

THE PRINCE AND THE ASSASSIN

Australia's First Royal Tour and Portent of World Terror

by STEVE HARRIS

The engrossing real life story of how Queen Victoria's favourite son, Prince Alfred, undertook the most ambitious Royal tour, only for Australia's overwhelming joy of having the first Royal on its shores jolted by his decadent behaviour, then shocked by an attempted assassination by a man trained as a priest.

The British Empire's youngest and most distant outpost found itself at the epicentre of a new crime and empirical fears about the first inter-continental terrorist group, a conspiracy and a 'lone wolf'. In a resulting 'reign of terror' extraordinary steps were taken to safeguard security with laws on treason and sedition which even the Queen felt went too far, and the would-be assassin was hastily executed in a miscarriage of justice led by opportunistic politicians.

This is an extraordinary and atmospheric weaving of the stories — some detailed for the first time — of royal intrigue, sexual appetite, religious bigotry, patriotic vengeance, naked ambition, national security and moral panic. They are stories of royals, immigrants, archbishops, republicans and the founding fathers of Australia and issues that remain with us today.

Drawing on Royal, British and Australian archives, the compelling narrative embraces a pivotal time in the evolution of Australia, and on the 150th anniversary reveals how a minute of madness rocked the country to its foundations, with a legacy which helped shape Australia's history and continues to influence and challenge us today.



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STEVE HARRIS

The Author

Steve Harris has 30 years experience in media. He is the only person to have been editorial head of both of Melbourne's major media groups: Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of *The Age* and Editor-in-Chief of the *Herald* and *Weekly Times Group*. He was also CEO of the Melbourne Football Club. Steve's first book is the critically acclaimed *Solomon's Noose: The True Story of Her Majesty's Hangman of Hobart*, also published by Melbourne Books.

Revelations & insights in *The Prince and the Assassin*

- Prince Alfred's spare heir upbringing as 'the chosen one' and prospective King of Australia
- Sexually decadent royal behaviour
- An historic tour which became the model for 50 subsequent royal tours to Aust
- Religious bigotry, violence and death in early Aust
- How a young migrant trained and destined to be a priest became an assassin
- How the biggest crime in Australia shocked, shamed, terrorised and divided the country
- How Henry Parkes, 'founder of federation', suppressed and doctored evidence, hired private spies and criminals for political advantage
- Australia suppressing civil liberties, even making it a crime of treason to discuss republicanism and to not drink a toast to the Queen
- Australian Catholics accused of disloyalty and an Archbishop conspiring against the Government
- Australia's most sensational trial, one of injustice and vengeance for a crime not on the Empire's capital list
- Alfred appealing for his would-be killer to not be executed
- An Australian Government accused of promoting fear for political advantage and committing treason and fraud

It illuminates a fascinating but forgotten milepost in Australian history.

— Professor Geoffrey Blainey, AC

A compelling account of one of the most controversial political crimes in Australian history, it shows how religious zealotry, bigotry and political over-reaction can bring a community to the brink of disorder.

It reveals disturbingly that when the criminal law is rushed and under political pressures, it can go awry.

Mr Harris is not only a sound researcher, but a very readable narrator.

His story brings lessons from the nineteenth century of Queen Victoria to the twenty-first century of Al Qaeda.

All contemporary politicians and community leaders dealing with the continuing fallout from 9/11 should read it.

— Professor Greg Woods QC, legal historian.

Marvellous...A truly gripping tale, wonderfully researched.

— Jane Ridley, Author, Broadcaster and Professor of Modern History, University of Buckingham, United Kingdom

A gripping tale of royal debauchery, abandoned priesthood, mental infirmity and Irish rebellion, leading to the attempted assassination of Queen Victoria's favourite son... This book has the excitement of a racy political crime thriller, backed by the most sound historical research. It gives the impression of an account written by an eyewitness. There are lessons for us today from the politicians' overreaction to what was mistakenly viewed as an existential threat to Australian society.

— Mark Tedeschi, AM, QC Senior Crown Prosecutor, NSW

Steve Harris' engaging, and richly detailed, account of the story behind the attempted assassination of a young Prince Alfred by Henry O'Farrell in Sydney 150 years ago illuminates a pivotal episode in Australian history. In 1868 Lone wolf assassinations and modern terrorism had just begun. President Lincoln had been assassinated just three years earlier. O'Farrell, deluded and unstable, falsely claimed to be a Fenian, justifying his actions in the name of Irish nationalism. The rise of Fenian terrorism cast a pall over Irish Catholic Australians and the reckless violence of O'Farrell ignited a wave of illiberal political discourse in the colony. One and half centuries later, in an era of fresh anxiety about terrorism, Australia is again facing a test of character. This time it is Muslim Australians who bear the brunt of prejudice, suspicion and guilt by association. Harris's book, a fascinating read at multiple levels, helps frame current anxieties in a deeper context.

— Professor Greg Barton, Research Professor in Global Islamic Politics, Alfred Deakin Institute (ADI), Co-Editor, *Islam Christian Muslim Relations*, Senior Fellow, Hedayah, Abu Dhabi