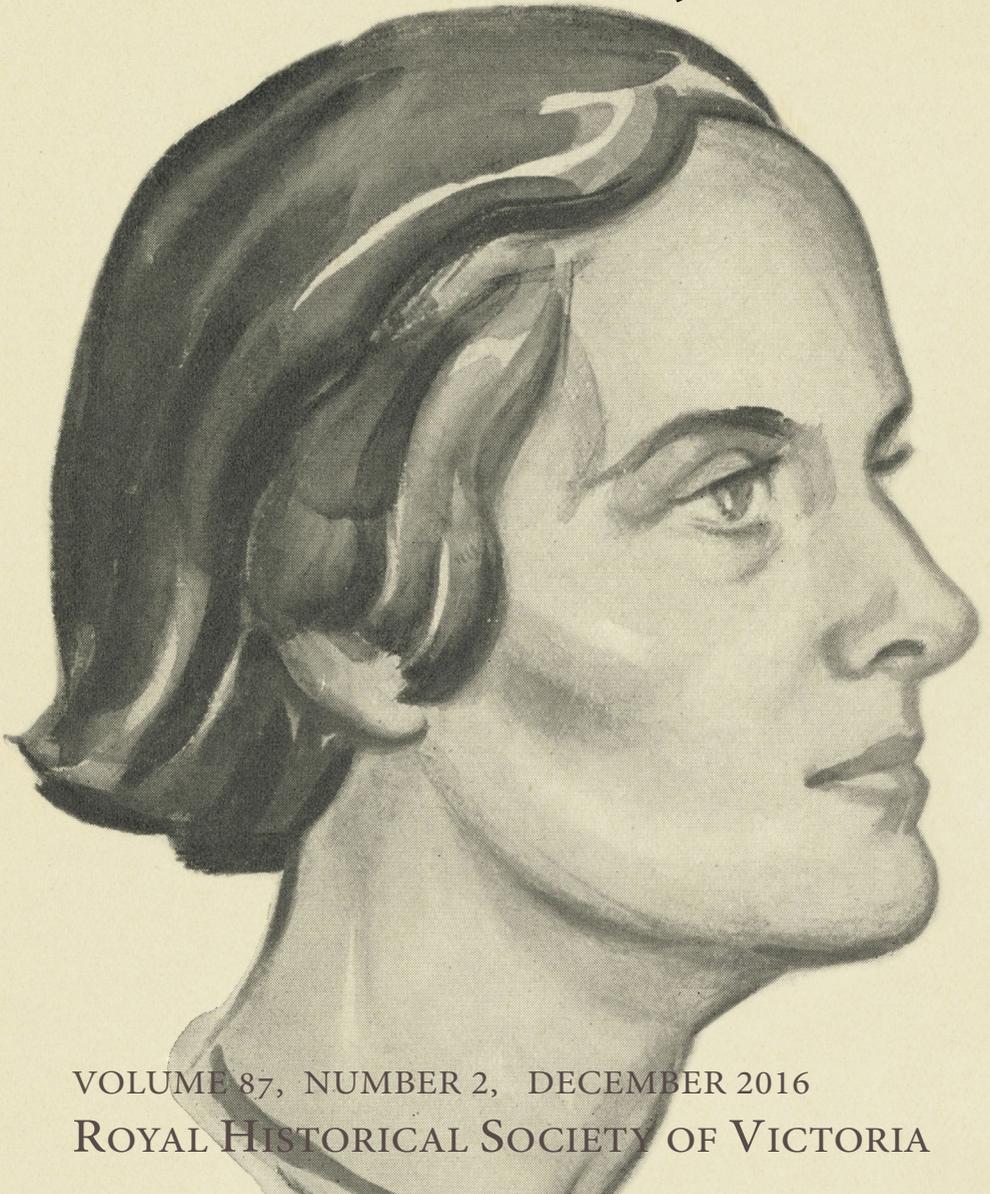


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ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF VICTORIA

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ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF VICTORIA

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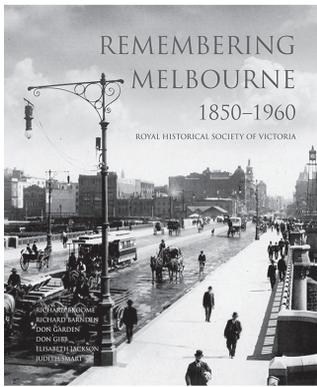
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Introduction

In this issue of the journal we have an array of articles tracing different aspects of Victoria's history, from a traditional Indigenous pathway in the Mallee to the working life of a Melbourne-born woman journalist during the 1930s. In between, there is an examination of how water was used during the gold rush in the Beechworth region and an insight into the lives of two unskilled labourers working in Melbourne during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There is also an investigation into a colonial murder mystery and a reflective piece that reveals the absorbing nature of research.

John Burch's article explores the Wirrengren-Kulkyne pathway, a track or songline, probably used by the ancestors of the traditional owners of the area. Colonial surveyors, squatters and others, who did not know how to identify the soaks or clay pans used by Aboriginal travellers, made a series of ill-fated traverses of the track. By the 1860s, the colonisers had begun learning from the traditional owners about the location of water along the pathway and tanks were established at these valuable sites, increasing the use of the available water to provide for horses, bullocks and stock. Burch traces the use of the pathway by the colonisers up to the arrival of the railway at Mildura in 1903, when the pathway went into decline as a stock track used by settlers. In subsequent years, the pathway was remembered but its precise location was forgotten as land was subdivided for farms and roads or tracks were constructed, sometimes on the former pathway. But that is not the end of the story because, using the PROV collection of Historic Plans, Burch suggests how the individual layers of the palimpsest could be revealed to identify the location of the original pathway. We await with great anticipation the next chapter in the recovery story of this cultural icon.

The diaries of Tom Purcell and William Farrell provide the voices that disrupt the traditionally silent historical spaces occupied by unskilled nineteenth-century labourers. Historians John Lack and Charles Fahey use the diaries of two working-class men in Melbourne to investigate a period over which historians have often disagreed about the extent of the upheavals in the working lives of the population. Lack and Fahey take us beyond the labour statistics—the usual space where unskilled workers find a place in history—to family, the kitchen table, the church pew and the vagaries of casual employment.

In contrast to Purcell and Farrell, Janet Mitchell—a Melbourne-born journalist and educator—came from a more privileged background. Yet as Patricia Clarke’s essay suggests, Mitchell also faced barriers defined more by gender than class and by the circumstances thrown up during the turmoil of the 1930s. Mitchell’s work, ambitions and connections took her to China in 1931 where she was part of the Australian delegation to the Institute of Pacific Relations conference, while at the same time writing articles for several Australian newspapers. Her international perspective drew her into work with the YWCA and the United Associations of Women and, as Clarke suggests, it was the twin forces of journalism and internationalism that shaped Mitchell’s life. It is an intriguing portrait of a hitherto little-known activist during this period in Australia’s history.

The attraction of correctives to established narratives in Australian history lies in the way these often open a window to shine some light into a dusty room. And this is part of the appeal that the research by archaeologists Susan Lawrence, Peter Davies and Jodi Turnbull brings to re-imagining the gold rush as an event with revolutionary environmental consequences across Victoria. Their article, with a focus on the Beechworth area, is one aspect of their much larger re-assessment of this historical period. In this case, water-mining systems were a significant part of how the fields around Beechworth operated, a fact made evident by the 740 miles of races that were constructed when the typical amount elsewhere was closer to ten to twenty miles. This article is a timely and welcome contribution to the burgeoning field of Australian environmental history that has generally overlooked mining as a focus for research.

Finally, there are two articles that offer solutions to a pair of very different mysteries from the early colonial era in Victoria. The first by Fred Cahir, Ian Clark and Paul Michael Donovan deals with the deaths of Joseph Gellibrand and George Hesse in 1837; the second is Barbara Minchinton’s critical re-reading of Georgiana McCrae’s journal. While a possible murder and an undiscovered error made by an editor are a curious combination, the two essays reveal one attraction of historical research. In this case, the authors of the articles have pursued a trail of evidence from which the conclusions have only been obtained through the most meticulous and imaginative investigation. The story of the deaths of Gellibrand and Hesse is placed in the broader

context of colonisation to show how the manufacture of such mysteries reflected nineteenth-century commentators' exclusion of Indigenous perspectives on events in favour of romanticising a mysterious narrative of disappearance. By comparison, Barbara Minchinton's *Historical Note* narrates her personal journey in identifying yet another flaw—adding to an already well-documented series of flaws—in Hugh McCrae's editing of his grandmother's diary. The insight she shares from this exercise is the caution researchers should apply when dealing with the frailty of human memory and the veracity of re-written diaries.

David Harris

‘I feel it dreadful to be out of work’: Tom Purcell and William Farrell and the Melbourne Labour Market 1875–1908

John Lack and Charles Fahey

Abstract

Thomas Purcell and William Farrell, two unskilled labourers, have left us with extremely rare personal accounts of working in Melbourne in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Both men were from the Irish-Catholic community; Farrell was a migrant from Ireland and Purcell was the son of an Irish migrant. Although both worked as unskilled labourers, their experiences of the Melbourne labour market differed greatly. After a brief period of broken employment, Purcell obtained permanent employment with the Victorian Railways and he enjoyed modest prosperity with a pension and home ownership. Farrell was a victim of the casual labour market and he battled with bouts of unemployment for most of his working life in Melbourne. At death he left no probated property.

Introduction

Economic historians writing of the two decades from 1870 to 1890 have described Australia as working man’s paradise. According to N.G. Butlin unemployment was low and wages were high. In these buoyant conditions, Butlin argued, unions did not campaign to increase wages. Rather their efforts were directed to limiting the working day. Peter Macarthy, a student of Butlin, argued that the boom economy of these years, based largely on construction and extractive work, favoured the unskilled and that wages for unskilled workers were ‘exceptionally high’. In the 1890s the wages of the unskilled collapsed, and the high wages of the boom became a goal that labour activists sought to restore with state minimum wages in the first decade of the twentieth century.¹

In 1986 Jenny Lee and Charles Fahey questioned the optimistic interpretation of the economic historians and examined the questions of seasonal and casual labour. In both urban and rural settings much work, they argued, was tied to the seasons of agricultural and pastoral production. Dock labour, for example, peaked in summer with the arrival of wool and wheat from the bush for dispatch to

export markets. Manufacturing workers—such as flour millers or wool-scourers—processing rural produce faced seasonal peaks and troughs, as did agricultural implement makers producing tillage and harvesting implements. Construction work was subject to the vagaries of the weather and all construction workers faced unemployment between jobs. In her study of Sydney, Shirley Fisher also challenged the interpretation of the economic historians and argued that official wage statistics were imprecise. Wages were quoted in ranges and the top of the range often represented aspirations of trade union officials rather than actual wages paid.²

In the *Cambridge Economic History of Australia*, Andrew Stretzer has challenged this pessimistic case and, following Robert Allen, has argued that seasonal and casual work was not peculiar to Australia, nor was there evidence that such work was more pronounced here. Furthermore, he points to recent studies that suggest Australian workers enjoyed the shortest working week in the world, a clear sign of labour shortage. And recent work with company wages books, rather than just official wage statistics, shows rising real wages in the late nineteenth century.³

This essay will consider working conditions in Melbourne by examining two rare working-class voices—William Farrell and Thomas Purcell. Much of the analysis of urban working conditions by labour and economic historians has been based on an examination of official statistics and wages books, and the discussion says little about individual experiences. Two remarkable journals—the diaries of Thomas (Tom) Purcell and fragmentary papers of William Farrell (including short diaries, 1889 and 1893)—allow us to take a look at the boom and depression from the perspective of the unskilled. Thomas Purcell, the son of Irish-Catholic migrants, rode out the boom and the subsequent depression as a permanent railway labourer; William Farrell on the other hand lived most of these years with very insecure employment.

By looking at individual experiences we can highlight a number of important aspects of the urban labour market. Both diarists were migrants to Melbourne, one from the country and the other from overseas. Their journals allow us to explore the way migrants adapted to the urban labour market. At different times both lost work. How

did they cope with this? What was the role of the family in seeking work and dealing with the problems of broken employment? Each year thousands of migrants sought the security of government employment. The differing experiences of Farrell and Purcell demonstrate the importance of employment stability in obtaining assets. Finally, the two diaries throw much light on the experience of Irish migrants and their children. The Irish were over-represented among the unskilled. What were the implications for this in understanding their experiences in a major Australian migrant city?⁴

Tom Purcell

Tom Purcell was born in Melbourne in 1853. His Irish parents, John Purcell and Mary Noonan, born respectively in Kilkenny and Cork, were married at the Cape of Good Hope and came on to Victoria. By 1854 John was gold mining at Heathcote, on the McIvor diggings, where they had four more children (a second son dying in infancy, leaving them with one son and three daughters). Although there is evidence that he selected a small piece of land where he did some farming, when John died there almost 40 years later he was described as having ‘always followed mining pursuits.’⁵ By then, the extended Purcell family was strong in the district, three of John’s siblings, Michael, Mary and Margaret, having joined him at Heathcote in the 1850s; they married Irish-Catholic partners and raised their families there. Though many of the details of the emigration of this extended Purcell family remain elusive, the pattern of the brothers’ and sisters’ movements and settlement, suggest chain, if not group, migration. Proximity and marriage linked the first generation but, inevitably, as the families grew and dispersed from Heathcote, the warm familiarity originating in shared backgrounds, fears and hopes, and settlement experiences declined as cousins and even siblings lost touch, fortunes varied, and illness and death intervened. In the decades immediately after the 1850s, however, this diaspora and dispersal lay well in the future. By the third decade of settlement, cracks were showing.⁶

By the mid-1870s, when members of the second generation were marrying or looking for partners and seeking callings that would support their families, gold mining at Heathcote was in decline, and the town offered limited prospects for the children of miners and farmers. Parents like John Purcell were content with their lot—he, for

instance, was a respected local figure, often called upon to chair public meetings, regularly elected to the land and mining boards, and a long-term cemetery trustee—but their children were becoming anxious and footloose. In the diary he kept conscientiously from 1881, John's son Tom recorded the dismaying exodus of young people to Melbourne. Young men could eke out a living gold mining on the tribute system and turn their hand (as Tom did) to mustering cattle and shepherding; boys could help their farming fathers and older brothers with the ploughing and sowing, the cropping, threshing, winnowing and bagging, and the chaff cutting and oats cleaning. But for many, mining and farming offered only intermittent, seasonal and uncertain income, little upon which to base courtship, marriage and the inevitable responsibilities of parenthood. Opportunities could be even more limited for young women who, after leaving school at thirteen or fourteen, faced years at home before marriage, helping mother and learning from her the skills of housekeeping and baby rearing. The danger was that unmarried daughters could end up as a widowed parent's permanent companion and carer.⁷

Melbourne beckoned. The metropolis was booming and the garment trade generated a demand for seamstresses, dressmakers, tailoresses, machinists and milliners. Women were also wanted as factory operatives in food processing and packaging, although respectable families sent their daughters into callings linked to the domestic arts and into workrooms under the surveillance of forewomen, rather than into factories with largely male workforces and foremen (unless a brother or male cousin was there to watch over them). And there was always housekeeping and domestic service.

In John Purcell's family it was the daughters, Mary, Margaret and Ellen (Nell), who first broke away, in order of age, looking for work and prospective husbands. Mary was working as a domestic servant, but living at Footscray, when she married a Scot, James Nelson, at St Francis' Church Melbourne in 1877. Nelson was a loom tender at Miller's Rope and Jute Works in Emerald Hill (South Melbourne), and had perhaps been specially recruited for this bag-making enterprise, recently stimulated by tariff protection.⁸

In October 1881 Margaret went to Melbourne and, in November, Nell followed. They lived with the Nelsons at Emerald Hill but, with

the birth of the Nelsons' first child, the young family moved to Fitzroy. The Purcell sisters boarded for a time before they all—Mary and James Nelson and Margaret and Nell Purcell—moved to Footscray, living close but in two dwellings. Their fortunes seemed to have flourished; Nell was 'machining in Collins Street', where Margaret soon joined her. Relations between the siblings continued to be close and affectionate. Early in 1882 Nell sent home for Tom 'a beautiful writing desk' that had cost her 16s. John Purcell visited his daughters in Melbourne in April 1882, probably to check on Margaret and Nell's accommodation and to ensure that they were attending mass regularly.⁹

The Heathcote family to whom the Purcells were closest was that of George and Mary Crowder. London-born George had married Irishwoman Mary Heenan at St Francis' Church, Melbourne, in 1853. All eight of their children were born at Heathcote, where George, as late as July 1881, was a miner. In 1880 their second born, Eliza, moved to Melbourne and was joined by her brother Tom in March 1882. Tom Crowder, who had worked alongside his mate, Tom Purcell, in the Heathcote mines, saw recruitment with the police in Melbourne as more secure employment than mining. His parents soon left to join their children in Melbourne.¹⁰

In the early 1880s gold mining in the Heathcote district was in terminal decline. In March 1870 the field employed 1,410 miners while a decade later, in March 1880, this had declined to 585.¹¹ On declining fields Victorian companies and mine owners were reluctant to employ men on weekly wages. Miners were frequently employed as tributers or contactors. Under tribute agreements working miners rented the mine and paid the owner or company a percentage of the gold yield they mined. Contactors agreed to sink shafts and drive tunnels at a stipulated rate per foot. As Tom found, both were precarious pursuits. His diary regularly recorded variable earnings with slimmer and slimmer pickings in late 1881 and early 1882. Between October and November 1881, for example, he had bottomed five 'duffers', hitting bedrock in shafts and drives without finding a trace of gold. In the new year his returns were poor and set the tone for the coming year. On 11 January he 'bottomed a duffer' and filled it in; two days later he sank his fourth duffer for the week; on 18 January he got three dwts (pennyweights) for the day, and on 26 January he bottomed a further

hole for one dwt. Contracting also carried risks and miscalculation of prices could lead to losses if the ground was difficult to mine and left little profit for the contractors.¹²

Over the year 1881 it was pretty clear that Tom had not earned much more than his subsistence. In February he had noted that some Costerfield (a neighbouring mining town) chaps had thrown in mining for work at the Yan Yean water race near Melbourne. July saw Tom mustering cattle. By mid-August he had decided that he would go to Melbourne. As he wrote in his diary on 13 August: 'I am making preparations to go to town [by which he meant Melbourne] to seek employment'. The city—Marvellous Melbourne—already had its attractions, which Tom had sampled as recently as Christmas 1881. 'I spent [he recorded] about £1/5/- in ten days,' visiting the museum and attending a pantomime and the Australian–English cricket match. He was also measured for a suit. And he and Eliza Crowder, presumably in company, visited Brighton, St Kilda, and Mordialloc beaches. It was not all frivolity, for as a devout Catholic his visit began with mass at St Patrick's Cathedral and at St Mary's St Kilda, and concluded with confession and communion at St Patrick's and masses at St Francis' in the city and St Mary's St Kilda. He also visited Father Henry Backhaus, a pioneering Catholic priest in the Bendigo and Heathcote districts who had retired to Brighton.¹³

The signs were that he was anxious about Eliza Crowder, who had been corresponding with him regularly since her removal to Melbourne. On 21 February 1881 he had sent her a couple of books for her birthday. Although he was prudent—a non-drinker who signed the pledge in November of that year—his income was insufficient to allow him to embark on marriage and a family, and it appears that he came to Melbourne to be closer to Eliza, and to find regular work so that he could save and prepare for marriage. The risk was that if he did not leave Heathcote he might lose her as she had ample opportunity to meet eligible Catholic young men in Melbourne.¹⁴

Tom's move turned out to be a permanent one. While his parents were living in Heathcote it remained, in a sense, home. After he left in August 1882 he would never return except to visit his parents during holidays. When his father died in 1892 he packed up his widowed mother's effects and she moved in with one of her daughters in

Melbourne. Four years later, after the death of his mother, he returned to arrange for the transfer of his father's remains from Heathcote to Footscray cemetery. This was a story that was replicated in tens of thousands of families in the 1880s, and again in the early 1900s when Melbourne began to recover from the terrible 1890s depression. Except under the most dire circumstances, Melbourne acted like a magnet for Victoria's young country folk.¹⁵

The grass promised to be greener in Melbourne. Perhaps sister Nell, home in Heathcote for her winter holiday in 1882 with the old folk, had added her mite of influence to Tom's decision to come to Melbourne. Certainly they went together, and their sister Margaret met them at North Melbourne railway station for their journey to Footscray. Tom began a five-month search for permanent labouring work, the main skill he offered being as a pick-and-shovel man. Boots and trousers would be one of the main expenses recorded in his diaries over his more than 30-year working life, 1882–1913.¹⁶

