 1852.
- Daniel Bacchus, born 1853, Bellarine / Indented Head, died 19 December 1854, aged 17 months.²² This date is one month later on the family memorial.

Thomas Gange and Caroline Newcomb

Thomas Gange was initially employed in 1844 by Ann Drysdale and Caroline Newcomb to manage Coriyule which they had acquired as a squatter's licence. On the 1st April 1843, John Armstrong attended the sale of the licence for Steel's Station. He bid 350 pounds on behalf of Drysdale and Newcomb but Austin got it for 10 pounds more. However, on the 11th, they received a letter from Austin offering to sell Steel's station. He called on the 12th April and they bought the licence. They immediately renamed it '*Coryul*'. The partners engaged Steel to remain for 12 months to manage their new property.²³ Steel left on the 13th April 1844 and a family of emigrants called Hill were hired for '*Coriyul*', however they proved unsatisfactory.²⁴ On the 30 August 1844, they engaged Thomas Gange and his wife to go to 'Coriyul' in place of the Hills. Caroline was reported to be '*much pleased with Thomas Gange and his wife*' on the 25th October 1844.²⁵ This began a long association at Coriyule between the Gange family and the partners which extended beyond Anne's death in 1853 and lasted until Caroline left

²⁰ 'Married', Geelong Advertiser, 24 April 1878, p. 2.

¹⁷ 'Queenscliff Police Court', Geelong Advertiser, 8 May 1865, p.3.

¹⁸ 'Deaths', Argus, 24 October 1919, p.1.

¹⁹ Victoria Deaths 1836 - 1985, reg. 8268/1912, accessed Findmypast, 22 September 2022; Public Records Office Victoria, Wills and Probate, VPRS 28/P3, unit 317, accessed Findmypast, 22 September 2022.

²¹ 'Town Talk', Geelong Advertiser, 1 May 1878, p. 2.

²² Deaths, District of Bellarine, Colony of Victoria, Daniel Bacchus Gange, Nineteenth December 1854, Reg. 1233/1855.

²³ Bev Roberts (ed), Miss D and Miss N, An extraordinary partnership: The Diary of Anne Drysdale, Melbourne, 2009, pp. 160-61.

²⁴ Anne Drysdale, *Diary Vol.* 11, 14.03.1844; 26.02.1844, State Library of Victoria, online version.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.08.1844; 25.10.1844.

Coriyule in 1864. Grange was the manager at Coriyule and responsible for their horse stud. They annually advertised two stallions available for service: Orion, a thorough-bred horse and Wallace, a Clydesdale, both standing at Coriyule.²⁶

On the 3rd of April 1845, Anne and Caroline returned from a holiday at Coriyule 'determined if possible to buy Coriyule'27 which was one of several freehold holdings they acquired as land on the Bellarine was opened for sale. The diary which covers the period from late 1847 up to June 1851 is missing. However, in 1848, land on the Bellarine Peninsula was surveyed and large allotments put up for auction as freehold at an upset price of one pound per acre. On the 29th September 1848, they purchased Coriyule (Lot 13 of 569 acres) for 796 pounds, 12 shillings, one of the few lots to sell above the upset price. The deeds for Lot 13 were issued on the 24th November 1848. Neighbouring Lot 14 did not receive an initial bid but Drysdale and Newcomb purchased this lot of 240 acres for 240 pounds with these deeds issued on the 1st November 1848. They also purchased Lot 44 situated to the west of Coriyule of 168 acres, 2 roods for 168 pounds 10 shillings which they named Garrangill.²⁸ Thus, the partnership of Anne Drysdale and Caroline Newcomb were in possession of over 977 acres of freehold land by early 1849. John Henderson began construction of Coriyule homestead in February 1849 and, with the cottage at Boronggoop deteriorating badly, they moved into their new home in August 1849 well before it was completed.²⁹ At this time, the Gange family moved and established a home at Garrangill.

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Fig. 2 Garrangill, Crown Lot XI, in name of Drysdale and Newcomb, Plan of Part of the Parishes of Bellarine, Paywit and Moolap in the County of Grant, Bellarine Historical Society Collection.

²⁶ 'Advertisement', *Geelong Advertiser*, Tuesday 7 November 1848, p.4.

²⁷ Anne Drysdale, Vol. 111, 03.04.1845.

²⁸ 'Government Land Sales', *Argus*, 29 September 1848, p.2; 'District of Port Phillip', *Argus*, 16 January 1848, p.1; 'Title Deeds', *Argus*, 9 January 1848, p.4; Argus, 13 February 1848, p.1.

