

A letter from a Lang family member

Dear Assoc. Professor Joel and Dr Turner,

I am writing to say how much I enjoyed reading your book. Alec Lang was my great uncle. I was born in the year that he died, and remained almost totally ignorant of his life and achievements until I began to research my family's history some ten years or so ago. (At that time I wrote to the Carlton Football Club to ask permission to access their archives, but never received a reply.)

It seems to me that your book has served a very useful purpose in documenting important events in a singular chapter of the social history of Melbourne. Your treatment of my great uncle's 'delinquency' seems to me to be dispassionate and fair, possibly sympathetic. It was also interesting to see some of the family photos I have in my possession appear in a public document. Unfortunately, I can't contribute anything to the information you and your colleague have already painstakingly amassed. I do not recall my father ever having told me about his Uncle Alec. My father was a lifelong Carlton supporter, as was his father—my grandfather and Alec's older brother. I can tell you that my great grandfather, Thomas Lang, was a builder, not a contractor. In partnership with his brother, John George Lang, they traded as 'Lang Brothers', and built many fine terrace houses in Parkville, as well as the College Church and the Fairfield railway station. My great great grandfather, John Lang, migrated to Melbourne with his wife and young Thomas (Alec's Dad) in 1856 aboard the 'Marco Polo'. John Lang was also a carpenter and built many houses in the area to the east and north of the Melbourne General Cemetery. Many of them still stand. John Lang, the original immigrant, died some three years or so before the wedding recorded in the photo in your book. His widow, Elizabeth (Learmonth) was still alive and appears in the photo, near the front.

I can't say that, looking back, I ever had any sense of my father or grandfather nursing a sense of shame about what transpired, although I have no difficulty at all in accepting that Alec's problems caused his immediate family considerable distress.

One aspect of the story struck me as odd: the published accounts of Alec's on-field behaviour carry no hint that he ever performed below his level best. He apparently played no part in the internecine strife that engulfed Jack Worrall. He was sufficiently loyal to his club to return after a five-year suspension to try and resume his career. What grounds are there for believing that he would knowingly do something that would damage his club? I have wondered whether, in his own possibly naive way, great uncle Alec might have believed that in taking the bribe and declaring his intention to 'play his socks off', he was going to *help* his club by burning one of the money men busily putting temptation in front of him and his mates. We will likely never know.

Anyway, thank you for a fine book which I will ensure my children and grandchildren have access to.

Kind regards,

A Lang family member