A marginal note in his diary for 15 August 1882, the day he arrived in Melbourne, reads as follows: 'Railway to Heathcote passed'. Tom and his father had been members of the Heathcote Railway League (John had chaired many public meetings on the matter), and Tom had been introduced to the local members of parliament for the Rodney electorate—Simon Fraser and the minister for railways, Duncan Gillies. Their patronage he hoped would secure him railway work, its attraction being steady and continuous employment not subject to the vagaries of the weather, the season and the general economy. But the parliamentarians proved elusive. Tom got a ticket to the parliamentary gallery, and remained two hours, but did not so much as catch a glimpse of Gillies. A week after, he was still 'trying to see Hon. D.G.' or 'looking for D.G.', but he soon gave up the fruitless case. He would have to approach private employers for work.¹⁷

First he went to several wool and hide merchants in West Melbourne—Younghusbands (NZ Loan and Mercantile Agency Co. Ltd) and Priestleys—but it was apparently the off season. He sought a job at a new smelting works on the Saltwater (Maribyrrong) River at Yarraville, then chased work at the Collingwood quarries and gasworks. When a friend 'got on' at the waterworks, Tom followed him there as a quarryman but, even as an experienced miner, he found the work gruelling: 'worked but ½ day and knocked off with 15 blisters on my

hands.' He bought a pick and shovel and went to work at Clifton Hill (as a day labourer). After three weeks his gang was dismissed; his total pay amounted to £3 14s 2d (this would have meant little more than 4s a day for each of eighteen days). He then found a temporary painting job at Windsor but that finished in October. Then Priestleys, hide merchants, took him on; the hours varied from 45 to 60 per week, 8 to 6 in summer and 8 to 5 in winter, for a wage of £2 2s. He was dismissed after two weeks. In November a friend wrote that Goldsborough Mort (wool stores) was looking for men but by then he was working at Miller's jute works, a job secured perhaps through his brother-in-law, Jim Nelson. It was only casual work, whitewashing the ceilings and walls, but he saw factory conditions at first hand: 'One of the weavers got the top of her fingers taken off today' (15 November 1882). One week later the weavers were on strike. He worked his last day there on 22 December before returning home to Heathcote for Christmas, where he helped his father in reaping and threshing. Back in Melbourne in the new year, he sought work (unsuccessfully) at Hughes's smelting works in La Trobe Street before, on 17 January 1883, 'Mr Anderson ... put me on at [the] Goods Sheds', that is, the Victorian Railways sheds at Spencer Street, the system's main country terminal.¹⁸

In the first two months of his employment with the railways, Purcell's diary captures the insecurity of casually employed labourers. On 23 January he observed that 40 men were 'sent away from the sheds this morning'. In February he regularly received overtime but, by the end of the month, 30 men had been dismissed. In early March he observed that work was 'very dull'. On 13 March he noted, 'I was dismissed this morning among about 100 men', while on the following day he was put on again at the wood siding. On 15 March he received a letter 'stating that they were slackening hands and I must not expect to be kept on in preference to old hands'. Over the next few months, as the produce arriving from rural Victoria dried up, his diary continued to record insecure work:

- 9 May great number of men dismissed this morning
- 11 May I was called out this morning and put in again
- 2 July about 200 men dismissed from Kensington Hill
- 9 July some of the men at the woodsiding got a week's notice

In September employment was still unstable and on 17 September he recorded that there had been 'great reductions made in the number of men employed by the railways lately over 500 dismissed'.¹⁹

Towards the end of the month Purcell was given a medical examination and asked to return in eight or nine days. When he did so in early October, Dr Phillips informed him that 'he could not be justified in passing me and that he [Purcell] could seek an examination from another doctor'. On 19 October the foreman handed Purcell's gang forms on which they were to state their age and length of service. This may have been preparation for making the men permanent. In November Purcell took a further medical examination. This examination must have been successful and from the end of 1884 he appears to have been in permanent employment with the railways.²⁰ Towards the end of the year he received considerable overtime, and as a sign of his new security he joined the St Michael's branch of the Hibernian Australian Catholic Benefit Society.²¹

As a permanent railway employee, Purcell continued to witness the seasonal fluctuations in work around the railway yards, with summer peaks in the wool and wheat seasons and slow-downs in the winter months. And throughout the 1880s he continued to record the ebb and flow of employees in the railway yards. On 5 July 1886 he observed that there were 'very few men working about the sheds', and two days later he recorded that 2,200 men had applied for railway jobs. As a railway labourer Purcell did not receive high wages; he commenced work in 1883 at 6s 6d per week and by 1887 he was probably earning 7s per day (Table 1). This was below the rates that skilled mechanics could achieve, 9s to 10s per day. The critical point was that work was regular, uninterrupted by seasonal unemployment and there were opportunities for overtime in the busy seasons.²²

With a permanent position in the railways, Purcell was able to participate in the booming Melbourne economy of the 1880s. In October 1884, rather than attend the railway picnic, Purcell journeyed out to Footscray and purchased a block on the Glasgow estate in Berry Street. For over two years the block remained undeveloped, although Purcell did note at the beginning of 1886 that two houses were going up on blocks near his. Marriage and the birth of his first child undoubtedly

pushed Purcell to develop his own block. On 24 February 1886, Tom Purcell, 33, married Eliza Crowder, 30, at St Mary's in North Melbourne and, on the following day, he and Eliza moved into a rental house in Footscray. Their first child was born in this rental house in January 1887. With a permanent job, Purcell could afford to pay £3 6s—a week and a half's wages—for the services of a doctor.²³

In April Purcell tried unsuccessfully to borrow from his friendly society. He then took five shares in a building society, handed over the titles of his block to the society's solicitor and took out a loan to commence building. Drawing £50 from the bank, he commenced building the chimney in early August. Three months later they moved into their new four-room weatherboard house and, on the following day, he purchased a shovel and sowed potatoes. Over the next 30 years Tom and Eliza used their garden to good advantage, producing a wide variety of vegetables and fruit and also raising poultry. This home production was critical, for six children were born in the Berry Street house—John 1887, James 1889, Thomas 1890, George 1892, Kathleen 1895 and Leo 1897.²⁴

Purcell's diary records the transition from boom in the 1880s to the depressed 1890s. The first sign of trouble was the great maritime strike of 1890. Purcell attended a mass meeting in Flinders Park to support the strikers, and he took up a collection among his fellow railway workers to assist those out of work. In June 1891, more ominous signs of distress appeared among his friends. On 1 June he wrote, 'Mr Pitt is out of work, there are a lot of people out now'. A month later Pitt was breaking stones but could only make 15s or 17s 6d per week. And at the beginning of 1892 Purcell again recorded, 'a great many people out of work at present'.²⁵ As a permanent railway employee Purcell rode out the bitter years of the 1890s depression and the employment problems that emerged with prolonged drought in the late 1890s and early 1900s. His real wage rose in these years with the general deflation of the 1890s (Table 1).²⁶

Table 1 Thomas Purcell's career in the Victorian Railways

Year	Occupation	Wage per week	Real Wage (base 1890)
1884	Labourer	39s*	42s 3d
1887	Door Porter	42s*	42s 9d
1890	Weighing Porter	48s*	48s
1893	Weighing Porter	48s*	61s 1d
1896	Goods Porter	48s*	56s 4d
1899	Receiving Porter	48s*	60s 3d
1902	Receiving Porter	48s	53s 2d
1905	Goods Checker	48s	59s 5d
1908	Goods Checker	48s	54s 9d
1911	Goods Checker	51s	51s 4d

Source: Triennial Employment Lists published in *Victoria Government Gazette*.

*Before 1902 the lists did not record wages. For these years the wages have been estimated using the wages listed for staff removed from employment and published in *Victoria Railways Report of the Victorian Railways Chief Commissioners, 1886–1899*. The wages were deflated with the McLean–Woodland index. See I.W. Mclean and S.J. Woodland, ‘Consumer Prices in Australia, 1850–1914’, Working Paper 92–4, Department of Economics, University of Adelaide, 1992, Appendix Table 6.

In the 1890s Purcell kept his diary less assiduously. He continued to work at the railways until 1913 when he retired. He enjoyed seven years of retirement on a railways pension and died in December 1920. He left a modest estate—a house valued at £550 and a savings bank deposit of about £209—and his wife drew his pension for a further sixteen years.²⁷ Purcell's employment security probably helped him keep most of his children from unskilled labouring employment. Although his eldest son John became a labourer, Thomas Vincent was first a telephonist and then a clerk, George Thomas served an apprenticeship at the Colonial Sugar Refinery as a fugalman, and Leo was trained as an iron moulder. Daughter Kathleen joined the army of young working-class girls entering the clothing trades and was a dressmaker.²⁸

William Farrell

Purcell's working life contrasts dramatically with the experiences of William Farrell. William Farrell, the son of a labourer, was born in Meath in 1848. He joined the British army in Liverpool and served in New Zealand from 1865 to 1866, in England and Ireland from 1866 to 1872, and in India until 1875. On service in Ireland he married Anne Sheridan, a native of Limerick, and their first child was born in India in 1872. Discharged from the army, he migrated to Melbourne and probably arrived around 1875. William and Anne's first-born child died in India as an infant and their first Australian child, William, was born in Melbourne in April 1875.²⁹

Arriving in Melbourne almost a decade before Purcell, Farrell faced the same essential problem of finding work in Melbourne's unskilled labour market, the main differences being that he arrived as the labour market was entering a period of recession and that, unlike Purcell, he did not have family links in the colony. In the late 1870s he appears to have worked as a common labourer, and at one stage he tried his hand as a wood merchant. As a seller of firewood his motto was:

My wood is good
My weight is just
I pledge my word
I give no trust³⁰

This business turned out badly and in the early 1880s he wrote to his baker, a Mr Ogilvie, that:

I am sorry for keeping you out of money so long when I gave up wood dealing I had to make good £10 [and] paying off that and keeping my family comes rather hard ... If you had stopped serving me when I told you I would be clair [*sic*] with you now, you being so kind I could not be dishonorable [*sic*] You are aware I could have got bread for 4d per loaves that would save me in difference in one year and the price I have been paying you £3.0.8 that could have got my family clothes.³¹

Farrell's first-born Australian child was delivered in the lying-in hospital; the next three children were born in the poorer parts of the central city in lanes off Bourke and Market streets. In these years Farrell not only battled to gain employment, he also battled with drink. In an undated note from the early 1880s, probably 1882, he wrote: 'I will J

William Farrell somonely [*sic*] and with firm resolution will from this date obtain from all entoxcriation [*sic*] drink from this, may the Lord help me in my undertaking till these debts are paid'.³² He observed that if he obtained constant work, by saving he could get out of debt in eight weeks. He summed up his position in a simple table of expenditure and savings.³³

Table 2 William Farrell's Expenditure and Savings

Expenditure for one week	£	/	s	/	d
Sugar 5lbs @ 4d	1	/	8	/	
Tea ½ lb @1s		/	1	/	
Sundries etc		/	3	/	
Milk 2d per day		/	1	/	2
Bread		/	3	/	2½
Meat and potatoes etc		/	10	/	
Rent		/	7	/	
Total	1	/	7	/	0½
Income for week	1	/	16	/	
Keep from drink					

From the late 1870s, it is clear from Farrell's notebooks that he sought work as a casual labourer with the railways. In February 1881 he wrote to the general traffic manager of the Victorian Railways:

I beg most respectfully to State During this last 3 years I have been working on the Victoria Railways in the wool and wheat season, during that time I have never on any occasion being checked by any foreman in the department, for not being able and willing to work I would be for ever thankful if you be so kind as to order my name to be enrolled on the casual list to take my turn from the next busy season.³⁴

Like Purcell, William Farrell looked to have obtained more secure employment with the railways, two William Farrells, a lampman and a labourer, being listed in the first triennial employment list of the Victorian Railways in 1884. William Farrell, diarist, was probably the labourer, who, for reasons that are not clear, was dismissed in 1885.

The lampman was still employed in 1887. Our William Farrell was thus thrown once again onto the casual labour market.³⁵

Farrell's papers reveal very little about his life from the mid-1880s until the beginning of 1889. From occupations listed on the birth certificates of his children we can learn that he remained a labourer, probably a pick-and-shovel labourer in the construction sector. At the end of January 1889 he acquired a printed diary and commenced to keep a daily journal.

In mid-1888 Farrell and his family were living in a rented house in Stanley Street, West Melbourne. By this date his family responsibilities had grown considerably. When Anne Farrell registered the birth of Annie in June, the Farrell family was made up of William 13, John 11, Patrick 9, Maria 8, Michael 6, and Frank 5. As a construction labourer, Farrell was paid 7s per day at the beginning of 1889 and his two eldest sons had joined the labour market. On 28 January he tallied up his progress for the year:

Brought forward earned up to date	£6.11.0
Jack	15.0
Will	14.0
	£8.0.0

The day nice and cool, odd showers. Put in today 8½ hours 7s 5¼p saved up to this date £ 2.0.0. Opposite state school in Queensbury Street with tram the leavles [*sic*] had to be altered here to [*sic*] high 6 inches.³⁶

Early in February Farrell's work was interrupted by rain. On Wednesday 6 February, 'Worked at home, wet all day'. The following day he lost half an hour owing to showers and at the end of the week he was '11 hours short of a full week'. His wage was only 32s 6d instead of 42s.³⁷ In weeks of lost time the income of children was essential. Like many of the young workforce of Melbourne in the 1880s, Farrell's sons Jack and Will were in and out of work. At the beginning of February, Jack's contributions to the family wage ceased while Will was earning 7s per week. On the week ending 23 February, Will appears to have quit his job but found another position as a telegraph boy within a few days. His father caustically wrote, 'I wonder how long he will stop there'. Less than two weeks later he answered his own question, 'Jack working in stores McLean Brothers and Rig[g]s. Will was not working today'.

Throwing in his job, Will disappeared from the household and, on 19 March, Anne Farrell returned her son's uniform to the post office. His father noted, 'I think he will not come home for a while.'³⁸

In the 1880s Melbourne was transformed with massive investment in urban infrastructure: railways, tramways, water reticulation, domestic and public buildings. In the early 1960s Noel Butlin wrote that this investment was a boon for labour, providing plentiful work at high wages. The 1889 journal of William Farrell is a unique insight into how this investment trickled down to the casual construction labourer.

At the beginning of 1889, Farrell was working as a pick-and-shovel labourer laying a tramline through North Melbourne. Like all construction labourers he was paid by the hour and his wages were higher than many labourers employed in factories. While the typical factory labourer received 6s per day, Farrell was paid at the rate of 7s. In full employment his work routine was seven and a half hours Monday to Friday and five and a half hours on Saturday. Work, as we have seen, could be interrupted by poor weather and the need to keep a track of lost hours may have been one reason for keeping a journal. It could also have been the reason that Farrell purchased a gold watch and chain valued at the enormous sum of £10 19s early in March. And having committed himself to this purchase he had a moment of doubt about his ability to pay for them: 'I wonder how I will get on with them.'³⁹

This was a genuine concern and Farrell undoubtedly knew from previous experience that construction contracts had limited duration, for his journal gives us an insight into how thousands of similar work contracts were conducted. Although we do not know when Farrell commenced on the North Melbourne tramline, it provided steady work through January 1889. As the work progressed Farrell recorded his location in his diary:

28 January opposite state school in Queensbury St

29 January Opposite corner of Queensbury and Abbotsford Street

5 February opposite Saddler in Abbotsford St⁴⁰

Such regular recordings were ticking off the amount of work he could expect.

Labourers like Farrell were human earthmovers, and his diary gives us a feeling for the physicality of his work. Rain delayed work but summer heat, with the promise of fulltime work, had to be endured:

'30 January today very hot Commenced in Abbotsford [St] today'. On 19 February he was working in a drain seven feet deep, and this work continued for four days. On his Sunday holiday he 'was at home all day sleeping best part of day. I feel a great pain in the pit of my stomach this evening.'⁴¹ The diary gives little indication that Farrell attended Sunday Mass.

On 4 March the sinking was not bad but three days later they were on the last chain at the end of Abbotsford Street and Flemington Road. On 8 March his foreman told him to take a holiday but then found some work for him digging drains. This was short-lived and the following day he was not working. He 'put in 5½ hours' on 12 March only to be told at the end of the day that there was 'no more work till Flemington Rd is finished'. About which he mused: 'God knows when that will be.'⁴² With this contract finished he faced the perennial problem of construction labourers: searching for work. In his diary he recounted both the frustrations and the costs of wandering through the city visiting construction sites and interviewing foremen:

13 March Wednesday

I started this morning to look for work. Went to Port Melbourne. Me and Jack. No show, tried McKenzie no show. I spend 2s on one thing and another

14 March Thursday

I started this morning to look for work no show. Went to Port Melbourne trams. Richardson Street where they are lowering gas pipes no show. Went to St Kilda road no show. I am promised a start when S[outh]. Melbourne tram starts young Doran told me today they would start about Tuesday. Poor Jack drew 2s out of bank he came with me.

15 March Friday

Started out this morning I think I will get a show on Swamp on Monday morning. I feel it dreadful to be out of work. Poor Jack is very ill. So is Will and trouble never comes alone.⁴³

This search for work proved too much for Farrell and, with no one in his household in work, on 24 March 'he broke out on the drink'. He quarrelled with his wife over a dirty lot of plates and dishes, which he 'made short work of'. Although he had the offer of work he failed to turn up and continued drinking. He pawned his shovel and in desperation he visited the local police station and asked, unsuccessfully, for the police

sergeant to lock him up. At the beginning of April he despaired ‘when is the day coming I am to be happy’.⁴⁴

Farrell undoubtedly had a weakness for drink, yet his journal does brutally illustrate that unskilled construction work was highly insecure even in the boom of the 1880s. As investment dried up in the early 1890s, short-term under-employment was replaced by long-term unemployment. For unskilled labourers such as Farrell, the years from the early 1890s until the early 1900s were a period of extreme economic stress.

We do not know when William Farrell recovered from his bender. A reference, dated 20 November 1893 from Mr Henry Hawley, the Melbourne City Council orderly system inspector, endorsed him as a ‘hard working, sober, and very intelligent man’, and affirmed that he had worked sweeping streets on the council’s orderly system for the past four years. The reference also stated that his three sons had worked with him and ‘followed their father’s footsteps’. While this suggests that the job commenced in 1889, a letter to his wife, ‘Dear Nance’, places him at work in the Mallee town of Birchip in May 1891. This appears to have come about after a dispute with two of his sons—Pat and Jack—who, in his view, were not pulling their weight with the family finances. The job itself depressed him. He had three miles to walk to work and three miles back, and the job was ‘pritty [*sic*] stiff’. He was penniless and did not have his good boots. He begged his wife for a few shillings until he was paid.⁴⁵

Although there is this confusion in Farrell’s narrative, it is clear that in the early 1890s he had a regular job and that his three eldest sons—William, Pat and Jack—worked with him. As a street sweeper with the council, Farrell accepted a lower wage than he could have earned as a construction labourer—six shillings a day compared to seven shillings—and the wages of his sons would have added to the family funds. But this was not to last.⁴⁶

Farrell gave a hint of impending trouble when he wrote in April 1893 that, ‘All sweeping men got [a] fortnight to leave’. Two weeks later he observed the notice ‘time was up’, and after a further two weeks sixteen men were laid off. On 2 August he heard of a rumour that sweeping was to be ‘let by contract’, and a report in the *Age* on 29 August carried the news that, ‘by a majority of 3 our work to be let by contract’. This was confirmed on 11 September. He was given notice to

leave on 10 October only to be cruelly given notice to 'stop for further orders'. On 28 October, Farrell noted in his journal beside his weekly wage that: '20 boys advertised to day I wonder how I will get on, time only will tell. Last day on blocks'. Late in December he returned to the journal and wrote, 'I answer today, Saturday 30 December very bad two months out work'. In the dark days of the 1890s Farrell kept another journal; this time it was not of work but a listing of his neighbours who were unemployed.⁴⁷

Farrell survived the 1890s by picking up available labouring jobs, and on many of these he was trusted sufficiently to be employed as a ganger. References show that he worked, among other jobs, draining the Condah Swamp and on the Mallee Water Supply works. The pain of these years comes through in a letter he wrote in 1903 to a mate, Bill, announcing that he was thinking of working his passage over to Western Australia. He could work his passage over any week on the cattle boat but if he did he would 'need a shake down' until such time as he could 'see his way about'. Victoria, he explained, was frightful: 'nothing doing this last two years'. Jack was up north working on the Mildura railway and he had to go in for stone-breaking but this was now finished. Although he was 'on the loaf' the family still had income from Will who was on the council and from Amy who worked, like many girls from inner Melbourne, at the bookbinding department of Sands & McDougall. He hoped to try his luck while there was still a 'spark of young blood' in him.⁴⁸

William Farrell did not take this trip. In 1904–05 he found six months work as a ganger on the Elwood swamp. He acquitted himself well in this job. William Parker, the engineer in charge of the project, wrote: 'All Mr Farrell's work has been done well and faithfully. He is a most capable ganger and attentive to his to duties which he thoroughly understands. He is a good disciplinarian and manages men well'.⁴⁹ This may have been his last job, and by the early twentieth century he was suffering from heart disease. He died in January 1908 of heart failure aged only 56. He left no measurable property. With few resources he could do little to set his children up, and the 1903 Commonwealth electoral roll listed his three eldest sons as labourers.

