

Letters from Australia, translated from Italian, written by Salvatore Adolfo Marchesi (1853-1921) to his brother Giuseppe (Joe) Marchesi (1842-1920), ex-emigrant returned to Poschiavo.

The originals were found by Milena Rossetti-Marchesi in a drawer in the Mulino di Aino property, where Adolfo and Giuseppe Marchesi were born. The Mulino was once owned by Gioan Antonio Marchesi (1777-1839), our great great great grandfather. It was functioning until the 1960's, is now fully restored to working order, and can be visited by the public.

PERIOD 1907-1919

Heathcote July 15th 1907

Dearest brother,

I received your letter and am very sorry to hear the sad news of your wife's death but we must submit to the will of the Lord and carry out his will. Thank God here we are all in good health at the moment and I hope this letter will find all of you the same.

Concerning the news from here it's not good. In Mandy Gully, I worked hard but this year I couldn't find anything worth having though I did have a good team and this gave me courage to go on and now I hope for a fresh start because this week I found a large amount of water, I'm 500 feet north of the shaft. Otherwise at Pitar Gully I found gold at 180 feet and I had plenty of water and so did the others and Wuilens was closed because a man injured himself and fell 200 ft down the shaft and he was all cleaned up and now there's a dispute about compensation and the dredgers aren't working because there's no water it's been dry here all winter only the creek is working and that pays well.

In connection with what you wrote about the death of Daniele Cramer, if Beti wrote to me I haven't received it and I've written to him again and hope he'll send me an answer quickly and do me the favour of allowing me to deal with things because there isn't time to lose and I'm supposed to have settled everything in 15 months according to law.

Otherwise there is nothing else to write this time except my greetings to you all and to Don Camillo from my family as well. Ellen arrived in Melbourne last week she wrote to me but I haven't seen her.

Goodbye I remain your brother A Marchesi.

Heathcote, 17-1-1910

Dearest brother,

I've received your letter and I am very pleased to hear that you are all in perfect health and it's the same for my family but as for me I've already been ill for 6 months but now I'm beginning to improve but I can't do much I'm still rather weak but I hope that in time my strength will come back but the doctor tells me I must be "very cheerful". The pain that hurts me most is rheumatism in my head. News from here is really bad the place has never been so poor, Monday Gully too, after I got ill they closed it and now the water is above its level but now they want to try to form a company but I don't know how it will end now. Otherwise there were three companies working Pitar Gully and (— —,„) they had a machine in (—?) but now they're all closed and even the dredgers that were in the Gully nobody has paid and they are all closed down and now they're just big machines that you can buy for next to nothing. And the farmers as well they're not doing much because the seasons are so poor the seasons aren't the same as they were when you were here. I would be happy to see the made-up road which goes above the mountains to see what you wrote of to me as a great undertaking.

There's nothing else to write this time but to send greetings to you from many of your friends and also Gio Hall sends greetings but he has grown very old and shakes so that now he can hardly hold anything in his hands because he drinks terribly and I don't think he can last much longer. Also, my family sends you loving greetings and all the relations loving greetings and my greetings too to all of you, brother, sister and all the nephews and nieces.

Goodbye I remain your affectionate brother A Marchesi.

Heathcote, March 5, 1911

Dearest brother,

I received your letter and am so pleased that you are all in perfect health it's the same for us only I'm always miserable I've tried so many doctors but none of them do me any good for 2 years now I haven't been able to do anything the doctors tell me it's the maener complent (*transl. note: miners' complaint*).

News from here is quite bad there is nothing to do and at the present time there isn't a claim being worked, only at Mclvor creek which they are dredging but even at this one they don't do much. Here there is nothing to do, only those who have land discreetly have sheep slaughtered and also kill cattle but now the government has put heavy taxes on land and the farmers are making a big fuss because they have to pay taxes which are in fact no longer like they used to be(,) it's the same for those who find gold you can't sell it if you don't have a mine where you got it from and you can't take gold for smelting if you don't have a licence and all this is because in Bendigo all the claims were stolen but every attempt that they've made can't stop those who decide they want to steal. Those who would like to buy gold have to pay £5. I'm sending you a card with the photograph of my younger daughters one makes locks and the other works at G. Farley making ladies' hats. Otherwise there is nothing to tell you except to send greetings from Gio Hall he is ill too and now you wouldn't know him he shakes like a leaf and he has been ill too and looks very old and Harry Gons too we're waiting for him to die at any moment and also Van and his wife are very old and cannot go back but they get £1 a week from the government.