²⁹ Roberts, *Miss D and Miss N*, p. 228.

The land on which Boronggoop and Leep Leep were located was successively resumed between 1848 and 1851. Boronggoop was subdivided for industrial land south of Geelong. The suburban area of South Geelong is now situated on this land, including the suburb of Newcomb named for Caroline. The partners attempted to buy the land on Leep Leep before it was subdivided into smaller farm lots. Perhaps to reinforce their claim, they had John Henderson build a woodshed there in June 1851. In September 1851 they sought a loan to buy Leep Leep but were unsuccessful. They wrote to Captain Lonsdale and then went to Melbourne in October to see him and Mr. Latrobe, successfully getting the land they wanted temporarily withdrawn from sale, but were eventually unable to proceed with purchase. In October 1851, they bought an allotment on Swan Bay in Portarlington.³⁰ In February 1852, Caroline and Miss Morris went to Leep Leep to look at the land for sale but did not purchase anything. In 1853, the land once occupied by Boronggoop and Leep Leep were further subdivided into farm lots.

The Diaries ended in May 1854. Thomas Gange and his son Fred were regularly reported to be working on Coriyule. Throughout 1853, Caroline inspected lands as they were released and bought several lots for herself and on behalf of others including Thomas Gange around Swam Bay. By 1853, Thomas Gange was well established at Garrangill. He was standing the Colonial Cart Stallion 'Czar' in his own name. 'Czar', sired by Anne Drysdale's horse 'Wallace', was a regular winner of this category at the Geelong Agricultural and Horticultural Exhibition.³¹ These advertisements appeared annually until the end of 1856. By 1855 much of her land had been leased to other farmers and Caroline focused mainly on the orchard and growing vegetables and flowers for which she regularly won prizes at the agricultural exhibitions in Geelong. She, however, was finding it difficult to run these enterprises single-handed. Failing in her attempts to find a younger woman to partner her as she had Anne, Caroline married the Reverend James Dodgson on the 27 November 1861 but continued to live at Coriyule. In 1864, she left to accompany Dodgson on his ministerial appointments to Maldon and elsewhere until she died in Brunswick, Melbourne in 1874.³²

At some time during this period Caroline gifted Garrangill to Thomas Gange in appreciation of his services as Station Manager of Coriyule and Garrangill, although the exact date of this transfer has not been located.³³ When the Shire of Bellarine was established in 1864, as well as Garrangill, Thomas Gange owned 320 acres of land in Bellarine which he rented to Timothy Ryan. By 1867, he also held 156 acres 38 perches of land, owner occupied in the Swan Bay area. This land was occupied by his son Robert in 1871-72 and then by their son-in-

³⁰ Anne Drysdale, *Diary Vol. IV*, 22.10.1851.

³¹ Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer, 27 December 1852, p.2.

³² Roberts, Miss D and Miss N, pp. 321-324.

³³ John Richardson, *The Lady Squatters*, Bellarine Rural City Council, 1986. p. 28.

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Fig. 3 Land owned by Caroline Newcomb and Thomas Gange, Swan Bay, Plan of Part of the Parishes of Bellarine, Paywit and Moolap in the County of Grant, Bellarine Historical Society Collection.

law Robert McDonald. Margaret Gange inherited these properties after her husband's death and continued to manage all three until 1870. She then sold the 320 acre block probably to William Harding.³⁴ On her death in 1882, the Swan Bay block was sold and Garrangill divided in six lots of 28 acres which she left to each of her children. Kezia, her unmarried daughter, inherited the homestead block.³⁵ Although it was rented out in 1888, she retained ownership of it until selling it just before her death in 1912.³⁶

Community Involvement

John Thomas Mitchell Gange died (suddenly) on the 2 June 1868, in Drysdale, Victoria. Although he began as a humble farm worker, Thomas Gange was involved in a several community organisations and rose to become a respected community leader in early Bellarine society. In the process, his religious affiliation changed from Church of England to Methodism. After his death, the family reverted to Church of England. An outline of his activities is given below.

Tuckfield Chapel and Drysdale Methodist Church

The first religious service on the Bellarine was on 4 May 1847 when the Rev. Francis Tuckfield, the Methodist minister in Geelong, baptised children at Coriyule. In May 1849, a Methodist church service was held under a tree near where the Tuckfield Chapel was built. The Chapel site was west of the [McLeod] Waterholes on land previously owned by J. Cowie, the second property east of Coriyule and on what is now Wyndham Street.³⁷ The foundations for the chapel were laid in 1849 and the building completed in 1850.³⁸ A brick chapel and minister's

³⁴ Rate Books, Shire of Bellarine, various years, online database, Bellarine Historical Society.