Conclusion

Although these two biographies cannot settle arguments about the standard of living in colonial Australia, they have the benefit of taking

us beyond the abstraction of statistics to the lived experience of working labourers. Thomas Purcell clearly fits the picture of the affluent working man. For most of his time in Melbourne he was in regular employment and he became a home owner. Yet he knew that he was fortunate. Coming to Melbourne from the bush, he faced an initial struggle to obtain secure work. When he did have a permanent job, he noted many around him losing work when seasonal peaks declined. The depression of the 1890s left many of his neighbours unemployed. Moving to Melbourne, Purcell was not alone. His sisters preceded him to the city and he had networks of family and friends to help him seek work. They also provided him with accommodation. He was young and unmarried and could return to his parents' home when he was unemployed at the end of 1882.

Farrell came to Melbourne after army service in India with a wife and soon had a young and growing family. He did not have the luxury of going bush and when out of employment he had to turn to precarious self-employment. Contracting might appear to be social mobility but it could also be a path to debt and insecurity. Alcohol was a potent factor in Farrell's employment survival. Off the drink he could work hard at heavy manual labour, but construction jobs were of limited length and frustrating job searches could lead to depression and drink. In this perilous working world, family earning was a necessary buffer against lost time. When more than one family member was unemployed the struggle was even more severe. Although Farrell overcame drink for several years after 1889, self-discipline was not enough; the economic depression of the 1890s had little respect for either the drinker or the abstainer. Farrell's working life also highlights how prolonged the recovery from the depression was, and after 1893 he appears never to have enjoyed secure work. Wages may have been high by world standards in nineteenth-century Melbourne but labouring life was precarious. The lure of the safe government or railway job was powerful. In his 50s Farrell had a constant search for hard labour. Purcell on the other hand retired with a pension and his own home. Farrell and Purcell earned similar wages but their life chances were poles apart. Statistical series of average wages cannot capture such divergent work experiences.

Notes

- 1 N.G. Butlin, *Investment in Australian Economic Development, 1861–1900*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1964, pp. 390–8; P.G. Macarthy, ‘Wages in Australia, 1891–1914’, *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. X, no. 1, March 1970, p. 57, and ‘Wages for Unskilled Work and Margins for Skill, Australia, 1901–1921’, *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. XII, no. 2, September 1972, pp. 142–60.
- 2 Jenny Lee and Charles Fahey, ‘A Boom for Whom? Some Developments in the Australian Labour Market’, *Labour History*, no. 50, May 1986, pp. 1–27; Shirley Fitzgerald, *Rising Damp: Sydney, 1870–90*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1987, see p. 201.
- 3 R.C. Allen, ‘Real Incomes in the English-speaking World, 1879–1913’, in G. Grantham and M. MacKinnon (eds), *Labour Market Evolution: The Economic History of Market Integration, Wage Flexibility and the Employment Relation*, London, Routledge, 1994; Andrew Seltzer, ‘Labour, Skills and Migration’, in Simon Ville and Glen Withers (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of Australia*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 178–201.
- 4 Among grooms married in Victoria in 1871, 17 per cent of the Irish gave their occupation as labourer; for all grooms the proportion was 12.2 per cent. Based on a 1 in 10 sample of Victorian marriages in 1871. This sample was compiled from digitised images of marriages held by the office of Births, Deaths & Marriages, Melbourne. The authors thank the registrar for permission to use these.
- 5 *McIvor Times*, 29 September 1892. For his selection, see *McIvor Times*, 15 and 22 October 1874. John Purcell held 4 acres in 1882. See Borough of Heathcote Rate Books, VPRS 16334/P/0001/04, VA 3001, Public Record Office Victoria (PROV).
- 6 This genealogical information is based on a search of Births, Deaths & Marriages records for the Purcell family located through the Digger Index.
- 7 Thomas Purcell, Diary, Ms11791, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria (SLV).
- 8 Marriage certificate, 14 July 1877. James’s father is listed on this certificate as a weaver but James appears to have migrated alone.
- 9 The move to Melbourne can be followed through entries in Thomas Purcell, Dairy, October 1881 to April 1882. For Margaret’s move, see 13 October 1881. Tom Purcell regularly received letters from his sisters, which he always answered. See, for example, 15 October 1881 and 12 December 1881.
- 10 On the day Tom Crowder went to Melbourne, Tom Purcell also noted that another acquaintance, E. Penna, had gone the day before. Purcell, Diary, 16 February 1882.
- 11 *Report of the Mining Surveyors and Registrars*, March 1870 and March 1880.
- 12 Purcell, Diary, 9 December 1881, and 11, 18 and 26 January 1882.
- 13 Purcell, Diary, 28 February 1882, and 13 August 1882. For his holiday trip to Melbourne, see 24 December 1881 to 4 January 1882.
- 14 Purcell, Diary, 16 November 1881, 9 January 1882 and 21 February 1882.
- 15 In both 1891 and 1911 around a third of all brides and grooms residing in Melbourne at the date of their marriage had been born in regional Victoria. Based on 10 per cent samples drawn from Victorian Marriage Certificates 1891 and 1911.
- 16 Thomas Purcell regularly recorded his clothing expenses. His most expensive purchase was a suit for £5 5s on 20 October 1883.
- 17 For the search for politicians, see Purcell, Dairy, 16, 22 and 23 August 1882.
- 18 The search for work is the main theme in his diary August 1882 to January 1883.
- 19 Purcell, Diary, various dates 1883.
- 20 For his medical examinations, see Purcell, Diary, 24 September and 8 October 1883. He listed his service on 19 October 1883.
- 21 Purcell, Diary, 4 December 1883. In December of this year he regularly worked 2 to 3 hours of overtime.

- 22 Annual Reports of the Victorian Railways give the wages of those taken on each year and the wages of those leaving the service.
- 23 Purcell, Diary, 25 October 1884, 8, 24 and 25 February 1886, 2 January 1887 and 6 February 1886.
- 24 Purcell, Diary, 20 April 1887, 25 July 1887, 4 August 1887 and 6 September 1887. See 31 March 1888 when he killed 5 drakes, of which he kept one. Neighbours appear to have shared home produce.
- 25 Purcell, Diary, 29 August 1890, 1 June 1890 and 24 June 1891.
- 26 In 1887 Purcell received a wage comparable to wages for labourers at the Colonial Sugar Refinery near his home. Here in 1887 the median wage for a labourer was 42s per week. The lists recorded his wage for the first time in 1902 when he received 8s per day or 48s per week. At this point the average wage for a labourer in the Colonial Sugar Refinery was 39s. This is based on a data base compiled by Charles Fahey from wages returns from the Yarraville Refinery, deposit N74, Colonial Sugar Refinery Papers, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australian National University.
- 27 VPRS 28/P3, Unit 2477, 175/809 (digitised copy viewed online 13 August 2016), PROV, and VPRS 7591/P2, 175/809 (digitised copy viewed online 13 August 2016), PROV.
- 28 These occupations were listed in the Commonwealth electoral rolls, 1908, 1912, 1914, 1916 and 1919. George is also listed in the employment returns of Colonial Sugar Refinery.
- 29 William Farrell Papers, Ms10029, Australian Manuscripts Collection, SLV. The collection consists of two brief diaries, a number of notebooks, his military service record, testimonials and the drafts of a number of letters. His genealogical details have been obtained through tracking the births of his children through Victorian birth records and through his death certificate.
- 30 These details come from a very rough notebook. All Farrell's papers show that they have been thumbed through frequently. His testimonials were obviously carried from job to job and repeatedly unfolded to show foremen. Dating is often imprecise.
- 31 Undated draft letter in his notebook dated from a list of his children contained in it.
- 32 Undated draft letter.
- 33 These accounts are contained in a rough notebook; the date is imprecise but the context suggests the early 1880s.
- 34 Copy of letter written in his notebook and sent to the traffic manager.
- 35 *Government Gazette*, 28 May 1884, p. 1471, and 13 July 1887, p. 2059.
- 36 Farrell, 1889 Diary, 28 January.
- 37 Farrell, 1889 Diary, 6, 7 and 8 February.
- 38 Farrell, 1889 Diary, 23, 26 February and 5, 19 March.
- 39 Farrell, 1889 Diary, 2 March.
- 40 Farrell, 1889 Diary, 28, 29 January and 5 February.
- 41 Farrell, 1889 Diary, 30 January and 19 February.
- 42 Farrell, 1889 Diary, 4, 8 and 12 March.
- 43 Farrell, 1889 Diary, 13, 14 and 15 March.
- 44 Farrell, 1889 Diary, 24, 29 and 30 March, and 1 April.
- 45 Farrell, Letter to Dear Nance, 26 May 1891.
- 46 William Farrell, Diary, January to December 1893. This diary is largely a journal recording fortnightly earnings.
- 47 Farrell, 1893 Diary, 20 April, 4, 23 May, 2, 19 August, 11 September, 10 October, 28 October and 30 December. The purpose of his unemployment list is not clear. It may have been to seek political support for the unemployed.
- 48 Farrell, Letter to 'Bill', May 1903.
- 49 Reference from William Parker, 2 March 1905.

**Melbourne Journalist Reports on the
'Storm Centre of Asia', 1931–32
Janet Mitchell:
Journalist, Internationalist, Educationalist**

Patricia Clarke

Abstract

In the early 1930s Janet Mitchell was in a unique position to report the Japanese occupation of Manzhou (Manchuria), an event now regarded as the start of World War II. She watched as Japanese troops marched into the strategic city of Harbin and observed the League of Nations remain impotent as Japan occupied the Chinese province. Her opportunities in journalism, hard-won and precarious, flowed from her participation in international organisations but she turned to senior roles in education for intermittent financial security. Her life story illustrates the difficulties highly qualified and dedicated women faced in pursuing careers in the period between the wars.

In November 1931 while visiting Beijing (Peiping), Melbourne-born journalist Janet Mitchell came across a street named after her relative, the legendary 'Chinese' Morrison, former correspondent for the *London Times* and renowned as an influential political adviser to the Chinese government. She decided to contact an Australian journalist, William Henry Donald, who had known her cousin. Donald had been in China since early in the twentieth century, originally in Hong Kong with the *South China Post* and later as correspondent for the *New York Post* and the *Manchester Guardian* and editor of the *Far Eastern Review*: 'Hullo, Cousin-of-Morrison, Donald greeted her. 'So you're one of the scribbling tribe too'.¹

Janet Mitchell was in China as a member of the Australian delegation to the Fourth Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR) conference and had a commission to write for several Australian papers including the *Melbourne Argus* and the *Sydney Daily Telegraph*. The conference, originally scheduled to be held in October 1931 in Hangzhou, was moved to Shanghai following the 'Mukden incident'. This was the name given to an event that began with an explosion on the railway

near Shenyong (Mukden) in Manzhou on 18 September 1931 that had far-reaching consequences. Japan had been granted a lease to the South Manchuria Railway, a branch of the Chinese Eastern Railway, conferring on it administration of the railway zone but Japanese soldiers often carried out manoeuvres outside the zone. Although Japan attempted to blame the event on Chinese dissidents, radical Japanese army officers engineered the explosion as a pretext for extending their military control over the whole of Manzhou.

Overnight Japanese forces took control of the arsenal, aerodrome, barracks and the Chinese walled city in Shenyong. This event is now recognised as ‘the unquestioned beginning of World War II’, and as ‘one of the first of a series of confrontational acts by militaristic governments that would shatter the fragile peace created after the Great War’ and which changed ‘the fate of China under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist Party.’² The forces of the warlord of Manzhou, Zhang Xue-liang, presented little resistance, although fighting with some other Chinese resistance forces was fierce and many were killed and wounded on both sides. The aggression by Japan resulted in its military occupation of Manzhou, which was later extended to adjoining provinces.³ Mitchell had been undecided about whether she would risk travelling into the war zone but meeting Donald strengthened her resolve. She described him as ‘a man of remarkable personality’ who was on ‘the inside of most political happenings in China.’⁴ By the time she met him he was political adviser to Manzhou leader, the ‘Young Marshal’, Zhang Xue-liang, and later was adviser to General and Madam Chiang Kai-shek, who regarded him as an influential and close friend.

‘You call yourself a journalist and you’re talking of returning to Australia’, Donald challenged her. ‘Don’t you realize you’re on the verge of the greatest drama in history—the Japanese bid for the ascendancy of Eastern Asia? ... Of course you’re going to Manchuria.’⁵ Donald was one of the few journalists who recognised that the staged event at Shenyang, far from being an ‘incident’, was of extreme significance to the future of China and eventually of the world. A later Australian critic, Jacqui Murray, attributed the general lack of understanding about events in Manzhou among Australian journalists to the remarkable success of Japanese news management to which, she believed, journalists fell victim because they knew ‘very little about the protagonists’. She also extended her criticism to journalists well acquainted with Asia:

ill-informed and even incompetent journalists were not alone in misleading readers. Journalists with much more experience of Asian affairs unwittingly precipitated the passage of the misnomer incident into the historical lexicon where reference is made to the Mukden or Manchurian Incident—thus contributing to confusion about the facts and gravity of the event which still echoes in the historical record.⁶

Janet Mitchell was about to become one of the journalists thrown into what appeared to those without long experience of China to be a confusing world of war and chaos. Although much less prepared than seasoned correspondents, she achieved a triumph with a series of broadcasts after she emerged from nearly a year in Manzhou. Mitchell had not come up through the ranks of trained journalists but she was used to writing for newspapers. Like many women journalists in the 1930s, she ‘worked freelance or on assignment’, and like some she was a ‘highly educated, activist’ woman.⁷ She was also far from ignorant about the situation in China. She had been critical of the discussions at the recent IPR conference, where delegates had ‘talked about everything except the one thing we were all thinking about—war’.⁸ She had travelled widely, she was an active defender of the League of Nations’ role in the maintenance of peace, she had been involved in the IPR since she was chosen as the only female Australian delegate to the founding conference at Honolulu in 1925 and through her work with the YWCA she had developed contacts with the organisation’s representatives in Japan and China.

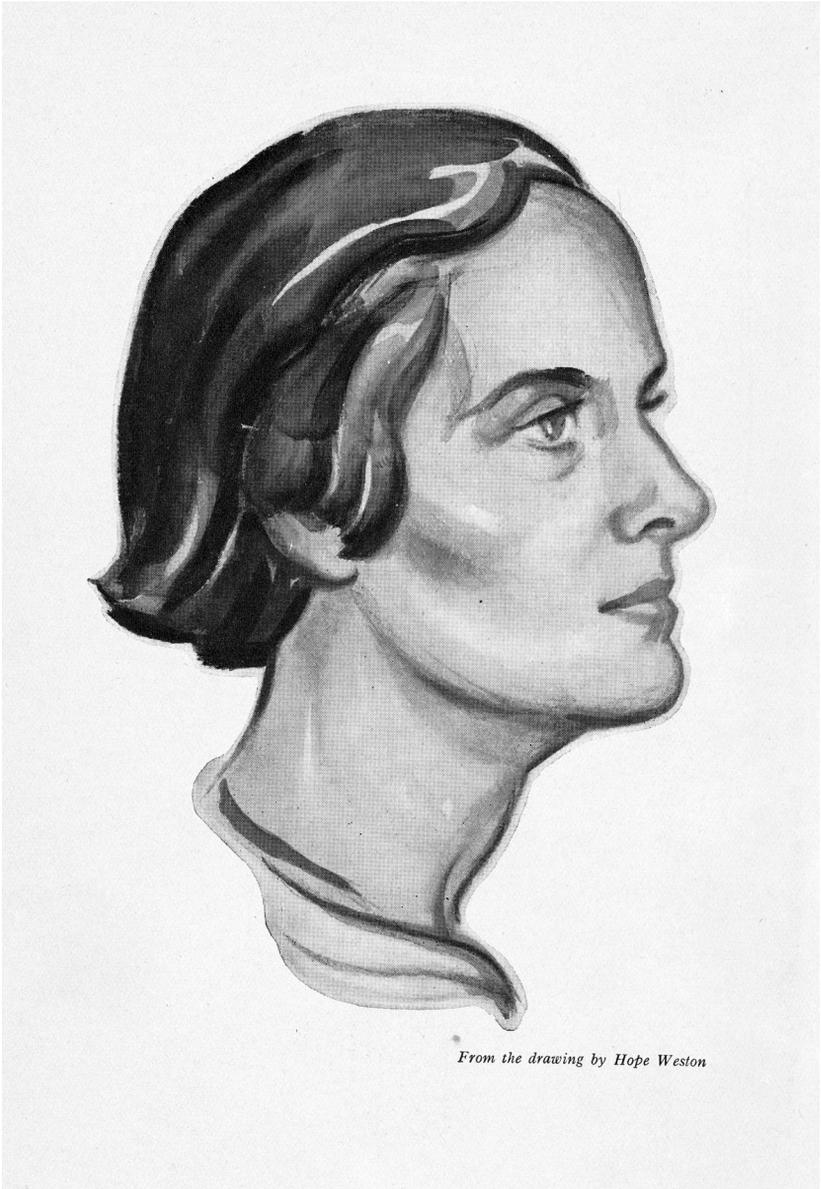
Mitchell's Life Before 1931

Janet Charlotte Mitchell, the youngest of four girls, was born on 3 November 1896 into a talented and influential Melbourne family. Her father, Edward Mitchell (appointed KCMG in 1918), was a leader at the Victorian Bar and held many public offices in religious, sporting and charitable organisations. Her mother, born Eliza Fraser Morrison, was a daughter of Reverend Alexander Morrison, principal of Scotch College from 1857 to his death in 1903, and a niece of George Morrison, principal of Geelong College, one of whose children was Ernest George (‘Chinese’) Morrison. Janet’s sister, Mary Mitchell, became a renowned novelist following the international success of her first novel, *Warning to Wantons*, and her mother and another sister, Nancy Adams, wrote family histories.

A delicate child, Janet was educated by governesses at the Mitchell homes in East Melbourne and Macedon but was able to persuade her father to allow her to study music at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. When her study was interrupted by a family trip to London, she enrolled at the Royal College of Music. After deciding she did not have the temperament or talent to become a concert pianist, she enrolled in 1918 at Bedford College, University of London, graduating in 1922 with an honours arts degree. She left university with 'a capacity to work independently, a fairly well developed critical faculty, a great love of metaphysics and speculative thought, and above all a respect for fact'.⁹

After a decade in London, Mitchell returned to Melbourne a well-educated woman with a very limited range of career possibilities. While she sought full-time employment, she wrote music and literary reviews for a Melbourne weekly. In London she had been 'fired by the idea of the League of Nations' and in Melbourne she was elected to the Council of the League of Nations Union (LNU). She organised talks on the League in schools and she became an active member of the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA).¹⁰ In 1924 Mitchell was appointed education secretary for the Victorian YWCA. Margaret Dunn in her history of the organisation queries whether it adapted well to the needs of the 'new woman and her freedom' that emerged after World War I: many leaders 'looked on the shingled hair and short skirts with a very jaundiced eye'.¹¹ Janet regarded her work organising classes in home-making and community skills, to which she added lectures on international affairs and music, as futile and unproductive carried out in 'an atmosphere of vague, sloppy religious sentimentality ... and unbusinesslike inefficiency'.¹² She was to look back, however, 'with gratitude for the good fellowship, patience and real spiritual power of many of the [YWCA's] leaders' and the organisation's concern for 'building a finer social and international order'.¹³

The international aspect of the YWCA's work provided Mitchell with the new and creative challenge she longed for. YWCA members were reminded frequently that the organisation was part of a world movement and 'a feeling of responsibility for its sisters in foreign lands' was deeply embedded. From 1920, Australia like England and America, provided financial support for representatives in several countries.¹⁴ Mitchell appreciated the value of this goal and through the YWCA's World Fellowship Movement she came in contact with workers in China



Janet Mitchell, 'From the drawing by Hope Weston', published in Janet Mitchell, *Spoils of Opportunity: An Autobiography*, London, Methuen, 1938 (NLA CDP-10573593)

and Japan. She began to see the YWCA's 'big international possibilities, as a world-wide organization working for peace through developing fellowship between individuals'.¹⁵

The challenge that gave her 'fresh stimulus and inspiration' and changed her life came in June 1925 when the Victorian YWCA chose her to represent the organisation at the founding conference of the IPR in Honolulu. The Australian delegates were leaders in social, educational and religious work, chosen to promote friendship and co-operation between peoples in the Pacific. Stephen Roberts (later Sir), then a history lecturer at Melbourne University and later professor of modern history at the University of Sydney, led the group, which included Dr E.J. Stuckey, medical missionary in China; H. Duncan Hall, from Sydney University, an LNU member, later worker for the League and professor of international relations at the University of Syracuse; New Zealander, J.B. Condliffe, professor of economics at Canterbury University College, Christchurch, later an economics professor at the University of California, Berkeley; and J.T. Massey representing the YMCA.