Loving greetings from my family and many others, and many more from me too, and greetings to all the others at home and to those who ask for news about me.

Goodbye I remain your affectionate brother A Marchesi

St Kilda, 31 Dec 1911

Dearest brother,

I've received your letter and am very pleased to hear that you are all in good health and it's the same for my family but I can't say the same for myself as I have been sent here to take hot baths of sea water, it's now 3 months that I've been in bed with a bad illness and even the doctor had little hope and I received all the last rites of the church, even the priest didn't leave me every day for a week but thanks be to God now I feel a little better the baths have done me a lot of good.

I've gained 2 stone here and my wife is here cooking for me and also Elen came to see me often and Ginni came too and told me all the news from Poschiavo she told me that she liked the place very much and that she could nearly speak Italian too. I think that she will get married in a little while but both of them are very good to me. In Heathcote now there is nothing to do and in fact there is nobody trying for gold but Costefil goes on getting antimony and a good price. I've nothing else to tell you and in fact my hand is shaking so I cannot write any more this time and I hope to write to you better another time and my greetings to you all from my family too and I remain your affectionate brother A Marchesi

Heathcote, May 18th 1913

Dearest brother,

I've received your letter and am very pleased to hear that you are all in good health and it's the same for my family but regret that I can't say the same for me but I'm quite a bit better than I was a while ago but the doctor tells me that my working days are over. I have to report that there is nothing to do, only Costafil is taking antimony (*translator's note: a chemical element*) and a lot of gold but the men cannot stay such a long time or they become ill and it finished me who worked there [?] years ago. There are 150 men but [?]. I received a letter from cousin Antonio and he has been ill for a long time, he was here a month ago, and wanted to come and spend a little time with me but he couldn't come because he was ill again. He would not have been here except for the fact that his wife had died and she had made her will and had asked me to be her executor but she left everything to cousin (Antonio) until he goes and I don't think it will be long because he looks very poorly.

Now my daughters have gone to Melbourne to work, one making locks and the other ladies' hats and I'm sending you a photo of them both and of my son who went to see them, taken together, but the boy is still at school though he too must do something because he is nearly 14 years old now he is learning to tune pianos and he has a good ear for music.

I've nothing else to tell you this time and in fact I thank God that he has given me strength to write to you this time because I didn't expect to be able to I'm sorry for the bad writing but I'm still shaky and my wife sends her greetings to you so do my daughters and my son they do all they can for me and I hope that another time that I can give you better news.

Goodbye goodbye I remain your brother A Marchesi.

Heathcote 12th August 1913

Dearest brother,

I received your letter yesterday and am sending you a quick reply to thank you for the money order you sent me because for three years now I haven't earned a farthing (*centesimo*) and I'm always having to pay big bills as well as the doctor and if I wasn't in a [logo] (*translator's note: perhaps a kind of club or benevolent society*) I don't know what I would have done it has been a great help to me because even now I can't do anything the doctor advised me to go north where it's hot but we realized it would be too expensive but thank God the winter is nearly over and I hope that when the warm weather comes I might be a little better. At present my wife is in Melbourne too because her sister Ritti was ill and sent for Lizzie to look after her but the last letter says she was much better.

I also received a letter from cousin Antonio a little while ago and he was much better but he couldn't leave his place he's grown very old. I can tell you that there's nothing to do here now I've given up looking for gold but Costafil has 200 men working and they send all the antimony to Germany, they get good quality gold too. Otherwise, I've nothing else to write this time except to send you best wishes from lots of people who ask for news of you also Eslop (Heslop) who came to see me and who sends you greetings and looks very old also greetings from my wife's sister. I wrote to Federico as well but I haven't had a reply. Elen is in Siney (*Sydney*) at present. I send you all good wishes from my family and loving greetings from myself and I hope God will give me the strength to write better another time.

