

Alison Lloyd

OUR
AUSTRALIAN
GIRL

LETTY ON THE LAND

常州大学图书馆
Alison Lloyd
藏书章



With illustrations by Lucia Masciullo

Puffin Books

PUFFIN BOOKS

Published by the Penguin Group

Melbourne • London • New York • Toronto • Dublin

New Delhi • Auckland • Johannesburg

Penguin Books Ltd, Registered Offices: 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England

Published by Penguin Group (Australia), 2011

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Text copyright © Alison Lloyd, 2011

Illustrations copyright © Lucia Masciullo, 2011

The moral right of the author and the illustrator has been asserted. All rights reserved.

Every effort has been made to contact the copyright holders for material used in this book.

If anyone has information on relevant copyright holders, please contact us.

Cover and internal design by Evi O. © Penguin Group (Australia)

Cover portrait copyright © Tim de Neeffe

Cover photograph copyright © Rob Palmer

Typeset in Bembo by Post Pre-press Group, Brisbane, Queensland

Printed and bound in Australia by McPherson's Printing Group, Maryborough, Victoria

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication data available.

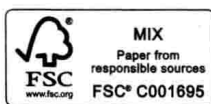
ISBN 978 0 14 330542 2

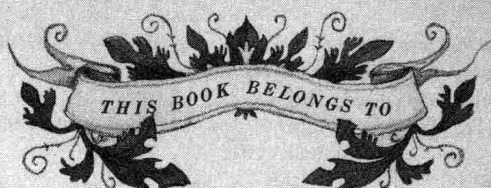
Illustration on page 108 reprinted with kind permission from the
National Library of Australia.

puffin.com.au

ouraustliangirl.com.au

Charms on the front cover reprinted with kind permission from A&E Metal Merchants.
www.aemetals.com.au







OUR
AUSTRALIAN
GIRL



LETTY ON THE LAND

If Letty wants to keep her job, she must travel with her mistress to a sheep farm in the Blue Mountains, leaving her sister Lavinia behind in Sydney. Letty has heard that the bush is a wild place, full of strange beasts and dangers, not to mention the bushrangers who hide out in it. And as Letty soon learns, life on the land has plenty of challenges...

Join Letty again on her adventure in the third of four exciting stories about a free-settler girl and her new life in a far-off land.

Puffin Books

*To my sisters
And my beautiful nieces —
This generation of Australian girls*



*Special thanks to the people in rural Australia
who enthusiastically shared their time and knowledge
to help me discover Letty's land.*