Mitchell saw the IPR's problems as migration, international commercial and industrial relationships, and religious, ethical and cultural questions. She suggested that the IPR should seek to attract women involved in industrial reform citing trade unionist and feminist, Muriel Heagney, and Eleanor Hinder, who worked on industrial relations for the YWCA in Shanghai. Only three years later when the Pan Pacific Women's Association held its inaugural conference in Honolulu, the Australian delegation included Muriel Heagney, Muriel Swain and Eleanor Hinder. The latter two were also delegates to the IPR conference in Shanghai in 1931.¹⁶ On a personal level the 1925 IPR conference widened Mitchell's outlook through her contact with delegates from other countries, particularly Japan and China, and through new friendships. She believed that young women were 'fundamentally the same everywhere, irrespective of colour, creed, or class' but, as David Walker pointed out in *Anxious Nation*, this did not affect her opinion when she observed inter-racial citizens in the melting-pot of Honolulu.¹⁷ Racial intermarriages she wrote, 'seemed to produce the worst features of both races'.¹⁸ As Walker observed, Mitchell seemed comforted that 'the feeling of racial superiority was not confined to the white races' after noting that Japan discriminated against mixed marriages.¹⁹ Formal

discussions on migration centred on Japanese criticism of American immigration leaving Australian delegate Duncan Hall puzzled that the Japanese were not concerned with discriminatory policies in other countries.²⁰

Mitchell returned home more aware of the YWCA's importance in Asia and anxious to find a role in world affairs. Half an hour after landing in Sydney, she gave a ten minute radio talk on the conference and that night she addressed a meeting of the Workers' Educational Association in Newcastle. In Melbourne she addressed a crowded meeting on 'The Pacific Today and Tomorrow', recounting conference debates and conclusions and warning that the 'gravity of the present situation in China' could not be overestimated. She believed that world powers would have to give up their spheres of influence and extra-territorial rights and predicted that a future educated Chinese nation would be the most potent force for good or evil that the world had ever seen.²¹ When she returned to work at the YWCA, she felt the job's 'limitations more strongly' and wanted 'desperately to break out into something new ... something creative'.²²

The publicity she received as a result of the conference led to the challenge Mitchell wanted so badly. Soon after she returned, the commissioners of the Government Savings Bank of New South Wales offered her the job of director of the bank's newly established Thrift Service Division, making her the first woman in Australia to be appointed to a senior position in a bank. In September 1926 the bank sent her to the United States for six months to study the operation of schemes promoting saving and budgeting of household finances and school-and-work-based savings plans, many of which were run by women in charge of personal service departments. She began her investigations in San Francisco, attended the International Thrift Congress and Savings Bankers' Convention in Philadelphia and from her headquarters in New York visited many cities including Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Chicago and Washington.²³ She also enjoyed a remarkable interlude when Mrs James Roosevelt invited her to spend Christmas week at her home at Hyde-Park-on-Hudson joining her son and daughter-in-law, the future president Franklin D. Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt.²⁴ The invitation came through a letter of introduction from a friend, one of several occasions on which letters of introduction from influential Australians eased Janet's way overseas.

When Mitchell returned as a thrift expert, she set up public campaigns, gave lectures and talks throughout the state on planned saving and spending and advised individuals on financial problems. She became a highly accomplished publicist promoting household budgeting, particularly encouraging housewives to take charge of household finances and save money under the Definite Object Savings Plan she initiated to spend later on home improvements, education and recreation. She also advised wage earners, country hospitals and other institutions and created a new industrial savings 'bank-where-you-work' scheme.²⁵ Although her work was successful, it was heavy and exacting. Each night she went home 'utterly depleted, until the work came to a dramatic and painful end', on 23 April 1931, when the bank closed suddenly, a casualty of the Great Depression.²⁶ Although parts of the bank were later absorbed by the Commonwealth Bank, the Thrift Department was abolished leaving Mitchell without a job and with a feeling of guilt in having to abandon her customers.

IPR Conference, Shanghai, October 1931

A week after her bank job ceased in July, Mitchell was appointed by the Sydney Branch of the AIIA as a delegate to the IPR conference scheduled to be held in Hangzhou in October 1931.²⁷ In the six years since the first conference in Honolulu she had accumulated a wide experience of life through her work with the factory and domestic workers, clerks and typists, teachers, nurses and recent arrivals from the country or overseas at the YWCA, and she had been hardened by the reality of families struggling to survive the Great Depression following the collapse of the bank. She was also more experienced in the international aspirations and work of the IPR, the AIIA and the LNU.

She was farewelled at a luncheon by the United Associations of Women (UAW), an organisation formed in Sydney in 1929 by women who saw a need for a more politically forceful alternative to the range of Australian women's organisations. Jessie Street resigned from the Feminist Club to become the first president of the UAW, which soon attracted many prominent women activists. The UAW's main aim was to achieve equality of status, opportunity and liberties for men and women; its specific objectives included support for qualified women standing for public office, the study of social, political and economic questions, and the promotion of international peace and understanding and the League of Nations.²⁸ Jessie Street, who hosted the luncheon said

she had hoped Mitchell would have been a candidate for selection to stand for parliament. This appears to have been the link between the radical UAW and Mitchell, who was conservative in background and ideas as, for example, in her implacable opposition to NSW Premier Jack Lang's plan to default on international debt.²⁹ Another connection was through Professor Francis Anderson, a long-time president of the NSW LNU and a passionate advocate for peace 'grounded securely on justice', who seconded the toast.³⁰ In her reply Mitchell indicated she was aware of developing tensions in Manzhou, well before the 'Mukden incident'. She believed this made the forthcoming IPR conference of international importance as 'it would deal specially with the Chinese, Russian, and Japanese contacts in Manchuria'. Referring to her recent work, she told the guests she hoped that a home economics bureau would be established in Australia to research all topics concerning women's work, not just income management, and that it would be financed by the government, as a similar one was in the United States.³¹

Mitchell was about to enter a tumultuous period of her life, beginning with the meeting of the Institute in Shanghai in October/November 1931, and continuing for the following year when she experienced extraordinary danger and hardships in her search for news during the Japanese conquest of Manzhou. As the delegation approached China by ship she became more aware of the much greater importance of IPR conferences since the first tentative meeting in Honolulu six years before. It now had a permanent secretariat, published a journal, *Pacific Affairs*, and was involved in continuing research.

Although she was made a member of the Program Committee, which decided the subjects the conference would discuss, Mitchell apparently had little influence as current events in Manzhou were excluded from the agenda. As delegates concentrated on the agenda items—economic and cultural relations and diplomacy in the Pacific and China's economic development and international relations—she became critical of the unreality of the discussions and disturbed by conflicting views of many 'liberal internationalists or moderate intellectuals' among the delegates who defended Japan's actions in Manzhou. This led her to doubt the Institute's influence for peace.³² As war raged to the north, she observed the cohesive and unified Japanese delegation and the unwillingness of the Chinese delegation to face unpleasant truths about their country. As news of the Japanese advance into Manzhou 'with its

trail of fighting, suffering and chaos' continued, she found the meetings in Shanghai 'a mockery' and her 'early idealism, the open-hearted naïve enthusiasm' with which she had viewed the IPR as a constructive force, ebbed away. By the end of the conference Mitchell's belief not only in the IPR but in the League of Nations was 'crumbling' and she wondered whether Japan with its 'dangerous fusion of patriotism and religion' would ever relinquish Manchou even in the face of 'international pressure or adverse world opinion'.³³

In her autobiography, Mitchell's account of the conference covers a chapter but she does not mention other members of the Australian delegation apart from the leader Sir William Harrison Moore, emeritus professor of international law at the University of Melbourne, whose guidance and opinions she valued. She sought out women delegates from Asia, particularly the Chinese delegates, educationalist, Miss Wu Yih-Fang, and writer on Chinese culture, Mrs Sophia Chen-Zen from the National University Beijing, but does not mention her fellow Australian female delegates: Emily Scott (later Lady), sister of internationalist Edward Dyason, one of the founders of the AIIA; Muriel Swain, statistician, office-bearer and delegate to Pan-Pacific conferences; not even Eleanor Hinder who was working as the YWCA's Education Officer in Shanghai. This may be because she and Hinder held divergent views on the LNU. While Hinder was an enthusiastic supporter of the Australian president Raymond Watt, Mitchell had criticised him a few years before, during an argument over reactions to a recent speaker, Bank of England director, Sir Otto Niemeyer, who condemned default on loans. She told Watt, who defended critics of the speech, that she was sceptical about 'whether people who do not hold solidly by fundamental moral issues can make a valuable contribution to any movement', a question about which there could be 'no two opinions'.³⁴ In further correspondence they reconciled their differences but there is little doubt this contributed to Mitchell's developing scepticism about the LNU and the League of Nations. Nicholas Brown in *Transnational Lives* contrasts Mitchell's distrust of Watt with his importance to Eleanor Hinder 'in building a sense of mission'.³⁵ After Shanghai Hinder had a distinguished career as an international public servant working for the International Labour Organisation in Geneva and, after World War II, for the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East.

After the conference Mitchell left for Tianjin (Tientsin), three hours by rail from Beijing, on the first stage of her journey north to Manzhou. When she arrived in Tianjin martial law was in force and parts of the Chinese and foreign sections of the city were sand-bagged and barricaded with barbed wire. The Japanese section was deserted, 'its shops all barricaded, its windows shuttered, here and there a frightened face peering out from behind blinds'. At night she slept close to the sound of shooting.³⁶ There was some doubt whether she would get further by train until she produced a letter from the Australian prime minister with an impressive seal requesting her safe conduct. She left Tianjin for Shenyang in time to be there by 16 November, the date when the League of Nations' ultimatum to Japan to withdraw its troops to the South Manchurian Railway zone expired. She was anxious to be present for this climax and she was also on the trail of a story she had heard in Tianjin that Chinese tailors in Shenyang were making green and gold flags ready for a Japanese celebration after they had installed a Chinese puppet leader. As the train passed Shanhaiguan, the boundary between China and Manzhou, where the Great Wall touched the sea, she was the only woman passenger left on the 'unspeakably filthy and very hot' train. As they travelled further north, she saw the mutilated bodies of Chinese on a railway platform and soldiers digging 'an enormous common grave' nearby. After the train stopped south of Shenyang, where the line had been destroyed by fighting, she travelled the rest of the way in a rickshaw over a shelled-out road.³⁷

'Manchuria is a volcano, Harbin is the centre of the crater'

In a hotel lobby in Shenyang, Mitchell joined the throng of foreign press correspondents congregated in the city to watch the withdrawal of troops if Japan complied with the League's demand. But the ultimatum came and went and there was no Japanese withdrawal. Instead, Japanese forces continued to drive further north to Harbin, where the railway from the south met the east-west railway from Soviet Russia to Vladivostok. The editor of a Shanghai paper, whom she knew, advised Mitchell to get to Harbin: 'Manchuria is a volcano, Harbin is the centre of the crater', he told her.³⁸ Even before the Japanese advance, Harbin was a city with a constant undercurrent of conflicting Soviet and Chinese interests, in addition to a community of White Russians who had fled from Soviet Russia. Wedged between Russia, China, Japan and Korea (a Japanese colony from early in the century), Manzhou was described

by Mitchell as a 'seething cauldron of tension, suspicion and fear' and 'a bone of contention', being relatively undeveloped in a continent of over-populated countries.³⁹ The Chinese Eastern Railway running east through Harbin was owned by Russia and China but, when Japan took the city, China's interests were taken over by the state of Manchukuo, the name the Japanese imposed on Manzhou.

Once Mitchell reached Harbin she was anchored there for the next ten months. She watched on 25 January 1932 as Japanese troops began to attack the city and the following week she saw them march, bedraggled but triumphant, through the city. As Donald's biographer described the situation later, 'The biggest of Asia's storms had begun. In a prelude to a universal cataclysm, Japan's Army had swept through Manchuria, and stood looking toward the Great Wall.'⁴⁰ Despite being in this 'flash point' of what Donald had told her would be the start of a world war, Mitchell found no way of sending news flashes from the city. Looking back from a distance of many decades, journalist Jacqui Murray believed that 'Mitchell was too inexperienced in journalism to function effectively as a foreign correspondent in the confusing conditions that are the inevitable accessories to international conflicts.' According to Murray:

She had none of the training and background that give journalists the confidence to make judgments about rapidly unfolding events under trying circumstances. Only the most seasoned Western correspondents, who had been keeping watch on political developments in Japan and long-running Sino-Japanese disputes in China, Manchuria, and Korea, recognised the significance of Japan's actions in Manchuria. The Australian media had no such personnel in Asia.⁴¹

This harsh judgment is disputed by Jeannine Baker in *Australian War Reporters*, who quotes Heather Radi in acknowledging Mitchell's wide understanding of both sides in the conflict, particularly 'her exceptional understanding of Japan's internal problems in the 1930s' and her informative writing and talks on the situation in Manzhou 'at a time when detailed information about the events was scarce'.⁴²

Reporting from Manzhou in 1932 was a challenge even for experienced foreign correspondents who managed to file dispatches from cities occupied by the Japanese only by overcoming great difficulties including costly and slow transmission of cables, inexplicable

delays, and censorship and translation problems. Unfamiliar with these channels Mitchell managed to get some informative articles to Australian papers in letters she sent to her mother. In the first, published in the Melbourne *Argus* in mid-February but datelined in December well before the Japanese reached Harbin, she described the simple rural life she observed at a village market outside Harbin.⁴³ After the Japanese took over she looked for news but there ‘did not seem to be anything to report—except rumours and they were endless’, in a city where the Japanese controlled news outlets.⁴⁴ In an article published in Melbourne in July but datelined 7 May, she wrote not about the political and military situation but about the facts she could rely on from her observation of the daily life she was experiencing in Harbin. She wrote of a huge calico banner stretched across the main railway bridge carrying words that translated as ‘Manchukuo is the Herald of Peace in the Orient and the Herald of Universal Peace’ in lettering two feet high and nearby another banner inscribed in Chinese and English ‘Manchukuo—the earthly Paradise’. She reported the terrible plight of the refugees flocking into Harbin:

villages and towns are being burned and looted on the Eastern Line between Harbin and Vladivostok. One evening a week or so ago I watched the reflections of burning villages from a high point in Harbin. The more fortunate villagers perish; the less lucky escape to a nomadic life of slow starvation ... many [drift] to Harbin to swell the already appalling number of the destitute here. It would be difficult to imagine more pitiable human wreckage than that which lines the streets of Harbin.

Although many were ‘morphine maniacs and vodka-sodden’, she saw them as ‘orphans of the storm’, victims of ‘inhumanity and lawlessness’.⁴⁵ The arrival of the League of Nations’ Lytton Commission of Inquiry in May 1932 raised hopes of definitive news but although the press bombarded members with questions they came away without clear answers. William Donald, the person who could have enlightened Mitchell, was not free to talk as he was employed as adviser to Dr Wellington Koo a Chinese representative on the commission and a former Nationalist prime minister and foreign minister. When Mitchell met Donald he warned her that it was dangerous to be seen talking with him, citing the example of a journalist who had done so in Shenyang and had been imprisoned.⁴⁶

The weather, combined with rudimentary communications and public services, made even sending letters difficult. Mitchell was in Harbin during extreme winter conditions when for six months temperatures fell far below zero ranging from minus 30 to minus 40 degrees Fahrenheit with icy blizzards. In summer, shortages of food and other essentials became worse after the rivers flooded leaving tens of thousands of people without shelter and causing cholera to become prevalent. Unable to eat meat, fish and many vegetables for fear of infection, she lived on sweet corn, sterilised bread and beans from the garden.⁴⁷ She was not only in financial distress—she taught English to Russians, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Czechs and Germans to earn some money—but also in acute physical danger in a city riddled with bandits where it was unsafe to walk at night. Three of her Russian acquaintances were murdered and another kidnapped, tortured and killed when a ransom could not be paid. During the months she spent in Harbin, she lived in White Russian households, in which nearly every occupant had a tragic past and a future of uncertainty.⁴⁸

‘I was looking into a darkening world’

When Mitchell was able to leave Harbin in September 1932, she was fortunate to travel on the only train that week that was not derailed and attacked by bandits. As the train crossed the Manzhou border with China, she and a Canadian seated near her exchanged congratulations. Once she was away from Manzhou, her opinions were in great demand, but before returning to Australia she visited Korea and Japan to gauge reaction in those countries to events in Manzhou. She left Japan depressed at the prospects for peace. In Tokyo she found only an occasional ‘flickering of a liberal spirit’ and concluded ‘I was looking into a darkening world.’⁴⁹ When she reached Australia, she addressed many organisations. Some of her talks such as those to the Country Women’s Association and the LNU covered her dramatic journey from Shenyang to Harbin and ten months living under Japanese control.⁵⁰ In others, including two to the Royal Empire Society on ‘Manchuria: the Riddle of Asia’, she spoke of Manzhou’s great strategic importance to Japan in the light of Soviet control of Outer Mongolia. She forecast that the establishment of Manchukuo on anti-communist lines ‘might have an important bearing on the future of the world.’⁵¹ Her speech to the Sane Democracy League stressed that a knowledge of the history of Sino-Soviet relations was essential to an understanding of the current

Sino-Japanese conflict.⁵² She also had many articles published in Australian newspapers including a series in the Adelaide *Advertiser*, the first covering the difficulties faced by the Lytton Inquiry, and another series in the Sydney *Sun* beginning on Christmas Day 1932.⁵³

Mitchell's great triumph from her experiences in Manzhou came when the ABC invited her to make a series of radio broadcasts in January 1933. Remarkably, as very few scripts have survived from the 1930s, three of her five broadcasts have been preserved in the National Archives of Australia.⁵⁴ Her talks are thoughtful and considered and provide a first-hand, graphic description of a unique experience. In her first broadcast, on 2 January 1933, she described Manzhou as 'the storm centre of Asia':

The present conflict raging in Manchuria itself, in China and Japan, and in Geneva, may develop in to a worldwide conflagration ... it is a topic of vital importance to every nation—to Australia much more vitally than to many of those European powers which from the distance of Geneva attempt to settle the destinies of Asia and the Pacific at the League of Nations.⁵⁵

In this broadcast, which set the scene for the following ones, she described the makeup of the population and how she came to be in Shenyang and Harbin, the two main cities attacked by the Japanese during their conquest of Manzhou. In her second talk, on 9 January 1933, she described her role in her broadcasts as similar to the chorus in a Greek drama introducing the mighty actors in a tragedy—China, Japan and Russia—in a theatre of conflict situated in 'one of the great frontiers regions of the world'.⁵⁶ At the end, she asked listeners to send in questions. She answered these at the beginning of her third broadcast, which covered the lead-up to the 'Mukden incident', and this pattern presumably continued in her fourth and fifth talks.⁵⁷

No transcript of her fourth talk on Manchukuo has been found but it is probable that it was similar to an ABC broadcast she made in 1941 on Japan's colonising methods.⁵⁸ The fifth may have been on efforts by the League of Nations to find a solution to the crisis in Manzhou. The failure of these efforts influenced world opinion on the futility of the League of Nations and on prospects for peace, disarmament and non-aggression and led Mitchell to question the League's efficacy. When she was chosen to go Geneva in 1935 as a 'temporary collaborator' her earlier