Goodbye I remain your brother A Marchesi.

Heathcote, 1st March 1914

Dearest brother,

I received your letter a week ago and I'm happy to hear that you are all in good health and it's the same for us, even I am much better this time only this summer has been very hot and it hasn't rained and in many places people carry water long distances.

News from here is very poor, there is nothing to do nobody is trying to mine gold but Costafil are going ahead with 200 men working and I have the job of providing them with pick handles when they want them they tell me to send 4 dozen at a time. Elen stayed with us here for 5 weeks and now we've received a letter saying she will leave here on March 4th I don't know if she will go to see you too or whether she will go to England. I also received a letter from cousin Antonio but he's not well he wanted to come and see me and stay here for a little while but he's not strong enough to travel he tells me that now he vomits a lot of blood but he would like to come and try if a change of air might do him good and he sends you best wishes so does Isloph (Eslop in letter dated 12-08-13) now he's here in town also Leari Tomas who sends you all good wishes and tells me to ask you if you remember when you went after kangaroos and your dog got a sheep.

Otherwise, I don't know what to write this time but greetings to you all on behalf of my family who are all at home now since in Melbourne they weren't well and the doctor here doesn't want them to go back because they could catch consumption. Lizzie [*Lesi*] had £25 a week from the youngest but she couldn't stay there. Otherwise I send you many greetings and to you.

Goodbye goodbye I remain your brother A Marchesi.

Heathcote February 1st 1915

Dearest brother,

I've received your letter and I'm pleased to hear that you are well and it's the same for us.

You write me poor news from Poschiavo and say that everything is expensive and I have to tell you that here too one can't live during the war and also the season has been disastrous in fact most people haven't harvested at all. Wheat [*uit*] is 8 shillings a bushel bread is 10 pence a loaf meat 9 pence a pound coffee £9 a ton so we can't afford it and cattle and sheep are dying in thousands and horses the same and in fact every one says they've never seen times like these before it's now 12 months that it hasn't rained so that grass could grow and there's the trouble that everyone took for water for people and for the animals and nobody works here only Costafil who have about 300 men because antimony is quite expensive and they send it all to England every month and they are mining very good gold too and if there wasn't that here I don't know what people would do. I also received a letter from Maria Lanfranchi about her brother but I went to find him and he told me he had left everything equal and said that he had left me in charge. I wanted to find her letter first but I was told that letters couldn't get here because of the war again but now I've got hers also.

Your letter too was delayed (censored?) and they put passed on the envelope. The cousin has aged a lot and now he's going back but I can't do anything because he's better than he was a little while ago. 12 months ago, he came to see me here and he stayed for a week to see if the change of air would do him good but after he went back he was ill again and he sends you his best wishes and so do my family.

Goodbye I remain your brother A Marchesi.

Heathcote, 22nd July 1917

Dearest brother,

Its already a while since I received your letter, and I'm late in answering and now here I am letting you know about our good health and I hope it's the same for all of you. News from here is poor everything is expensive and there's no work only Costafil which keeps this place alive. I'm also sending you a letter from Scala and you will see that he asks you if you would oblige him by asking the cousins of the late Antonio to change the money due to him here but it wouldn't be safe to send money as long as the war continues and he would like you to take the money and pay it to cousin (*Maria Lanfranchi*) and cousin Carlo. Now we have settled everything and shared out everything equally plus that which he left to Carlo which they will see because I'm sending them a copy of his will and also his death certificate.

I'm also sending a letter to the bank which a solicitor told me to send off and would you do me the favour of getting the money and paying the cousins and send me a receipt from them but all five of them must sign their names then we can pay Scala here since the banks here won't guarantee you the money if we send it and they will make me pay about £2 per 100 and it would cost too much. They are also writing to Maria and sending the will to her and then everyone can see it. Scala is also writing to the bank to pay the money to you.