³⁵ Public Records Office Victoria, Wills and Probate, Margaret Gange Will.

³⁶ Public Records Office Victoria, Wills and Probate, Kezia Gange Will Codril.

³⁷ John Richardson, The Lady Squatters, p. 9.

³⁸ Rev. Temukisa, '170 Years', DUC Grapevine, Newsletter, Uniting Church of Drysdale, July 2019, p. 1.

house were built in 1855 on land owned by Drysdale and Newcomb. In 1859, The trustees of the chapel were the Rev. James Dodgson, Chairman, Caroline Newcomb, Secretary, Thomas Gange, Station Manager, Coriyule and Mr. M. Ashworth, Engineer, Bellarine Mill.³⁹ In the same year, James Leatherdale purchased a site (block X, allotment 5) in High Street, Drysdale. The trustees in 1861 were James Leatherdale, J. T. Gange, J. Ashworth, T. Butter and J.C. Allen. A Crown Grant of two acres (allotment 6) was given to J. T. Gange, James Leatherdale, J. Ashworth, T. Butter and Caroline Elizabeth Newcomb. The Chapel was moved to that more central location 1863.⁴⁰ It was repaired in 1870 and 1877. On that same site, a new parsonage was built in 1884 and a new Church, the current Uniting Church, opened on 16 September 1888.⁴¹ While this suggests the Gange family were Methodist, after Thomas's death by the 1870s they were associated with the Anglican Church in Drysdale which was where their children were married.

Portarlington / Indented Head Road Board

The Portarlington Road District was declared on 12 December, 1853. Six months later a letter requesting a meeting to form a Road Board was sent, signed by among others Caroline Newcomb as a landholder and Thomas Gange as a householder. Thomas Gange and Caroline Newcomb were elected to the first Board as members for Paywit. This was one of first Road Boards established in the Colony and Newcomb acted as the first secretary. At the first annual meeting on 11 July 1855 a new board was elected where Gange was returned but not Newcomb. In December 1855, Gange became the honorary treasurer.⁴² In addition to these early years, Thomas Gange was also elected to the Board each year between 1861 and 1865. Other Drysdale ex-employees on the Board were John Armstrong n 1854 and 1855 and John Henderson in 1856.⁴³

Indented Heads Farmers' Association

Squatters' runs on the Bellarine, as a designated settled area, were made available for purchase in 1848. Although the initial freeholders were often the previous squatters on these lands, the area was re-surveyed for smaller farms and town lots from 1851. The Indented Heads Farmers' Association was formed in 1856 with an annual subscription of 5 shillings and a protectionist agenda supporting the imposition of duties to protect the market for locally grown wheat and other farm produce.⁴⁴ Farmers in the Bellarine faced considerable cost pressures arising from the gold rushes, and many considered the option of selling up and moving to New Zealand.⁴⁵ Thomas Gange was a foundation member of the Association and a

- ⁴⁴ Wynd, Balla-wein, pp. 39-40.
- ⁴⁵ Wynd, Balla-wein, p. 40.

³⁹ Richardson, The Lady Squatters, p. 28.

⁴⁰ Richardson, *The Lady Squatters*, p. 28.

⁴¹ Ian Wind, Balla-wein: A history of the Shire of Bellarine, Council of the Shire of Bellarine, 1988, p. 62.

⁴² Wynd, *Balla-wein*, pp. 30-31.

⁴³ Wynd, Balla-wein, p. 182.

Committee member in 1859 and 1863.⁴⁶ The Association campaigned to open Crown Reserves and larger properties for subdivision into smaller farm lots.⁴⁷

Geelong and Western District Agricultural and Horticultural Society

Thomas Gange was enrolled as a member of this Society in March 1855 along with others including John Armstrong and John Henderson.⁴⁸ Thomas Gange exhibited his cart horse stallion, 'Czar', at the Geelong Agricultural and Horticultural Exhibition, regularly winning first prize.⁴⁹ He was on the Committee of Management. John Armstrong Esq. being Vice President. Gange remained with the Society until his death with another stallion, "Darlington" took out first prize in draught horse and Colonial-bred categories in 1867.⁵⁰

Bellarine Shire Council

In 1865, the Indented Head Road Board evolved into a Shire Council with a similar membership. Thus, Thomas Gange became a foundation councillor on the newly formed Bellarine Shire Council.⁵¹ Gange was elected to the Council unopposed in 1866 for the Bellarine Riding. Gange during his three years on Council actively pursued issues associated with his other interests including road construction and repair, use of crown lands and thistle control. He was still a member of the Council when he died with the Council expressing the esteem with which he was held by his fellow councillors.⁵²

Where are the bodies buried?