‘idealistic faith’ was reawakened but attending meetings and studying the League’s organisation left her disillusioned. She saw no prospects for the League while it remained in the hands of men and women actuated by ‘national self-interest ... leading inevitably to international distrust’ leaving humanity once more ‘betrayed by political expediency.’⁵⁹

Before Mitchell’s ABC broadcasts, very little analysis had appeared in Australian newspapers about the ‘Mukden incident’ and one month after, as Jacqui Murray relates, the ABC banned ‘expressions of opinion on the Sino-Japanese situation’, following an internal censorship dispute. The ban remained in force until ‘The Watchman’ (E.A. Mann) began his news commentaries three years later.⁶⁰ In addition to the absence of informed discussion, the press, as academic and diplomat William Macmahon Ball noted in an analysis of the news Australians read in the 1930s, relied overwhelmingly for overseas news on Australian Associated Press’s coverage from London. This presented a picture of the world through British eyes leaving Australia with a very inadequate coverage of Asia, ‘the very countries about which Australia needs full information.’⁶¹

This distortion in the source of news and the lack of regular informed opinion may have contributed to the wide variation commentators found in attitudes to Japan. A.G. Pearson wrote, in a chapter in *Press, Radio and World Affairs*, that apart from the pro-Japanese *Sydney Morning Herald*, the daily press was neutral or opposed to Japan and gave considerable prominence to the possibility of war between Japan and Britain or of a Japanese invasion of Australia.⁶² In a later analysis, historian W.G. Hudson, considered that the Australian press was ‘in varying degrees sympathetic to Japan’ while in the wider community, pacifism was in vogue and Japan was not unpopular.⁶³ The Lyons government continued through the 1930s to avoid offending Japan and from 1937 followed British views on foreign policy including its policy of appeasement. William Donald, who was responsible for Mitchell being a witness to the Japanese conquest of Manzhou, deeply resented Australia’s appeasing attitude towards Japan and her lack of assistance to China in the 1930s. After he was liberated in Manila in 1945 from a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp, he told an interviewer that China’s ‘cries to the humanity of the world’ went unheeded during the time she had been engaged in warfare against Japan. China had fought under:

the discouragement of international scorn, futilely endeavouring to prevent expanding invasion, and watching the nations busily doing their utmost to appease Japan and supply her with the wherewithal to destroy China. She was overwhelmed by a barbarism which begged comparison and defied description.⁶⁴

Mitchell After Manzhou

In London in 1935 Mitchell's novel on her experiences in China, *Tempest in Paradise*, was published to good reviews.⁶⁵ She had arrived in London early in 1934 after spending the previous year as acting head of Women's College at the University of Sydney. In the next two years she established, at most, a precarious existence as a journalist in a city where, as Australian author and literary agent Florence James wrote, 'scraping a living was almost a 24 hours a day job' for writers.⁶⁶ In 1936 Mitchell was appointed warden of Ashburne Hall for Women at the University of Manchester and two years later her autobiography, *Spoils of Opportunity*, was published. In the last pages of the book she wrote of the loss of her earlier belief in international causes for peace with another world war 'no longer an unthinkable nightmare but an actual possibility'.⁶⁷ She resigned her position at Ashburne Hall in 1940 and returned to Melbourne and was appointed deputy supervisor of the ABC's Victorian Youth Education Department where her duties included writing scripts, devising and producing programs and engaging writers and actors.⁶⁸

After fourteen years at the ABC, by far her longest continuous employment, Janet Mitchell retired in 1955 due to ill health. She died in Melbourne on 6 September 1957. An article in an ABC staff journal described her as 'a woman of great cultivation, possessed of taste and judgment, widely read and widely travelled, as well as being extremely well informed'. She brought to her position 'very considerable literary talents, her wide reading and her deep knowledge of people gained from an extremely varied career'.⁶⁹ A tall woman with dark hair and a strong, interesting face she was witty and amusing and also deeply spiritual. She had become interested in the Oxford High Church Movement in England in the 1930s and in Melbourne in 1949 she converted to the Catholic Church. She died unmarried hinting only in two sentences in her autobiography at a relationship apparently broken when she left Melbourne to work in Sydney, China, and England.⁷⁰

Conclusion

Janet Mitchell's working life centred on journalism, international organisations and education. The traditional female employment field of education provided her with the only positions with some semblance of permanence and financial security—as education officer at the YWCA, as thrift manager at the Savings Bank of NSW, as acting head of Women's College in Sydney, as head of Ashburne Hall in Britain and in her last position in the ABC's education department. But it was journalism and internationalism that provided the opportunities that shaped her life. Through her perseverance in journalism, she was a correspondent at a crucial event with momentous effects on world history. Her activism in international organisations sprang from her initial interest in the League of Nations as the great hope for peace after World War I and this led to her active membership of the IPR, the LNU and the AIIA and to her subsequent opportunities as a delegate at IPR conferences. She conformed with Nicholas Brown's view that 'unmarried and mobile activist women' like Hinder and Mitchell acted on their belief 'in international causes but in a way that reflected the particular opportunities available to them in part arising from earlier feminist internationalism'. Unlike Hinder, Mitchell did not succeed in finding work 'that offered an intersection between gendered roles and international opportunities'.⁷¹ Her chosen field of journalism, at the level she aspired to, was too steep a challenge for most women in the 1930s and unlike employment in international organisations it often provided only a meagre and tenuous income, leaving her to fall back on jobs in education.

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Beechworth Goldfield and Large-scale Water Management in Colonial Victoria

Peter Davies, Susan Lawrence and Jodi Turnbull

Abstract

The Beechworth goldfield was an important centre of water management in nineteenth-century Victoria. Miners built extensive networks of races and dams to capture and divert water to their mining claims on a scale much greater than elsewhere in Victoria. Many miners became water merchants, controlling and selling large volumes of water to other parties on the goldfield. The laws and regulations about mining water systems at Beechworth were central to the development of water policy and management in colonial Victoria.

Introduction

Gold miners were among the first European settlers in Victoria to manage water resources on an extensive scale. Miners needed large volumes of water to wash gold from the earth but dry seasons meant creek flows were often too limited for their needs. Within only a few years of the discovery of gold in 1851 miners began developing substantial infrastructure to augment natural supplies. This was particularly the case on the Beechworth (Ovens) goldfield, which was the focal point of water management on the early Victorian goldfields. Other Victorian mining areas also relied on water supply networks but the Beechworth miners quickly developed extensive systems of races and dams to collect and channel water to their claims on a scale far greater than anywhere else in the colony at the time. While the Yan Yean and Coliban projects were major water-supply systems built with substantial public funding, gold miners developed elaborate private networks to support extensive mining activity.¹

The Beechworth district was the centre of innovation for the development of complex mining water systems in gold-rush Victoria. In 1853, Irish-born engineer and miner, John H. Reilly introduced the technique of sluice-washing to Victoria at Nine Mile Creek (Stanley) to retrieve fine alluvial gold, and later claimed he was the first in the colony to sell water he controlled to other mining parties.² In later

years the technique of pump sluicing was pioneered at Yackandandah by mining entrepreneur John Alston Wallace, while substantial tunnels were excavated on various claims to extract water from underground springs.³ It was at Beechworth that laws and regulations to manage and control water rights were most energetically developed, debated and contested as men like Reilly and Wallace competed for legal control of water assets.

The scale of operations at Beechworth, the levels of private ownership of water, and the early innovations in water management all set the field apart from other colonial diggings. By the 1860s private entrepreneurs had established secure and large-scale supplies of water that they sold at a profit. Their experiences led to new laws and customs about water use and new technologies for using water in mining. In this paper the evolution of technology and legal systems at Beechworth is described to illustrate the central role of this field in the supply and use of water for mining. These developments are highlighted through the case studies of significant individuals whose careers illuminate the trajectory of independent water managers and merchants.

Mining water systems were a conspicuous feature of the Beechworth district. By 1868 miners had excavated more than 740 miles of water races in the adjacent Beechworth, Yackandandah, Stanley and Buckland mining subdivisions, compared with ten to twenty miles of races in most other mining divisions in the colony.⁴ Some of the longest races in Victoria were built in the district, including the Pioneer Ditch, which was reported to run for 70 miles from the Kiewa River at Dederang to Yackandandah.⁵ Miners were also skilled at tunnelling and excavating tailraces and they built extensive timber flumes to deliver water high across deep valleys.⁶ Millions of gallons of creek water were diverted every day into thousands of sluice-boxes and long-toms while scores of water wheels were used to drive pumps and winding machinery. Beechworth miners were also vigilant in securing legal access to water—they held more than half of all the water right licences issued in Victoria by the mid-1860s and as late as 1884 they retained at least 65 of the 129 active licences in the colony.⁷ Alluvial mining and water access at Beechworth were also the primary focus of several government inquiries and commissions held during this period, in 1859–60, 1860–61, 1862–63 and 1867.

Most of the gold from Beechworth was recovered as very fine grains distributed through alluvial deposits rather than in a thin layer of washdirt over pipeclay or bedrock that was typical of other alluvial goldfields.⁸ Separating gold from earth at Beechworth thus required large volumes of water and after the initial rushes it was far more economical to divert water to the ground being worked than to cart the washdirt to a water supply. Long-term annual rainfall in the district averages 37 inches, which meant that surface water was often seasonally available for processing deposits and recovering gold.⁹ Subterranean springs and aquifers also fed creeks and gullies. This led directly to the construction of substantial mining water systems around Beechworth, as water was diverted from where it was available to where it was needed. It also resulted in years of argument about the best way to secure legal access to this precious natural resource.

In this paper we begin by reviewing the geology and technology of gold mining at Beechworth in the nineteenth century and the need for substantial mining water systems. The 1850s and 1860s saw a sequence of parliamentary inquiries and legislation, along with court cases, local by-laws and regulations that gradually accommodated the water needs of miners, with a strong focus on developments in the Beechworth area. This evolution is characterised by individuals who played important roles in the development of water management on the Ovens goldfield. John Reilly was a civil engineer with Californian mining experience who quickly emerged in the 1850s as a key figure in the early development of water races and the sale of water. In later years the technology, scale and complexity of water diversions was apparent from the activities of John Pund, a major Beechworth sluicer and water monopoliser, who was closely associated with prominent mining figures including John Alston Wallace and William Telford.

Gold and Water at Beechworth

Gold was first discovered at Beechworth, known initially as the Ovens goldfield, in February 1852.¹⁰ The township grew around the site of early alluvial discoveries at Spring Creek, which flows over rocky falls into Reid's Creek to the north. Beechworth became the administrative centre of a mining district that included diggings at Woolshed, Yackandandah, Stanley and Eldorado, and Two Mile, Three Mile and Six Mile creeks, along with the more distant fields of Myrtleford, Buckland, Omeo, Jordan and Mitta Mitta.

Beechworth is located on the northern edge of the Victorian Central Highlands at an elevation of around 550 metres above sea level. Creeks drain north from Beechworth into Reedy Creek, west into Hodgson's Creek and the Ovens River, and north-east into Yackandandah Creek and the Kiewa River (Figure 1), with the topography largely conforming to the underlying geology. The Mt Pilot Range to the north and west of Beechworth is dominated by large granite plutons, separated by a fault line from the older Ordovician-period slates and sandstones to the east and south.¹¹ Major uplift of the area was followed by erosion and the deposition of gold-bearing Tertiary and Quaternary sediments along drainage lines in creeks and gullies. These include the tributaries of Spring Creek such as Deep, Hurdle and Silver creeks, and those of Hodgson's Creek including Two Mile, Three Mile and Six Mile creeks.¹² Alluvial gold was thus concentrated in the narrow gullies cut into the granite and sedimentary beds. Gold was typically found as very fine flakes, rarely more than a few grains in weight, but often abundantly

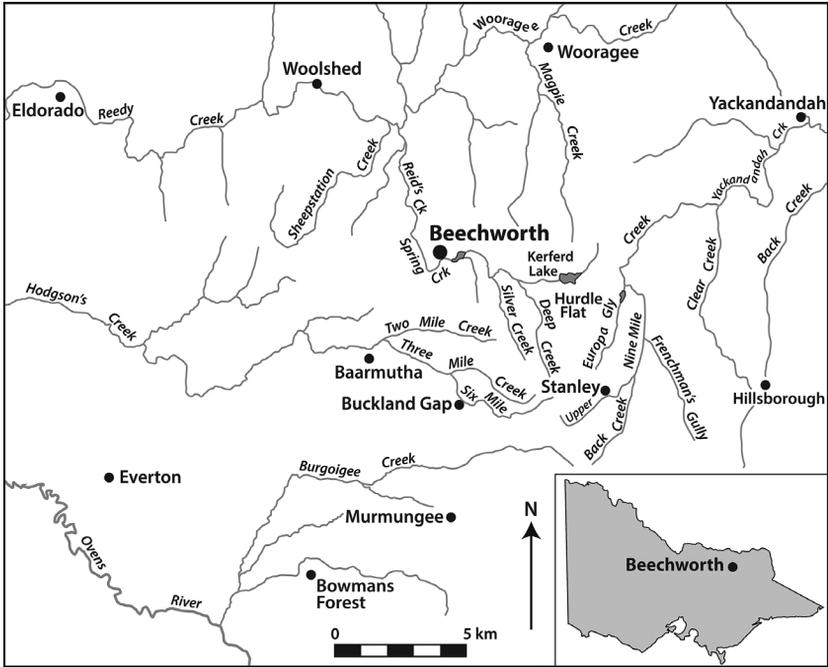


Fig. 1 Creeks drain north from Beechworth into Reedy Creek, west into Hodgson's Creek and the Ovens River, and north east into Yackandandah Creek and the Kiewa River.

present in alluvial drifts.¹³ Numerous quartz reefs were also worked in the Beechworth area, especially in the hills around Stanley, Hillsborough and Yackandandah, while alluvial tin in the form of cassiterite was recovered in quantity from the Reedy Creek catchment.¹⁴

Miners on the Ovens goldfield initially used pans and cradles to wash gold from the earth. The nature of alluvial deposits in the area, however, meant that ground sluicing was quickly adopted as a more efficient means of recovering the gold. Ground sluices channelled water through races and over a working face to loosen and wash away the soil, or used the flow of water to break down washdirt shovelled into a channel. The dislodged material was usually then diverted through a sluice-box in which gold was trapped behind riffles or wooden blocks. Creek diversions were also attempted from an early date, exposing the beds of waterways to permit washing out the gold, among the first examples of this method employed in Victoria.¹⁵ Hydraulic sluicing was an intensification of ground sluicing, using a jet of high-pressure water to blast out alluvial deposits on a massive scale. Hydraulic hoses were recorded in the area as early as August 1859.¹⁶ In later years, hydraulic pump sluicing also used a strong jet of water to break up deposits and pump the disintegrated alluvium into sluice-boxes on a floating barge. Paddocking was an alternative form of alluvial mining that was also practised at Beechworth. In this method, upstream water was diverted down to the claim, where the topsoil was removed and the washdirt was excavated several metres down to bedrock, leaving a large square pit.

These methods all required large volumes of water, which generally needed to be stored in a reservoir and distributed to the claim via a channel or race. Water races resembled simple earth-cut aqueducts, typically one to two metres wide and up to one metre deep. They were dug by hand with pick and shovel and ranged from a few hundred metres to many kilometres in length. Races were excavated at a slight fall across the contour to ensure a steady flow of water, with tunnels, flumes and siphons also used where necessary. Dams were usually simple mounds of clay piled across a creek or gully, with a pipe and valve inserted near the base to regulate the outward flow of water. Natural springs were also tapped extensively in the Beechworth area to increase the flows of available water. While many Beechworth miners had sluicing claims of five to ten acres, others worked smaller areas of one or two perches intensively with hundreds of thousands of gallons of water each day.¹⁷

The scale of development at Beechworth by the late 1860s is evident from contemporary accounts. These reported that there were 77 separate water races within an area of less than 46 square miles with an aggregate length of 159 miles, diverting up to 32.6 million gallons of water per day and an 'almost embarrassing multiplicity of small reservoirs'.¹⁸

Water on the goldfields was measured in sluice-heads, which usually referred to the volume of water flowing through a timber sluice-box inserted at the head of a race. The amount of water specified by a sluice-head, however, was often uncertain. Calculations varied according to the dimensions of sluice-boxes, hours and days of flow, and the meanings of 'head' and pressure. A common measure at Beechworth in 1860 was for one sluice-head to equal 36,000 gallons flowing over a 12-hour day, or 50 gallons per minute.¹⁹ By the late 1860s the secretary for mines, Robert Brough Smyth, summarised variations in sluice-heads in each of Victoria's seven mining districts, with a sluice-head in the Beechworth division regarded as equivalent to 178,500 gallons over a 24-hour period. Sluice-heads elsewhere in Victoria, however, generally referred to much larger amounts of water, which may reflect less competition for the available resources on other goldfields.²⁰

A unique feature of the Beechworth goldfield was the excavation of extensive tunnels into hillsides to tap natural springs and groundwater to augment supplies for sluicing. The technique was similar to cutting horizontal adits in mines to gain access to quartz reefs. A long tunnel was a key element, for example, in the plan by the Leviathan Company in the late 1850s to distribute water to the Nine Mile, Hurdle Flat and Three Mile districts.²¹ Many springs were opened up by simple excavations and channels to divert water to the required race. Springs and groundwater were also central to John Pund's activities in the following years, when he cut at least five tunnels to tap underground water at the head of one of his supply races.²² Rights to spring water at Beechworth were held separately from other water privileges. They entitled owners to control all the water they could tap from springs and tunnels and divert it anywhere, which made them highly desirable.²³ Spring rights at Beechworth were often preferred to dams and reservoirs as the steep topography of much of the goldfield meant the capacity of reservoirs was generally limited, given the simple earth bank dams typically built at the time. Tunnels dug into hills to tap spring water often resulted in nearby creeks and gullies running dry, further contributing to conflict

over water entitlements. Francis Dixon, a director of the Ovens Gold Fields Water Company that succeeded the Leviathan Company, told a select committee in 1860 that competition for water resulted in 'a very great deal of confusion and scrambling'.²⁴

Significant numbers of Chinese miners also worked alluvial deposits in the Beechworth area, using substantial volumes of water in the process. In 1867, for example, there were 3,115 Chinese alluvial miners in the Beechworth, Stanley, Yackandandah and Buckland divisions, compared to 2,003 European alluvial miners in the same area.²⁵ Several Chinese took out water right licences, including Ah Sing and You Quock at Woolshed Creek and Ah Foc at Wooragee in 1867, and William Nam Shing at Maggie Creek and Fy Tye at Wooragee in later years.²⁶ There is little evidence, however, for conflict over water between European and Chinese miners. The latter appear to have operated within the local by-laws and either purchased water as needed from licence holders or supplied their own needs via races cut under miners' rights.

The Beechworth field was divided into wet and dry diggings, i.e. wet claims along the creeks and claims on higher, drier ground. The wetter ground required significant capital to work, given the need to deal with constant flooding. Pumps were driven by steam engines or water wheels that needed races to supply water. After the easy surface gold was won, large volumes of water were needed to process larger volumes of washdirt in order to extract gold profitably. Goldfields administrators made special allowances for larger leases at Beechworth, with sluicing claims up to 800 yards long and 120 yards wide.²⁷ Men with capital took out these large leases and hired labour, including many Chinese, to work them; these wealthy men were known as the 'big bosses' or 'monkeys', so named after their top hats and tails.²⁸ Others called such men with their monopolies 'water squatters'.²⁹ They controlled mining water supplies and withheld water to suit their needs.³⁰

As the lower, wet creek areas were worked out, miners turned to the higher ground. Diversion of water to these levels was achieved with costly race networks, which in turn led to the development of hydraulic sluicing as the main form of mining in the district, with large companies employing many men on wages. Small-scale diggers, without capital for long races, were limited to working close to creeks, either alone or in small parties. They became known as 'punchers' and were strongly opposed to company mining and hired labour. This remained an important and bitter division at Beechworth for many years to come.³¹

Water Permits and Licences at Beechworth

The first permits to utilise water for mining in Victoria were issued by the goldfields commissioner J.S. Morphy at Beechworth in 1853.³² Initially these were verbal statements, but in 1854 commissioners began issuing written permits. Such permits were often simple notices nailed to a nearby tree and they generally lacked maps, clear boundaries or specified volumes or conditions of flow. This vagueness reflected the lack of laws regulating water diversions in the administrative uncertainty of the early gold rush.³³ Nevertheless, permits were highly regarded and changed hands, at Beechworth and elsewhere, for hundreds and sometimes thousands of pounds.³⁴

The legal authority for issuing water permits in Victoria at this time was scant. Commissioners on all fields relied on regulations issued in the *Government Gazette* in April 1853 and June 1855, by which they were authorised to allow sluice washing at running streams, but there was no mention of diverting water via races.³⁵ The Beechworth local court, however, established some basic rules relating to water races in October 1855, including recognition of a race as property, forfeiture of a race on abandonment, and night-and-day water for races.³⁶ By 1857, the *Goldfields Amendment Act* extended the provisions of the miner's right to permit the construction of 'races and dams for mining purposes', while holders of mining leases were also entitled to 'water rights and other easements' on payment of a rent or royalty. In the Beechworth area, it was also tacitly acknowledged that anyone could take as much water as they pleased from a race, free of charge, for domestic purposes. It is uncertain, however, if this privilege applied in other mining districts in Victoria.