Otherwise I don't know what to write this time except to ask you to do what's possible to send what you did the favour of... (*illegible in the text*) as well as this account without delay and they too will be anxious to receive it.

Goodbye and I remain your brother A Marchesi

(*Translator's note: Perhaps "Scala" was a solicitor dealing with the winding up of a relative's estate*)?

Heathcote, May 20th 1918

Dear brother,

I received your letter a little while ago and I'm very pleased that you are in good health as I and my family are too. I wanted to write to you before but I was waiting for a reply from the cousins for whom I had written two letters to Maria and had also sent them a copy of Antonio's will and death certificate, but have received no reply.

I have received a letter from Scala and he has told me that he has received a receipt that they have taken the money in the name of all five and he wanted his money here but I have advised them to see the lawyer in Bendigo but I do not believe he will let them have it until he has received a receipt from everybody will you kindly tell them to send it if they have received the money his part was 532 sterling I would be pleased also to know if they have received a copy of the will.

The news here is very poor with nothing to do and also at Costafil there are only 20 who are working there because they cannot send the antimony to England as they cannot get a boat there are 10000 tons at the

station here now. I have received a letter from Bendigo yesterday about the death of the adopted daughter of poor cousin Antonio and his wife died 12 months ago, and they have left a young girl with 2 children and left everything in my hands.

Otherwise I don't know what else to write this time only will you do me the favour of telling Maria Lanfranchi to let me know immediately what they have done about Scala I thought of writing to you since you receive my letters and perhaps they have not received them. Otherwise I do not know what else to write except to greet you all also in the name of my family and will you give my regards to those who ask about me.

Bye bye and I remain your brother A Marchesi

(Translation note: antimony = brittle and crystalline metallic substance).

Heathcote, May 24th 1919

Dear Brother,

It is already a little while since I received your letter and I am pleased that you are all in good health as also are my family but I am very ill and now cannot do anything.

I was late in writing as I was waiting too for letters one from cousin Maria as well who you told me would write but I have not received their letters but now we have settled everything also with Scala some time ago. The news from here is very bad and now that the war is finished we have influenza that has killed a great number in Melbourne we bury 50 every day and also here there are many funerals every day. The season has been very dry we have not had rain for 6 months but this week it has begun to rain although it is very late to do much good.

I report from here that there is nothing to do and no-one is searching for gold now but Costafil are progressing but first they cannot send antimony to England it is impossible to hire a ship they have 15000 tons of it here at the station but now they hope to send it away. Everything is expensive here food and also clothing people find it difficult to live as well as to buy clothes.

It is already a little while that I have not heard anything from Elen she sent me the newspapers throughout the war but I believe we'll see her back soon. Otherwise I have nothing else to write this time so I send greetings to you all in the name of my family.

Bye bye I remain your brother A Marchesi.

Note from translators:

(Letters translated by Johnny Dews, Margaret Dews and John Marchesi).

A reasonably literal translation has been made with minimal amendment to punctuation, to give the flavour of these letters, written by our forbear, who probably left school at the age of 10-12, as most boys would have done in Poschiavo at that time. Some English words and names are written as an Italian speaker might pronounce them (eg: letter of 12 Aug 1913; Siney – Sydney, and: letter of March 5 1911; maener complent – miner's complaint). In other examples, the Puschiavin' dialect is used rather than Italian.

Adolfo Marchesi married Elizabeth Ann Hester in 1884 at St Kilian Church, Sandhurst, Bendigo. She was the daughter of Charles Hester and Margaret Nicol. Adolfo died from miner's lung disease, and when he became too ill to write, his Australian born wife Elizabeth took over corresponding with her brother in law. (See separate file containing those letters). Giuseppe Luigi Marchesi married Maria Mengotti on 10th Oct 1883. She was born on 10th Oct 1838 and died on 10.5.1907. She was the daughter of Pietro Mengotti.

It is evident from the tone of the letters that the brothers were very fond of each other, and these letters give an interesting insight into life in a new country at that time.

(John Marchesi, October 2003).