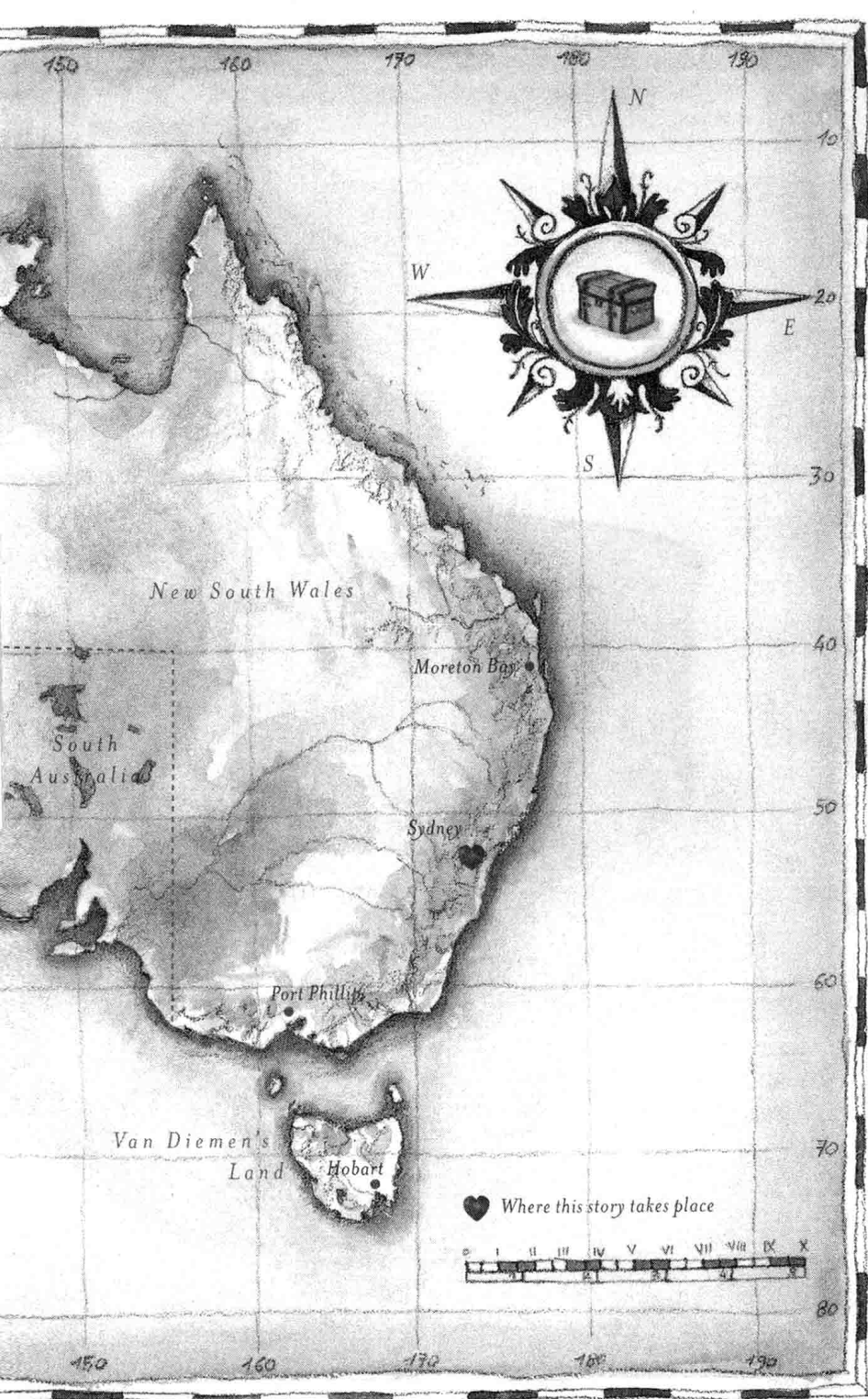
AUSTRALIA

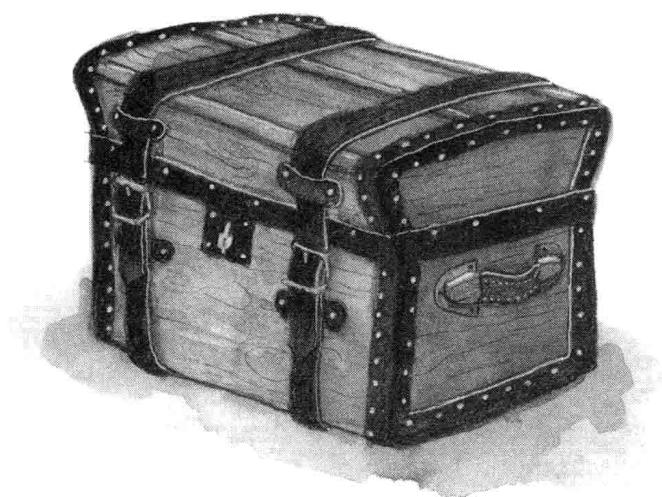
1841

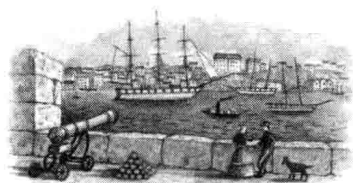
Western Australia

LETTY'S STORY

Letty has begun a new life in an unknown land on the other side of the world. Share in Letty's dramatic adventures as you read this story of a loveable Australian girl.







THE STORY SO FAR

Letty never meant to board the ship that brought her to Australia with her big sister, Lavinia. It was Lavinia's dream to start a new life in the colonies, but Letty has come by accident, and still longs for her papa and her family back home. Determined not to be a nuisance, Letty has found herself a job helping out at Fry's Bakery, and although she misses her best friend, Abner, life in Sydney is looking up. Then a letter in the post changes everything for Letty all over again...

SYDNEY



UNTIL the letter arrived, Letty was having a very fine morning. A square of warm Sydney sunshine lit Mary's lace pillow. Victoria's baby smiles lit everyone's faces.

For the past two months, Letty had been working in the little house behind George Fry's Bakery. Her job was to help with the housework while Mary recovered from having her baby and the fearful time that had led up to that. Mary still had silent days sometimes, but she was up and about in her neat red dress, instead of hiding in her blanket. Mary's brother

George was very relieved. Although he paid Letty's wages, he did not bother much about tidiness. So really Letty's work was lots of cuddling and talking to the baby. Letty felt like a big sister again. She hadn't been happier since leaving England, months and months ago.