Different kinds of water permits quickly emerged on the Beechworth goldfield, including creek, bank, spring and motive power rights, which reflected the many competing claims to the district's water. Some permitted 24 hours of flow, while others were night-and-day rights, for twelve hours each. Creek rights were limited to the claim within which they were taken up and terminated with such claims. Bank rights, however, entitled the miner to divert water from the creek to any other claims higher on the banks. Creek rights were superior to bank rights, as holders of the former could command those with bank rights to cease diverting water until the creek rights were supplied with the quantity allowed to them. Motive rights were used to drive water wheels

or 'California pumps' to pump water from wet claims. Spring rights allowed the excavation of tunnels to capture groundwater. Regulation of these rights and associated water matters was spelt out in detail in by-laws issued by the Mining Board of Beechworth in May 1858.³⁷ The result of all these water rights, however, was almost constant litigation and dispute, as race owners effectively became owners and merchants of water.³⁸

Faith in the validity of water permits was shaken following a decision in August 1858 by Judge Thomas Cope, in the case of *Hooper vs Mayzen* in the Beechworth Court of Mines. Cope determined that the use and diversion of water were illegal if taken from a creek or river upon which land had been alienated or taken up under a miner's right. The 1857 *Amending Act* (section 3) specified that miners could use 'for mining purposes any water which Her Majesty could lawfully divert and use'. Judge Cope doubted, however, whether Her Majesty was lawfully entitled to divert any water at all if it was required in the waterway by the landowner or by claimholders along the stream.³⁹ This reflected English common law, which recognised the riparian rights of reasonable water use by property owners whose land abutted a river or lake.⁴⁰ Contemporary legal opinion was divided on Cope's judgement, but members of the 1862–63 Gold Fields Royal Commission of Enquiry acknowledged that it still had the legal effect of invalidating water permits throughout Victoria, and excited great fears among miners about the security of their water rights.⁴¹

Judge Cope was also puzzled by the notion of Beechworth miners claiming first, second and subsequent rights to water based on the date of registration of the water permit. The idea followed the appropriation model developed on the California and Colorado goldfields, where the first person to claim water in a stream acquired a vested right to it, combined with the 'prior use' doctrine in Britain where first usage created a title to the water flow.⁴² By-laws at Beechworth and other Victorian goldfields specified that superiority of water claims were to be determined by priority of occupation, with the earlier occupant having the superior right to available water.⁴³ According to Judge Cope, however, the law recognised no such hierarchy of rights, and he was at a loss to know how to deal with the claims.⁴⁴

At the same time another Beechworth case, also presided over by Judge Cope, set a precedent for allowing parallel races that essentially

interfered with a rival's water supply. Miners began cutting deeper and deeper races and tunnels to tap the water table, effectively draining their rivals' races dry.⁴⁵ In response to these legal battles as well as conflict over the 'minute subdivision of water' at Beechworth, the Victorian government established a commission in 1860 to investigate water rights on the Beechworth goldfields.⁴⁶ As a direct result of the Beechworth commission, the government introduced water right licences across the colony under the 1862 *Amending Act*. These fifteen-year licences gave miners the right to cut and use races and dams. The legislation established penalties for wrongfully taking water from a race or reservoir, and required that a formal survey plan be lodged. The licence was intended to override previous permits and it was thought that miners would gladly transfer their old permits to new licences.

In order to assess the effects of the 1862 *Amending Act* and gain a general overview of gold mining in Victoria, the government established a royal commission that reported on virtually all aspects of the Victorian goldfields, including extensive evidence taken in regard to water supply at Beechworth.⁴⁷ The commissioners found that water right licences had not yet been taken up, due in part to the 'cumbersome and expensive process' of applying to the Board of Land and Works in Melbourne for a licence.⁴⁸ In addition, many miners preferred to continue operating under their vague earlier water permits, which in many cases were less restrictive than the new licences. The lack of uptake was also due to uncertainty as to whether the new licences would override the old permits.⁴⁹ It seems that the *Amending Act* had not solved the water issues.

The 1865 *Mining Statute* was intended to clarify laws on the goldfields, including the issue of water rights. Permission to build races and dams was still available via miner's rights (section 1.5) and as a fifteen-year licence (section 7.36) and by the end of 1865 more than 80 licences had been taken out in Victoria, including at least 46 in the Beechworth district.⁵⁰ In reality, however, the 1862 and 1865 Acts seem not to have fully settled all the issues around water rights and litigation continued. In 1867, yet another government board was appointed to report on how the legislation had been applied at Beechworth. Members identified a range of problems under the existing legislation and suggested amendments to restore order and remove difficulties under which race owners and miners continued to labour. By this stage, some races in the Beechworth district were more than 40 miles in length and had cost between £6,000 and £7,000 to construct.⁵¹

The board found, significantly, that licences issued under the 1862 *Amending Act* did not, in effect, supersede rights to water acquired under local by-laws, and members suggested that the surrender of these earlier permits be accepted and new licences issued under the 1865 Act. The Board concluded that while the current system was 'bad' many excellent works had nevertheless been constructed under the early permits and these, and the privileges belonging to them, should be secured to the holders.⁵²

It is not clear how these proposals took effect, although many suggestions were implemented under local by-laws. Many miners did not surrender their early privileges in exchange for new water right licences as officials hoped and still clung to their vague, somewhat less restrictive privileges granted under earlier by-laws. Thus, well into the 1890s, some miners were still operating under permits granted in the 1850s. This was a point of contention, for those with fifteen-year water right licences paid substantial annual rents for races and reservoirs and had no certainty of renewal when their licence expired, while those diverting water with a miner's right and under local by-laws paid only the modest miner's right fee and their titles were unchallenged.⁵³ Some miners, however, were more inclined to take out licences as these served as security for borrowing more money. Wealthy miners often held a variety of permits and licences at the same time. Beechworth sluicer Donald Fletcher wrote to a government board in 1879 that:

when money had to be borrowed to construct races, tail-races, and reservoirs, necessary to work old and abandoned ground profitably, the banks accepted a water right license and a gold-mining lease as tangible security, something that could not be rendered valueless unless with the consent of the Mining Department.⁵⁴

Conflict over water also occurred between miners and the local council. In 1862 the Beechworth municipality finished construction of a town reservoir, known as Lake Kerferd. The dam inundated the races of a party that included Charles Connolly and Donald Fletcher, who had purchased a water permit originally issued to Richard Smyth in August 1854. The miners received two sluice-heads of water from the reservoir in compensation, which was equivalent to 90,000 gallons per day or more than 28 million gallons per year.⁵⁵ Ten years later, however, with not enough water to meet domestic demand, the council ceased

supplying water to the miners, causing injury and loss to Connolly's party. The case eventually came before the Victorian Supreme Court in August 1875 and was only resolved the following year in favour of the plaintiffs. The council had to pay Connolly and Co. almost £7,000 for their water right to the two sluice-heads and legal costs.⁵⁶ It was an expensive way for ratepayers to test the legal limits of water diversion.

Despite the failure of various Acts to simplify the water licensing system, in the years following the 1865 *Mining Statute* miners across Victoria settled into a relatively stable period, with a better understanding of the security of their rights conferred under various Acts. Many significant water management schemes were undertaken in this period. In the late 1870s, however, the fifteen-year licences were about to expire and nervousness abounded as renewal was not automatic. There was no clarity for miners about what would happen as licences expired and work on some mining leases at Beechworth even came to a halt due to the uncertainty.⁵⁷ A government board was appointed in 1879 to examine, among other things, the impact of the fifteen-year licences at Beechworth. Some miners protested at the monopoly that water right owners now held and advocated auction of the licences when they had expired. Others argued that water should not be diverted out of natural catchments, as had been happening for years. Large water right holders such as Donald Fletcher, John Hambleton and John Pund hailed the licensing system as a success and argued strongly for ten-year renewals with increased water allowances.⁵⁸

By the 1880s there was a flurry of activity at Beechworth as miners tried to renew their water right licences and consolidate their position by buying others out. The majority of licence renewals after 1881 were for ten years rather than fifteen years.⁵⁹ The large number of licence applications, along with variable seasonal flows and the priority system of water rights, meant that there was often insufficient water to supply each permit or licence. The situation was exacerbated by the numerous races cut parallel and close together, each an attempt to trap the available water, which increased losses by seepage and evaporation. In spite of by-laws at Beechworth that specified an easement five feet wide on each side of a race, this was clearly not enough to separate the 'gathering ground' of parallel races to enable them to flow with water. In response, sluice miners like John Pund, Donald Fletcher and others sought to amalgamate water licences in the same area to make water delivery more

efficient and reduce wastage. The 1890 *Mines Act* continued the water rights licences, which appear thereafter to have superseded permits held under the miner's right.⁶⁰

The security of tenure provided by the 1865 *Mining Statute* and subsequent mining laws also encouraged mining entrepreneurs at Beechworth and elsewhere to invest confidently in water races, tail races and reservoirs, resulting in the buy-out and consolidation of many smaller water rights into larger and more effective supply systems. Sluicers recognised the inefficiency of multiple races each supplying individual claims and they amalgamated water rights to create substantial flows that enabled sluicing operations on a larger scale. The Rocky Mountain Extended Gold Sluicing Company, for example, held eleven water rights licences by 1884 and controlled the flow of more than five million gallons per day through its sluicing works at Beechworth. William M. Hyndman held four licences for 1.8 million gallons at Three Mile Creek, while Donald Fletcher held four licences for more than two million gallons.⁶¹ Peter Wallace, brother of John Alston Wallace, held two licences (No. 244 and No. 380) on the Ovens River, under which he was entitled to extract almost 71 million gallons a day, or 400 sluice-heads.⁶²

By the late nineteenth century alluvial mining was in decline across Victoria and most activity was associated with reef mining and deep leads. The intense battles fought over water in previous years were largely over and the principle of public ownership had been established, while allowing for private extraction and use in industry and agriculture. During the 1884–86 Royal Commission on Water Supply Alfred Deakin acknowledged that the Victorian mining legislation already recognised the power of the state over sources of water supply.⁶³ The notion of water as a public resource provided the foundation of new laws relating to irrigation on the northern plains in the 1880s. These laws effectively confirmed state ownership of Victoria's surface water and waterways, with control of water centralised and managed for the 'collective good'.⁶⁴

John Reilly

Case studies of individuals illustrate the processes and effects of controlling water on the goldfields. Here we describe the work of John Reilly as the first recorded individual to divert and trade water on the Victorian goldfields, and John Pund, who later controlled significant water assets in the Three Mile area. Pund and Reilly were not the largest water merchants at Beechworth but their careers cover most of the

mining period from the 1850s to the First World War and reveal the enterprise associated with the management of mining water systems.

John Henry Reilly was born c.1828 in Dublin and trained as a civil engineer, arriving in Victoria in 1852 with recent experience of alluvial mining in California.⁶⁵ He claimed to have engineered the Columbia Ditch in Tuolumne County, California in 1849–50 by building a diversion on the Stanislaus River and 37 miles of channel to distribute water downstream for mining, mechanical and agricultural purposes.⁶⁶ Such an enterprise was typical of the scale of operations in California at the time, where highly profitable water companies built hundreds of dams and thousands of miles of ditches.⁶⁷

Reilly's water permit was the first issued in Victoria and he claimed to be the first person in the colony to sell water for mining purposes, making a great deal of money in the process.⁶⁸ Reilly quickly took advantage of government regulations proclaimed in April 1853 by Colonial Secretary William Lonsdale, which permitted 'sluice washing ...at running streams'.⁶⁹ Another, unnamed group at Beechworth proposed to sluice for tin around the same time.⁷⁰ The successful commencement of ground sluicing in Victoria was carried out by John Reilly's party at Nine Mile Creek near Beechworth and was first reported in the *Argus* on 13 May 1853. The works included a race one and three-quarter miles in length, which tapped an upper tributary of Yackandandah Creek and flowed to a reservoir in Snake Valley (or Upper Nine Mile Creek). Water accumulated in the dam overnight and in the morning it flowed through a channel to a wooden sluice-box, 130 feet in length. Men stood on each side and shovelled earth into the sluice, digging down to a depth of about four feet, and the gold washed out by the water was trapped at the lower end of the sluice by bars fixed across the base of the box. When the ground on each side was dug up the sluice was moved a few metres to fresh ground and the process began again. The average gold yield was reported as one ounce per man per day, with seven men at work. Reilly later claimed that he recovered the full cost of the construction outlay within a week.⁷¹

Around the same time, Reilly and his party excavated another race, one mile in length, to supply water from the Nine Mile Creek to a reservoir at the top of Long Dick's Gully at Stanley. Each morning, water flowed down the gully and supplied miners working with cradles, for which water they paid up to seven shillings per day. By June 1853

other races were being built at Nine Mile Creek and more than half a dozen sluicing companies were at work at Reid's Creek, just north of the Beechworth township.⁷² Reilly also had an interest in another race to the Six Mile Creek, along with a large race, six feet wide and three feet deep, drawing water from the Ovens River, and a quartz reef near Buckland Gap.⁷³ More than 60 years later, Charles Grey Bird (writing as 'Alpha') claimed that Reilly supplied about ten 'Long Toms' and twenty cradles for up to a year and made 'virtually 100 guineas weekly' with his local monopoly on water supply.⁷⁴ Reilly himself later claimed to have made from £50 to £80 per day from the races.⁷⁵ His water permit changed hands several times in the following years, until by 1861 it was reported to be worth at least £2,000.⁷⁶

John Reilly was an important and influential figure in the development of mining water systems in gold-rush Victoria, and his time at Beechworth stands roughly in the middle of his career. He and others with experience of alluvial mining in California introduced not only sluicing techniques but also an understanding of large-scale water diversions. During the 1860s in Victoria, Reilly was closely associated with the Coliban System of Waterworks, constructed to provide Bendigo and Castlemaine with a reliable water supply.⁷⁷ Reilly's scheme was one of three plans submitted in 1864 to build the system and, although his plan was rejected by several authorities, for a brief time he had a high public profile as an engineer and water expert.⁷⁸ By this time he claimed to have built more than 300 miles of water races in Victoria and New South Wales, after beginning his work in Australia at Beechworth.⁷⁹ In the following years he was also involved with hydraulic engineering and sluicing works on the McIvor goldfield at Heathcote.⁸⁰

John Pund

Large mining parties exerted increasing control over water supplies at Beechworth during the 1860s and 1870s. Companies such as the Rocky Mountain Extended Gold Sluicing Co., Parkinson Alluvials, Pund & Co. and Fletcher & Co. began to monopolise access to mining water systems.⁸¹ These groups made large investments to construct race networks, deep tail races and tunnels, blasting through hard rock to drain alluvial claims and to source spring water. The Rocky Mountain Extended Sluicing Company, for example, is well known for its association with businessman John Alston Wallace and the dramatic 2,600-foot tunnel the company spent five years and £13,500

excavating deep beneath the town of Beechworth to drain tailings and sludge from the Spring Creek diggings.⁸² Less well known was another mining entrepreneur, John Pund, who spent decades creating major water systems and became a major figure in Beechworth's mining water industry.

John Martin Dietrich Pund was born *c.*1835 in Hamburg, Germany, and trained as a sailmaker before migrating to Victoria in 1854. He married Emily Ada Sherry in 1859 and the couple had three children, including Percy 'Jack' Pund who later worked alongside his father. In 1873 John Pund became naturalised as a British subject.⁸³ In the early days Pund developed mining interests at Yackandandah, Woolshed and Nine Mile, although his main claims were at Three Mile, where the family settled in 1874.⁸⁴ John Pund succeeded in becoming one of the largest and most successful alluvial miners and water barons on the Beechworth goldfield. His activities reveal important aspects of the development of mining water systems and the relationships between gold, water and landscapes.

The Three Mile Creek mining area, now called Baarmutha, is located about five kilometres south of Beechworth. The area was mined in the 1850s by the simple methods of pot-holing, cradle and pan, 'Long Toms', ground sluicing and puddling. Miners initially paid three shillings per load to have their washdirt carted to the nearest creek but water merchants soon constructed races to deliver water to the miners' claims. The area was quickly worked out and was gradually abandoned by the early 1860s when only a few Chinese remained. John Pund saw the potential of the Three Mile Diggings, provided a better water supply could be obtained. In 1865 he secured a fifteen-year water right licence (No. 58) with J. Hendery, J. McRae and J. Morrison.⁸⁵ Within five years Pund & Co. had constructed twelve miles of water race from the Upper Nine Mile Creek to Three Mile (Figure 2). This was the beginning of Pund's successful career in hydraulic sluicing, which produced more than 24,000 ounces of gold by the time of his death in 1915.⁸⁶

The increased water supply from Pund's races and those of other miners meant that Three Mile quickly became heavily sluiced. Long, fully boxed tail races, some over 1,000 yards in length, ran down the valley and emptied into Hodgson's Creek.⁸⁷ In 1874 Pund bought out Ah Gee's mining leases and dam and several other leases at Three Mile. In 1881 he obtained another water right licence (No. 442), which tapped

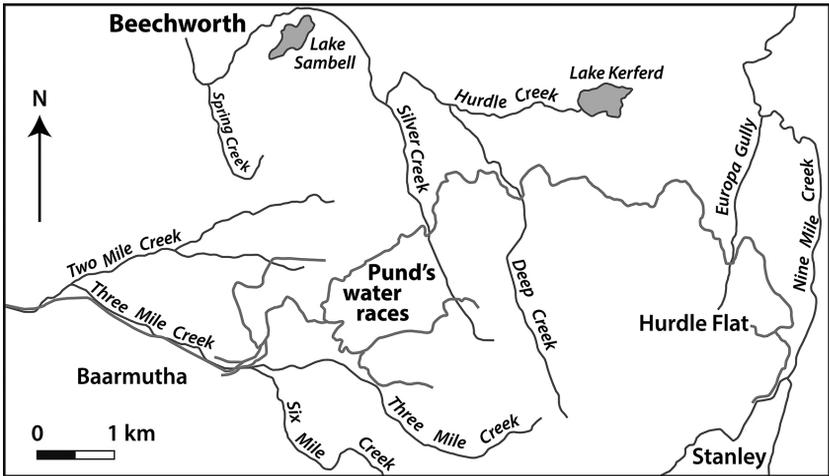


Fig. 2 Pund & Co. had constructed twelve miles of water race from the Upper Nine Mile Creek to Three Mile.