One of the more intriguing questions in Bellarine local history is where the Gange family are buried. Margaret remained on Garrangill, their family farm near Drysdale, until her death on 1st October 1882 living in the homestead known as 'Garrangill House'. Her death certificate indicated that she was buried at Garrangill with a Church of England service.⁵³ In her will written a year prior to her death, Margaret specifies that her trustees 'set aside half an acre or thereabouts as a burial ground for myself and the members of my family ... entry from the south eastern boundary'.⁵⁴ While the exact location was not specified, a private burial plot was established on Garrangill, known as Mt. Mitchell. It contains a monument with memorials for: John Thomas Mitchell Gange, d. 2 June 1868, aged 59 years; James Thomas (drowned), d.

⁵⁴ Supreme Court of the Colony of Victoria, Will of Mrs Margaret Gange, 25/250, 21 October 1881.

⁴⁶ Wynd, *Balla-wein*, pp. 183-84.

⁴⁷ Wynd, *Balla-wein*, pp. 48-50.

⁴⁸ 'Geelong and Western District Agricultural and Horticultural Society', *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*, 5 March 1855, p. 2.

⁴⁹ 'The Geelong Agricultural and Horticultural Exhibit', *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*, 5 October 1855, p. 2.

⁵⁰ 'Geelong and Western District Agricultural and Horticultural Society's Show', *Geelong Advertiser*, 20 September 1867, p. 3.

⁵¹ Wynd, *Balla-wein*, p. 119; 'Bellarine Shire Council', *Geelong Advertiser*, 2 November 1865, p. 3.

⁵² Thomas Savage, 'Shire of Bellarine', *Geelong Advertiser*, 7 August 1866, p. 3.

⁵³ Victoria, Bellarine, Margaret Gange, Death Certificate 10813/1882.

12 November 1849, aged 12 years; Thomas James, d. 18 April 1852, aged 10 months; and

Daniel Bacchus d. January 1855, aged 18 months with an entry for Margaret Gange, nee Robinson, d. 2 October 1882, aged 73 years, added at the end. The Monument inscription states it was 'Erected by Margaret', that is prior to her death and to commemorate Thomas's death. John Thomas Mitchell Gange's death certificate states that he was buried at the Bellarine Cemetery on 4th June 1868 in a Wesleyan ceremony.⁵⁵ However, there is no record of this grave in the Geelong Cemetery Trust records. It is unlikely a significant community member such as John Thomas Gange would be in an unmarked grave in the Drysdale Cemetery. The historic places documentation for the Memorial states its location to be the Old Bellarine Cemetery, off Portarlington Road, North East of Drysdale on land then owned by P.W. and M.A. Naughton.⁵⁶ This places it at the burial ground on the site of Garrangill, after subdivision, where it remains today excised from any further development. None of the family members who died after 1882 were buried there, despite Margaret's wish that this occur.



Fig. 4 Gange Family Monument, Mt. Mitchell, Drysdale. Source: Lorraine Stokes, Bellarine Historical Society

The oldest boy, James Thomas, was buried in the Geelong Eastern Cemetery. The couple's youngest boys mentioned on the Monument inscription both died in infancy. Daniel Bacchus was cited on the monument as dying in January 1855 aged 18 months although his death certificate showed that he died on 19 December 1854 aged 17 months and was interred on the same day at Mount Mitchell Cemetery, without clergy in attendance.⁵⁷ No death certificate was located for Thomas James Gange, cited on the monument as dying on the 18 April 1852 aged 10 months, but it can be assumed he was buried in the same area. As shown in Figure 4, the memorial is situated on an elevated area which was once known as Mount Mitchell.⁵⁸ Thus the memorial site definitely marks the graves of Margaret and Daniel Bacchus and is the most probable site of the graves of John Thomas and Thomas James Gange.

(C) Ann Hodgkinson, Bellarine Historical Society, 2023.

⁵⁵ Colony of Victoria, District of Bellarine, John Thomas Gange, Death Certificate 3228/1868.

⁵⁶ Geelong Regional Commission, Historic Places Document Sheet, Sheet No. 78, Geelong Regional Commission Register No. 48.

⁵⁷ Death Certificate, District of Bellarine, Colony of Victoria, Daniel Bacchus Gange, 1233/1855.

⁵⁸ Rowe, About Corayo, p. 1130.