George came in from the bakery and handed Mary a floury envelope. 'There's a letter for you, from the Bathurst mail.'

Mary laid her lace bobbins down and took the letter to the window.

'Is it from Clem?' Letty whispered to George. Clem was Mary's husband, who lived somewhere in the New South Wales countryside.

George nodded. He and Letty watched Mary's back. The last letter had made her cry. Then she was wooden and silent for days.

Eventually Mary turned around. 'Clem's sent money,' she said. 'For the coach over the mountains. He wants us to come home now.'

‘Go back to the bush, with the little babe?’ said George. ‘To live in a paddock with convicts and blackfellows? What’s he thinking?’

‘I’ve lived there before,’ said Mary, lifting her chin. ‘Clem wants me back. Not every man’s a city toff like you.’

George rolled his eyes.

To Letty, the bush was a dark green shadow on the far shore of Sydney, full of strange beasts and dangers. She wanted to stay away from it, and she felt a fierce desire to keep Victoria away, too, far from anything that could hurt her.

‘Why do you have to go back?’ she demanded. ‘Why can’t you stay here?’

As soon as the words were out, Letty knew she shouldn’t have said them. Servants weren’t meant to question their mistresses.

‘I want to,’ Mary answered. ‘That’s my home, Letty.’ Her face softened. ‘With Clem and my little boy. I’m Harry’s mama, too. They need me; and it’s where I belong.’

Mary did not mean to be harsh, but Letty felt as if her words had scratched open an old scab. Letty knew what it was like to have no mother. She knew what it was like to have nowhere to belong. That was how Letty's life in Sydney had been before George took her in. It was how her life would be again if Mary and Victoria left. George would have no reason to keep employing Letty then. Letty didn't want them to go, but she couldn't stop them. She bit her lip and hunched her shoulders.

'Oh,' was all she managed to say. She looked away from Mary, at the baby wrapped warm and safe in her basket.

Mary sat down beside her. 'We'll be fine, Letty. The bush isn't that bad.'

'When are you going?' George asked.

'As soon as you can get us seats on the Bathurst coach,' Mary replied. 'I need to speak to Letty's sister Lavinia, too.'

'Christ.' George ran a hand through his hair.

It stood up like a cockatoo's crest. Letty almost laughed, but she was too choked up. She would miss George as well.

'What am I going to do without you ladies to look after me?' George moaned.

'Ha! Find a wife of your own,' said Mary.

Could that be why Mary wanted to speak to Lavinia? George was sweet on Letty's sister, everyone knew. Perhaps Mary thought she'd hurry things along. Mary didn't know Lavinia then, Letty thought.

Lots of people wanted Letty's beautiful sister. But hardly anybody wanted Letty.



Mary, George and the baby came along for Letty and Lavinia's Sunday stroll. Lavinia tossed her long curls when she saw George, and made Letty walk between them.

They went through the Domain, down to the point with a view of the open ocean. Letty

sighed. The world was so vast. Way across that hazy blueness, far out of reach, were the rest of her family. Somewhere on the ocean, perhaps all the way to China by now, was Letty's best friend, Abner. And now Mary and her baby would be leaving Letty, too. It was like losing her family all over again. Letty felt like a stray seabird, blown out of the nest and off-course by one gust after another.

Lavinia gave Letty a searching look. 'You're quiet today,' she said.

Letty didn't want to say anything in front of George and Mary.

'How about you and I sit down for a rest?' Mary suggested to Lavinia. 'George, you take Letty to look at the Governor's new house.'

George looked disappointed. But he doffed his hat to Lavinia and offered Letty his arm.

At the top of the hill, they glimpsed the white outline of the building below.

'Right-o,' said George, after a two-second

look. 'We've seen that. I think the view's better back there, don't you?' He winked at Letty. 'Let's sneak up on them, eh? Find out what secrets our sisters have.'

Letty laughed. She and George walked soft-footed down the slope, shushing each other. They crouched behind a bush where they could hear Mary.

'...so we're going on the Bathurst coach next week,' she said.

'Hmph,' muttered George, unimpressed.

'Oh,' said Lavinia. 'So soon.'

Letty thought so, too. What would she do? Lavinia's employer up on Cumberland Street hadn't wanted Letty to work for them. The Immigrants Home, where she had stayed before, wouldn't take her either – it was only for girls who were new to the colony. Fear knotted her stomach.

'Letty is a good child,' Mary continued. 'She's trustworthy and hardworking.'