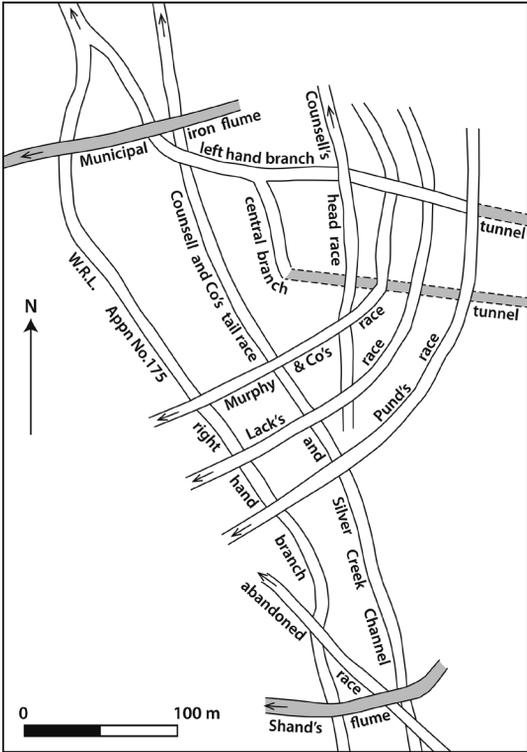
springs and tunnels at Upper Nine Mile Creek and delivered 950,000 gallons to the Three Mile sluicing area.⁸⁸ By 1887 Pund held 60 acres under mining leases and miner's rights, and used hydraulic sluices to wash away alluvial faces up to 24 feet in height.⁸⁹ The huge quantities of sludge that resulted from this process flowed downstream and inundated the river plains, causing years of conflict between miners and farmers.⁹⁰

During the 1880s Pund also went into partnership with John Alston Wallace. Wallace was a major mining entrepreneur in Victoria with extensive interests in sluicing and water companies.⁹¹ He was also outspoken in his support for the privatisation of water, believing that too much water was wasted on the goldfields and that water secured by means of expensive dams, races and flumes should be considered private property.⁹² In the 1880s and 1890s he promoted the development of steam-driven sluicing and dredging, employing Thomas Hedley from the McIvor Sluicing Company at Heathcote to design the powerful pumps and engines employed at Woolshed and Yackandandah.⁹³

Wallace and Pund's mining claim at Three Mile reused water from William Telford's United Sluicing Company upstream, after the sludge and tailings had been allowed to settle out of the water.⁹⁴ Telford was another water monopoliser who was also chairman of directors of the Rocky Mountain Extended Sluicing Company.⁹⁵ In 1895 Pund and Wallace joined forces with Telford's company and applied to take over

Shand and Hambleton's surrendered water right licence (No. 626) to carry an extra 400,000 gallons from Upper Nine Mile to Three Mile.⁹⁶ These amalgamations meant that the races of Pund and Wallace were the major network supplying the Upper Three Mile Diggings. By the early twentieth century, Pund & Co. were working the Three Mile and Six Mile areas and averaging 1,000 ounces of gold per year.⁹⁷ When John Pund died in 1915 his estate was valued at almost £16,000.⁹⁸ The sluicing enterprise was eventually sold and became the GSG Amalgamated Co. The company continued to sluice the Three Mile claim until the 1950s.⁹⁹

John Pund's water race system extended for up to 28 kilometres, diverting water out of the Upper Nine Mile Creek, across the headwaters of Spring Creek and into Three Mile Creek. This involved a major diversion of water from the catchment of the Kiewa River into the Ovens River. The race also included 30 crossings of other races in the area (Figure 3).¹⁰⁰



At one point south of Beechworth, Pund's race was but one of fourteen separate water channels running roughly parallel around Spring Creek and onward to claims further north and west. At least three large dams for retaining sludge and mining debris were also constructed by Pund & Co. John Pund's activities characterised the scale of industrial mining at Beechworth in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Water was gathered from miles around and diverted

Fig. 3 John Pund's water race system involved a major diversion of water from the catchment of the Kiewa River into the Ovens River.

into valleys that were sluiced away, leaving scars that can still be seen in the landscape today.

John Pund was one of Beechworth's major alluvial mining figures. His career spanned much of the period that saw large-scale, intensive hydraulic sluicing at Beechworth. He invested heavily in constructing water races and other mining infrastructure, ploughing his profits back into an industry in which he fervently believed. The complex mining water system that he built transferred water from the Nine Mile watershed westward into the Three Mile Creek. His activities over many years produced not only substantial quantities of gold and gave employment to many workers, but also transformed entire landscapes of gold and water, altering the hydrology of creeks and rivers in the district.

Conclusion

Gold miners were not the first colonists in Victoria to build water races and reservoirs. During the 1840s, flour millers recognised the potential of creek and river flows to drive water wheels. As early as 1841, for example, John Hepburn had established a lagoon, water race and overshot wheel to drive a mill at Smeaton, north east of Ballarat, while in the Beechworth area pastoralist David Reid built a water race and wheel to drive a flour mill by Yackandandah Creek in 1845–46.¹⁰¹ Flour mills were also built on the Yarra River and Plenty River in Melbourne in the 1840s.¹⁰² The scale of water manipulation for these mills, however, was relatively small and it was only with the arrival of gold diggers in the following decade that massive changes were wrought to waterways by the creation of extensive landscapes of water management.¹⁰³

The scale of water manipulation by gold miners was greater than for earlier industry, and at Beechworth it was very much greater than other mining districts in Victoria. Measured by the length and complexity of races, the number of water licences taken out or the volumes of water extracted from creeks and rivers, sluicing parties at Beechworth, Yackandandah, Stanley and nearby areas invested substantial capital and effort to develop water management systems. Miners in the area pioneered a range of technical, legal and commercial responses to water that had a major influence throughout the colony. By the mid 1850s a government select committee acknowledged that the Ovens was 'the best worked gold field [in Victoria], the works there resembling much the mining works carried on in California.'¹⁰⁴ Secretary for Mines Robert

Brough Smyth acknowledged that ‘the most important [water] works were constructed in the Beechworth District.’¹⁰⁵

Sluicing at Beechworth also distributed water on a scale similar to or greater than volumes delivered by contemporary domestic water supply systems. The Yan Yean supply for Melbourne, for example, was designed in the 1850s to deliver up to six million gallons per day, while Joseph Brady’s Coliban scheme aimed to provide five million gallons each to Castlemaine and Ballarat daily.¹⁰⁶ Miners at Beechworth harnessed and diverted more than 30 million gallons each day to their sluicing claims.¹⁰⁷

Water was a crucial commodity for gold miners everywhere. The greater the volumes of water available, the more gold that could be won. Large alluvial mining parties at Beechworth, however, operated at a scale that generally dwarfed most other mining operations in colonial Victoria. They amalgamated mining claims and water right licences to increase the rate of production and improve the rate of gold recovery, and persisted in sluicing the hills around Beechworth when thousands of other miners left for potentially richer fields elsewhere. The scale of their works and the water systems they developed left a permanent mark on Victoria’s water history that in many cases, can still be read in the landscape today.

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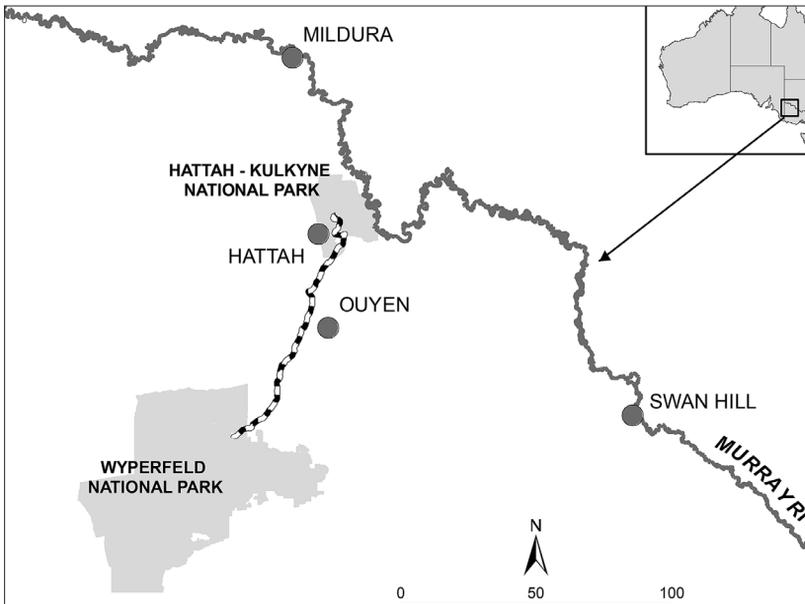
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The Wirrengren-Kulkyne Pathway: Locating a Cultural Icon

John Burch

Abstract

The Wirrengren-Kulkyne pathway is an Indigenous pathway that runs from Wirrengren in Wyperfeld National Park to Lake Brockie in Hattah-Kulkyne National Park. It was used, potentially for thousands of years, by Indigenous people to travel safely to annual meetings at Wirrengren. The traditional owners shared their knowledge of this pathway with early colonial settlers who then progressively usurped the pathway as an important piece of colonial infrastructure. After the pathway fell out of use, knowledge of its role nevertheless remained, but its actual location was lost. Maps made by Edward White in 1852 allow this significant cultural icon to be recovered.



When colonial explorers and settlers entered the Victorian Mallee in the nineteenth century the land they took possession of was already settled and managed. Indigenous people had been living along the Murray River corridor for thousands of years in one of the most densely settled areas of Indigenous Australia, and in the Mallee away from the river for about 3,500 years.¹ Land ownership was clearly defined and the land was being directly managed, often through the use of fire, to sustain its productivity and facilitate food gathering.² The communities of the Mallee were connected by defined pathways with other communities in Victoria, and ultimately all of Australia, allowing the exchange of trade goods and culture.³ Colonial settlement frequently adopted the existing Indigenous infrastructure that it found: village sites, water management, managed land and pathways, obscuring their presence into the future. Revealing this hidden past is an element in returning the land to its traditional owners.

Wirrengren : A Meeting Place

Wirrengren is part of the Wimmera Lakes system. It is the final destination of the Wimmera River and historically at times of flood was a lake, but since 1853 it has been a dry plain. Its traditional owners are the Wergaia people. Its importance to Indigenous culture arises from its use as a place 'where, at stipulated times, the tribes from the south met those from the Murray River and from the Tattiarra country of South Australia.'⁴ These meetings may have been occurring since its settlement by Indigenous people 3,500 years earlier.⁵

Meeting places were a central element of Indigenous culture. Large groups travelled to these gatherings creating the opportunity for the exchange of trade goods that might have moved hundreds of kilometres, the resolution of inter-tribal politics and the sharing of culture and ideas.⁶ These cultural exchanges, often in the form of song, were then disseminated across Australia.

Whilst Indigenous cultural tradition retained knowledge of the importance of Wirrengren, the acknowledgement of this in academic literature is almost solely attributable to the work of Aldo Massola from Museum Victoria, who took a special interest in the area. In a series of books and articles in the 1960s and 70s, using cultural knowledge, early colonial history and archaeological fieldwork, Massola built a detailed picture of the role and significance of Wirrengren. He even translated

the name from Werreng-jerren meaning the ‘noise as made from many people’.⁷

The picture that Massola built is feasible but needs to be treated with caution. Not all the claims he makes are well documented and at times he was clearly wrong. Clark has examined some translations of place names made by Massola and made an overall judgement that his translations are not trustworthy.⁸ Massola’s work on Wirrengren should not be dismissed but treated as requiring further validation.

Massola routinely collected ‘myths’ and stories from Indigenous people and one story, gathered from a number of sources, ascribes a particular cultural importance to Wirrengren supporting its use as a meeting place. It describes the Dreamtime journey of the Bram-bram-bult brothers to Wirrengren.⁹ As they travelled they camped at a number of locations along the Wimmera River and created a number of geographical features including the limestone formations like teeth and jaw nodules found at Wirrengren.

The role of Wirrengren as a meeting place is also documented by the writings and oral histories of the first colonial settlers in the area, which refer to the presence there of Indigenous people from other areas. James Clow noted that ‘this tract of country was frequented by both the Murray and Wimmera River blacks’.¹⁰ Massola refers to stories of the Tattiara people from South Australia along the Wimmera River but cites no sources.¹¹

Having postulated the role of Wirrengren, Massola confirmed his view by visiting the plain in 1968. Even at that time this was a challenging trip following sandy roads from the south along the Outlet Creek, an extension of the Wimmera River, from Lake Albacutya. Along the Outlet Creek he identified Indigenous campsites corresponding to the places that the Bram-bram-bult brothers had stopped and on the eastern edge of the Wirrengren Plain found the largest campsite he had seen in the Wimmera Lakes system, concluding ‘all this would suggest that the aborigines did congregate on this country for their intertribal meetings’.¹²

Whilst there appears to be no direct evidence of the time of year that annual gatherings were held at Wirrengren it was common that Indigenous people ‘scheduled their travel to exploit the seasonality of resources according to the optimal time to visit other nations for religious ceremonies and political gatherings’.¹³ Massola believed that

the annual meetings at Wirrengren would have coincided with the availability of lerp or manna.¹⁴ Lerp is a secretion of psyllid insects found on the leaves of certain eucalypts in February, March and April. It is very sweet and was highly prized by Indigenous people, who farmed its availability by burning mallee scrub and harvested it in large quantities.¹⁵ Massola further postulated that the annual meeting at Wirrengren may have been equivalent to the gatherings on the alpine high plains to exploit the Bogong moth or at Lake Bolac in the Western District where Indigenous people came from great distances to harvest eels.¹⁶

Little further consideration has been given to the role and importance of Wirrengren or assessing Massola's work. In 1984 Anne Ross rejected the suggestion that Wirrengren was a meeting place on the basis that there was 'no evidence', but made no reference to, or assessment of, the material Massola had collected.¹⁷ She was mainly interested in rejecting Tindale's identification of Pine Plains (adjacent to Wirrengren) as a point where the lands of the Wotjobaluk, Latji-Latji and Jari Jari peoples met, which further supports its identification as a meeting place.¹⁸

The Wirrengren-Kulkyne Pathway

Meeting places were connected by a nationwide network of pathways that followed prescribed routes and combined elements of a 'trade route', a 'pilgrim's path' and a 'safe corridor' through tribal lands. Initially labelled simply as trade routes they have also become known as dreaming paths or songlines as the relationship between Aboriginal songs and the pathways has become understood.

Stories such as that of the Bram-bram-bult brothers' journey have historically been seen outside Indigenous communities as simply 'creation myths', but they are also descriptions for travellers of local features to help them navigate major routes of communication and trade. This instance details, amongst other locations, the pathway following the Wimmera River from Stawell to Wirrengren.¹⁹

The Wirrengren-Kulkyne pathway is another such pathway. The name has no cultural history and the points at which it starts and ends are purely nominal. For the purposes of this article it is defined as just that pathway that crosses the Mallee from Lake Brockie in the Hattah Lakes to Pine Plains near Wirrengren. As part of a national network the pathway had no specific beginning or end. Paths ran on in the Kulkyne to Lake Hattah and Lake Mournpall and from Wirrengren to

Lake Hindmarsh. These could just as easily have been nominated as the starting or finishing points.

Massola also examined the issue of the pathways that ran to Wirrengren and he believed he had identified pathways via Nyah and Chinkapoop, along the Wimmera River and also along the Yarriambiack Creek via Lake Coorong.²⁰ His reference to the Tattiarra people of South Australia suggests a pathway existed in that direction. A path from Lake Hattah, the Wirrengren-Kulkyne pathway, was 'one starting off point for the Murray River tribes'.²¹

In 1973 he undertook field studies and believed he had identified another trade route between the Avoca River and Wirrengren.²² This is the least convincing piece of his work on Wirrengren. The simple presence of campsites at food-gathering points along the proposed route without any connecting infrastructure is not convincing.

In 1971 Massola published a map of the various pathways to Wirrengren that he had identified to that time.²³ This map emphasises the importance of Wirrengren by showing six pathways converging on the area but is a potentially misleading piece of work. It shows two pathways heading from Wirrengren to the Murray but neither passes through the Kulkyne and the Hattah Lakes as would be expected from his own work. Instead these pathways run directly to the Darling and the Murrumbidgee. The map needs to be understood as showing the origins and destination of trade, but not the pathways it followed.

Just as the records of early settlers documented the role of Wirrengren, they also recorded the existence of the earlier Wirrengren-Kulkyne pathway. Wirrengren and the Kulkyne were settled in 1847, the former by squatters moving north along the Wimmera River who founded Pine Plains station, and the Kulkyne by squatters moving downstream from Swan Hill, who established Kulkyne and Mournpall stations. The first record comes from J. Beilby who visited Pine Plains and Wirrengren in 1849. He reported, 'The natives travel from Clow's station [Pine Plains]... to Coghill's cattle station [Mournpall] near the Murray within two days'.²⁴ In 1850, at the other end of the pathway in the Kulkyne, the first surveyor of the area, Osgood Pritchard, placed a note on his map of the Lower Murray next to Lake Mournpall, 'These lakes are said by the Aborigines to be six and twenty in number, running[?] south. This is the road they take to Lake Hinmarsh [*sic*]'.²⁵ This notation was removed from subsequent maps and replaced with

a notation erroneously describing the Hattah Lakes as the destination of the Wimmera River.

The Wirrengren-Kulkyne route was significant at a state and local level. At a state level, as the colonial squatters were to discover, the pathway offered the safest pathway across the Mallee for those travelling from the Wimmera and the Western District. This made it a major connection between Victorian nations and those of the Darling River and beyond into New South Wales and Queensland. It was an important connection between Victoria and the national network of culture and trade. At a local level, apart from its cultural uses, the pathway was the avenue by which important trade goods made their way to Indigenous people around Mildura and the Kulkyne:

The Murray people brought with them such commodities as reeds for making reed-spears, lumps of red ochre for decoration, fresh water mussel shells to be used as knives and spoke shaves, small cut-reed and lobster-claw necklaces and possum-fur amulets. The southern tribes brought saplings for spear-shafts, certain swamp reeds for spear heads, axe stone blanks to be fashioned into axes, and sandstones blocks to be used as grinders.²⁶

The trade in stone was particularly important as there are no good local sources in the Kulkyne. Good stone was a major labour-saving device important in a number of local technologies. It was used to grind nardoo, a staple food, and in the collection and fashioning of wood and bark from which canoes, shields etc. were made. One of the most prestigious items traded was probably greenstone axes that came from Will-im-ee Mooring (Mt William) near Daylesford. These axes have been found in the Kulkyne and as far away as Adelaide and into New South Wales.²⁷

There is no clear evidence of how long after the arrival of the squatters that the Wirrengren-Kulkyne pathway continued to be used for its traditional cultural purposes. It may have only been for a short period as the communities to the south were rapidly decimated by the impacts of settlement. Records suggest that travel for cultural purposes did continue on the Lower Murray for a while and the squatters observed this without understanding what they saw. In 1853 Hugh Jamieson of Mildura station wrote to the Bishop of Melbourne:

during the summer months, nearly all, from the oldest to the youngest in the various tribes, have the greatest desire to abandon every

employment, and indulge in the roving life of naked savages ... they not unfrequently during their annual migrations travel over 200 or 300 miles of country, increasing in numbers as they proceed, alternately hunting, fishing, and levying contributions on both sheep and cattle, as they slowly and indolently saunter along the banks of the Murray and Darling.²⁸

Colonial Adoption of the Pathway

Dale Kerwin has documented the uses made of Indigenous infrastructure during later colonial settlement. He argues that there is an underlying pattern of usurpation, 'Since the earliest years of the colonizing process, Europeans used Aboriginal guides who predictably traveled along the paths already carved in the Aboriginal landscape. Settlers and graziers subsequently followed these pathways with the result that Aboriginal trading paths became drover runs and coach ways.'²⁹

Colonial use of the Wirrengren-Kulkyne pathway followed, if slowly, this paradigm. Though established at about the same time in 1847, the squatting runs at Pine Plains and the Kulkyne were part of separate waves of colonial settlement and were independent of each other. Their connection with more settled areas followed completely separate paths. But these squatters quickly became aware that they were in fact connected by the Wirrengren-Kulkyne pathway. The writings of Beilby and Pritchard, quoted earlier, also make it clear this knowledge came from the Indigenous people and not from colonial exploration.

Although the squatters knew that a pathway existed they did not adopt it; the climate and the perceived lack of water made it dangerous and it was, to a degree, unnecessary. The squatters at Pine Plains had no reason to want to travel to the Murray and appear to have initially ignored it. All their trade, transport, family and political connections were to the south and they focused in that direction. This was not the case in the Kulkyne. Whilst not initially using it for transport or communications, George Crawford of Kulkyne station appears to have explored at least part of the pathway to identify opportunities to expand his property. In 1849 he occupied land at Tiega and Yellumjip, points along the pathway with surface water.³⁰

The first non-Indigenous person that we know to have travelled the full length of the pathway was the surveyor Edward Riggs White. White had been previously involved in surveying the Victoria/South Australia

border and in 1851 he had been directed by Lieutenant Governor La Trobe to survey a route across the Mallee from the Wimmera River to the junction of the Murray and Darling rivers. Mirroring the earlier uses of the Wirrengren-Kulkyne pathway, La Trobe had identified the value and importance of accessing trade passing down the Darling River.

White initially surveyed the route that La Trobe had sought, following a line almost due north from Wirrengren. Having completed that task as requested, he decided that this route 'could not be made use of' owing to the soil type and 'the almost complete absence of grass and water.'³¹ Abandoning that as an option he travelled up the Murray to Lake Mournpall in the Kulkyne. White had Pritchard's earlier map with its reference to a 'road' and the implication is that he had decided to determine its suitability as an alternative to La Trobe's proposal.

Over the next few months White travelled and mapped the entire Wirrengren-Kulkyne pathway. The route that he mapped was, at most places, an existing pathway. Pritchard had referred to a 'road'. George Everard, an itinerant rural labourer frequently based at Pine Plains station and Kulkyne station between the 1850s and the 1880s, was to describe it as a cattle pad leaving Pine Plains. White says he set out on a track and comments that the track had been 'blown, or washed, out in many places.'³² This track was Indigenous in origin. Although Kulkyne station used the track to reach Tiega and Yellumjip that was a case of the squatters using existing Indigenous infrastructure. There is no evidence that their use had been sustained enough to create a pathway, and certainly not one that would be visible at Pine Plains. When White passed through, Tiega and Yellumjip were unoccupied and there were no huts, let alone buildings, on the sites.

White initially travelled to Yellumjip and then, rather than following the pathway south west to Pine Plains, headed off west directly towards Wirrengren, the shortest line to connect with the survey he had already done leaving Wirrengren. He failed to find a route following this line and turned around and surveyed his tracks back to Lake Mournpall. He then followed the Murray downstream to the South Australian border to attempt to recover equipment from his previous expedition, travelled south along the border and then crossed the Big Desert to Wirrengren and Pine Plains. From there he travelled to Yellumjip, completing his surveying of the pathway. Subsequently he

reported that he had completed the assignment given by La Trobe: 'I have connected Lake Hindmarsh with the Murray by a chain survey.'³³

Despite White proving the pathway could be travelled and leaving a cleared line a chain wide that would make it easily navigable, colonial adoption of the pathway was still delayed. Everard recorded the tragic outcomes of some of the first attempts. His first reference to the pathway, probably describing events in 1857, was:

there was just a track like a cattle pad between the Murray and Pine Plains, and no water after leaving the Kulkyne Lakes until you reached Werringra ... so it was very seldom anyone tackled the journey. One poor fellow attempted the job, got as far as Tiega, and caved in a mile or so beyond.³⁴

A police constable rode out from Pine Plains and buried the body but then struck trouble as his own horse died on the track as he returned. Everard's next reference, perhaps a year later, is that 'another poor fellow succumbed, not a hundred yards from where the one perished before.'³⁵ Once again the police were dispatched to bury the body.

If in the 1850s the pathway was dangerous and unreliable for the pastoral community, its isolation made it ideally suited for activities outside the law. During the 1850s horses were stolen in the Western District and taken up the pathway and across the Murray and into New South Wales and Queensland along the Darling River. The pathway had, temporarily, once again become part of an Australia-wide trade system, just as La Trobe had hoped. In 1859 the Victoria Police were forced to establish a police station at Kulkyne home station to try to control that trafficking.³⁶ The infamous bushranger, Mad Dog Morgan, was reputedly 'in the habit of traversing the Mallee by the Pine Plains-Kulkyne track when one place or the other got too hot for him.'³⁷ Massola also records a story of Morgan travelling with stolen horses at Lake Brambruk, one of the Bram-bram-bult brothers' stopping places, just south of Wirrengren.³⁸

Little had changed by the beginning of the 1860s. George Neumayer, conducting his magnetic survey of Victoria, travelled the pathway in 1860 after parting from the Bourke and Wills expedition at Menindie, and again in 1861. He travelled by spring cart, 'the very first attempt of this kind', and the assistance of his Indigenous guide, Peter, was essential:

Without the aid of a Black I believe it would have been utterly impossible for us to get through this country. There is not a blade of grass for the horses, and a few hundred yards to the right or the left would at times have caused us to miss the only water within 20 to 30 miles.³⁹

Neumayer provides some of the limited evidence available as to the nature of the pathway. It did not attempt to keep to a constant level but followed a direct line across the Mallee and consequently went 'continually up and down.' Neumayer stayed at Tiega and Yellumjip, providing descriptions of both. The hardest piece of the pathway to travel was the section from Yellumjip to Pine Plains with the initial part consisting of 'little flats alternating with countless sandhills ... and not a drop of water near.'⁴⁰

Given its nature the pathway would have remained occasionally used and dangerous, but the squatters transformed it. They had learnt from their Indigenous guides that the land that the original explorers thought desolate and waterless was not, in fact, without water. Depressions in the land contained soaks or clay pans where water could be found. The Indigenous people had managed these sites and created 'native wells' to support their travel.⁴¹

Indigenous knowledge was now turned to creating more reliable water for pastoralism. The 'native well' sites were expanded into larger, lined and covered water storages that were known as 'tanks.'⁴² The placement of tanks along the pathway occurred in the mid to late 1860s and was probably the work of Henry Miller, who by 1868 had acquired both Kulkyne and Pine Plains stations and had the incentive to undertake the work to connect his holdings and establish a land route into Victoria rather than relying on paddle-steamer traffic on the Murray:

but the King, or some of the many Millers who inhabit there [Kulkyne home station], generously keep water-tanks on that desolate track. One is at "Horse Paddock Hut", another at "Yallumjib", a third at "Tyeega," a fourth at "Mulkyne" a fifth at "Hattar", 18 miles from the Murray.⁴³

The accessibility of the pathway changed as the 'native wells' were converted into tanks. By the late 1860s Everard was traveling back and forward between Pine Plains and Kulkyne station without undue concern. Now that the pathway was provided with water, it was not just

suitable as a track for horses; it could also be used for bullock drays and droving stock. Evidence of stock being driven along the pathway starts soon after in the 1870s. Thompson reports a herd of 800 cattle being driven from Kulkyne station through to Horsham in about 1873.⁴⁴ Everard was employed droving a flock of sheep from South Avenue station near Robe in South Australia up to Kulkyne in 1875.⁴⁵ There are no contemporary references, but once water supplies were more secure the pathway was used by bullock drays, which were the main goods transportation system. Oral history refers to it as a ‘bullock dray route.’⁴⁶

By the 1870s the pathway had become an accepted public highway. The commissioners for the 1879 Crown Lands Commission of Enquiry travelled it and met with the superintendent of Kulkyne station at Tiega.⁴⁷ In 1891 Governor Hopetoun left Kulkyne station for the railhead at Dimboola, travelling along the pathway.⁴⁸ But, despite being improved, the pathway was never tamed. Fierce summers and drought could dry up water sources and make it threatening and dangerous again. James Grassie, a former Western Districts squatter and poet, travelled the pathway a number of times in the 1870s and described his experiences, sometimes embellished, in the Mt Gambier newspaper, the *Border Watch*. During the drought of 1876 he issued a warning to travellers and described a particularly harrowing journey:

The other week I was overtaken by four horsemen apparently well mounted... but on the fourth day thereafter their four horses died, and mine alone, worn to a skeleton in that short period, managed to struggle through. Besides these we counted five dead horses on the track.⁴⁹

As the colonial population of the Mallee grew, particularly at Mildura, proposals emerged for other uses of the pathway. In 1891, with the co-operation of Edward Lascelles from Lake Corrang station at Hopetoun, the use of the pathway from Yellumjip to Mildura as a postal route was investigated.⁵⁰ In making this investigation Noel McKay, editor of the *Sunraysia Daily*, noted that the land was also being crossed with railway survey lines. Whilst talking about a survey line crossing Yellumjip plain he observed that these surveys were in the wrong location and that, ‘all these survey lines (and there were several of them encountered in our week’s trip) were for the most part taken along the old station tracks from one watering point to another.’⁵¹ In following the old station tracks the surveys were following the original Indigenous pathways between water sources and adding another layer of use on the landscape.

The eventual arrival of rail in Mildura in 1903 ended the colonial importance of the Wirrengren-Kulkyne pathway. The process for selecting the rail route to Mildura had been contentious and prolonged. Five different routes were considered. The proposed lines from Jeparit and Hopetoun actually followed the pathway between Yellumjip and Nalkwyne.⁵² In the end the railway ran from Woomelang and simply crossed the pathway at Trinita, north of Ouyen. But trial surveys were carried out of all the proposed rail lines and these cut new tracks across the land, one following part of the pathway itself.⁵³ In 1919 a separate rail line was opened from Ouyen to Murrayville with a station at Tiega, further removing the need to use the Indigenous pathway for goods transport.

The final impact on the pathway came in the 1910s and 1920s with the resettlement of much of the nineteenth-century pastoral land for agricultural use under closer settlement or soldier settlement programs. The land was broken up into smaller packages and new roads were laid out to service the farms. Some of these new roads aligned themselves with the bullock dray route, further obscuring the pathway. The land around Tiega was settled in the 1910s and that south of the Kulkyne in the 1920s. The Calder Highway was also pushed through to Mildura in the early 1920s.⁵⁴ Initially one part of the highway, now known as the Old Calder Highway, followed the bullock dray route and part of the Indigenous pathway to Lake Hattah. With the availability of the highway the pathway's usefulness for other than the most local of purposes was gone.

By the late 1920s the pathway's location had been obscured by the presence of rail reservations and tracks servicing the new farms and the water resources on which it had depended were further converted into farm dams. With its passing out of use and the catastrophic reduction in the populations of Indigenous communities, knowledge of the line the pathway followed gradually faded. References remained in literature to the 'aboriginal track' and Kenyon even reproduced one of White's maps of the pathway but labelled it as an exploration route.⁵⁵ Most recently in 1986 Ward noted that the bullock dray route crossed the Calder Highway at Trinta.⁵⁶ When questioned today Indigenous people and park rangers know the pathway existed, but not its location.

E.R. White's Maps

Having surveyed the pathway in 1851 White produced two maps in 1852 that captured his work and showed its location. First he produced a map titled 'Rough Plan of Survey of Mallee Scrub' (the 'Rough Plan') that has his signature and the date 9 August 1852.⁵⁷ This map encompasses all of White's survey work in the entire Mallee. The Wirrengren-Kulkyne pathway is shown, but is only a small piece of the overall map. It names four points along the pathway: Yellumjip, Tarreeje (now known as Tiega), Nalkwyne and Mt Jenkins and marks a number of small plains.

The 'Rough Plan' also shows pathways or routes south along the Wimmera River and west into South Australia that converge on Wirrengren. The pathway to South Australia is marked in places with 'native wells' and corresponds to a number of soaks that Ross identified heading west from Werringen.⁵⁸ It may represent another Indigenous pathway used by the Tattiara people to come to the tribal meetings at Wirrengren. Consequently, in the areas that it can, the 'Rough Plan' provides support to Massola's original proposition about the centrality of Wirrengren and his map showing pathways converging on the location.

White also produced a second map, divided into four separate sheets, covering his chain survey from Lake Hindmarsh to the Murray. He titled it 'Plan of Survey from Lake Hindmarsh to Lake Moornpul' (the 'Plan of Survey') and it is also signed and dated 9 August 1852.⁵⁹ These four map sheets are on a much larger scale and name the same locations as the 'Rough Plan', but show much more detail: additional grass plains, sandhills and topography.

Of the four sheets contained in the 'Plan of Survey', Sheets 2, 3 and 4 record the Wirrengren-Kulkyne pathway. They are held by the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) but White put all identifying material on Sheet 1 and only gave the other sheets a sheet number. The absence of date, title and signature has subsequently led to the authorship and provenance of Sheets 2, 3 and 4 becoming confused. They are not attributed to White in the PROV catalogue and are undated or incorrectly dated and confusingly labelled. Sheets 2, 3 and 4 have been respectively titled, 'Wimmera20A; Outlet Creek; Conga Wonga Ginap Tyamoonna Wyperfeld', 'Wimmera21; Outlet Creek; Ginap Tyamoonna Wyperfeld' and 'Wimmera22; Lake Mournpall Nalkwyne: Brockie Mournpoul Yelwell'.⁶⁰ Two are undated and the third, 20A, is dated 1881, the date on which a copy was made of the original. Someone has,

though, written 'White 1852' in pencil on Wimmera22. Their similarity in content to the 'Rough Plan', their consecutive sheet labels and their connection to Sheet 1 makes it certain that these are the work of White in 1852.

A simple visual inspection of both the 'Rough Plan' and the 'Plan of Survey' shows that they contain enough recognisable detail to allow them to be compared with current maps and the pathway marked on the maps to be located. Some features that White labelled such as Lake Mournpall, Yellumjip, Tiega and Mt Jenkins are readily identifiable, and other unnamed features such as the Lendrook Plain, Lake Agnes, Wirrengren itself and Lake Brockie are also easily recognisable.

There are limitations to both sources. The 'Rough Plan' is on a very small scale and, by its title, does not purport to be an accurate map. The 'Plan of Survey' is not a map of the pathway but a map of the line that White surveyed as he followed the pathway. They map different, but very closely related, objects. This is reflected in the 'Rough Plan' and the 'Plan of Survey' occasionally showing a slightly different path in relation to the same feature. The 'Plan of Survey' seems to pass through high points that would have been good for surveying and taking theodolite bearings but not the natural line of a walking path.

There are also sections in both maps, but more noticeably in the 'Plan of Survey' because of its scale, where the marked line is perfectly straight for lengths of up to four miles, an improbable route. These straight lines often occur in what is now sandy, trackless national park or state forest and may reflect areas where White could not find a track, as it had been blown away or washed out. Consequently, the maps may at times only be inferring, not recording, parts of the pathway.

These uncertainties and limitations would be resolvable if White's 'Black Books', the notes he took whilst conducting the survey, were available. Pritchard's 'Black Books' of his mapping of Lake Mournpall, which are held by the PROV, show his survey line and its relationship to the lake's shoreline precisely. White's 'Black Books' are not, however, part of the PROV collection and appear to have been lost. It has been presumed that they went to London in 1914 when South Australia challenged White's mapping of the Victoria/South Australia border in the Privy Council and were never returned.⁶¹

Despite these limitations, White's maps provide a sufficient basis for identifying with reasonable accuracy, within just a few metres at some

points, or perhaps one or two hundred metres at others, the line taken by the Wirrengren-Kulkyne pathway. Geo-referencing of the maps is feasible and combined with a field survey could accurately re-establish the pathway's location.

The land across which the Wirrengren-Kulkyne pathway runs is now akin to a palimpsest with different land uses leaving different markings with different meanings layered over each other. With the appropriate Indigenous cultural permission and involvement, White's maps, the known history of land use, geo-referencing and field survey, there is the potential to peel back these layers to reveal underneath modern roads, farms and dams the original path and the water management that supported it—a cultural artefact of immense significance and value.

Notes

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- 2 See Bill Gammage, *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 2012, generally for the nature of Aboriginal land management, specifically for the use of fire in the Mallee as a land management tool, pp. 201, 226.
- 3 Dale Kerwin, *Aboriginal Dreaming Paths and Trading Routes: The Colonisation of The Australian Economic Landscape*, Brighton, Sussex Academic, 2012.
- 4 Aldo Massola, *Journey to Aboriginal Victoria*, Adelaide, Rigby, 1969, p. 113.
- 5 Anne Ross and the Land Conservation Council, Victoria, *Aboriginal Land Use in the Mallee District of North Western Victoria: Prepared for the Land Conservation Council of Victoria*. Melbourne, Land Conservation Council, 1986, p. 42.
- 6 Kerwin, p. 103.
- 7 Aldo Massola, 'Aboriginal Campsites on Wyperfeld National Park and Pine Plains Station', *Victorian Naturalist*, vol. 86, no. 3, 1969, p. 75.
- 8 Ian D. Clark, *Place Names and Land Tenure: Windows into Aboriginal Landscapes: Essays in Victorian Aboriginal History* (1st edition), Melbourne, Heritage Matters, 1998, pp. 147ff.
- 9 Aldo Massola and John Gollings, *Bunjil's Caves: Myths, Legends and Superstitions of the Aborigines of South-east Australia*, Melbourne, Lansdowne Press, 1968, pp. 4–8.
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- 11 Massola, *Journey to Aboriginal Victoria*, p. 123.
- 12 Massola, 'Aboriginal Campsites', p. 76.
- 13 Kerwin, p. 12.
- 14 Aldo Massola, 'An Avoca River-Wirrengren Plain Aboriginal Trade Route', *Victorian Naturalist*, vol. 90, no. 5, 1973, p. 126.

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- 17 Ross, *Aboriginal Land Use*, p. 49.
- 18 Norman B. Tindale and Rhys Jones, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia: Their Terrain, Environmental Controls, Distribution, Limits, and Proper Names*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1974, Map 2, SE Sheet.
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- 20 Massola, 'Aboriginal Campsites', p. 72.
- 21 Massola, *Journey to Aboriginal Victoria*, p. 123.
- 22 Massola, 'An Avoca River-Wirrengren Plain Aboriginal Trade Route', p. 126.
- 23 Aldo Massola, *The Aborigines of South-eastern Australia: As They Were*, Melbourne, Heinemann, 1971, p. 71.
- 24 J. Beilby, *Port Phillip Gazette*, 29 November and 1 December 1849, quoted in Alfred Kenyon and Historical Society of Victoria, *The Story of the Mallee*, Melbourne, Wilke & Co., for Ian A. Wood and Keith C. Hofmaier, 1982, p. 35.
- 25 PROV, VPRS 8168/P0002, Unit 3604 Osgood Pritchard, 'From Kulkynne to Wemen', 1851.
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- 47 Victoria, *Report of the Crown Lands Commission of Enquiry on Both the Agricultural and Pastoral Occupation of the Public Lands to be Instituted on the Expiration of the Present Act at the Close of 1880*, Melbourne, John Ferres, Government Printer, 1879, p. 412. The report refers to a meeting at Yarrajee, which is a corruption of the original Indigenous name Tarrajee, which in turn became Tiega.
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‘The Remarkable Disappearance of Messrs Gellibrand and Hesse’. What Really Happened in 1837? A Re-examination of the Historical Evidence

Paul Michael F Donovan, Ian D Clark and Fred (David) Cahir

Abstract

In 1837, Joseph Tice Gellibrand and George Brooks Legrew Hesse disappeared near Birregurra. Popular history says that their bodies were never found and their deaths are a mystery. However, letters, records, contemporary newspaper articles and early histories outline the disappearance and discovery of the bodies. Isaac Hebb’s history in the 1880s refuted primary sources, claiming that the whereabouts of the bodies were never found. This article re-examines early historical documents, many of which Hebb may not have had access to or opted not to include in his work. We critique Hebb’s analysis and reinvestigate the story.

In 1837, Joseph Tice Gellibrand (See Figure 1) and George Brooks Legrew Hesse, went missing near present-day Birregurra while exploring the western district of Port Phillip. Places such as Gellibrand River, Mount Gellibrand and Mount Hesse were subsequently named after the principals of this event.¹ Popular history says that their bodies were never found and the nature of their deaths is shrouded in mystery.² Meanwhile letters, records, contemporary newspaper articles and early histories such as G. T. Lloyd’s, outline the disappearance and discovery of the bodies without any sense of mystery.³ The disappearance of the two men became surrounded with mystery and romance in the 1880s following Isaac Hebb’s local history of Colac, which refuted several primary sources describing details of the event.⁴ Hebb’s critique, has led to a common belief that the whereabouts of Gellibrand and Hesse’s bodies were never found. This is illustrative of the tendency, as discussed by Cahir, of 19th century historians to romanticise narratives of colonial progress at the expense of any inclusion of Indigenous perspectives.⁵

This article refutes this belief that the mystery was never solved by re-examining early historical documents, many of which Hebb may not have had access to or opted not to include in his work. To shed some light on the events, we critique Hebb’s analysis of the primary sources. We conclude that Gellibrand and Hesse died in the Otway Ranges and

were buried between the Gellibrand River and the coast. The bodies were later exhumed, one being sent back to Van Diemen's Land and examined by a medical professional, who found it not to be Gellibrand's body, the other was positively identified by Gellibrand's oldest son and sent back to Hobart where its identity was confirmed by his widow. We argue that 19th century histories such as James Bonwick's 1857 *Discovery and Settlement of Port Phillip* and Isaac Hebb's *History of Colac* is the source of the trope of the 'mystery' surrounding the fate of Gellibrand and Hesse.⁶ The evidence presented here offers a solid explanation as to what really happened to Gellibrand and Hesse in 1837. Newspaper articles of the time offer gravity to the role of the Allan Brothers in engaging with Indigenous testimonies. A thorough examination of these has offered crucial evidence to the truth of the story, by cross examination with evidence which alone was inconclusive. The Indigenous voices of this history offer new depth and dimension to the clues. Taking these facts into account, no doubt can remain as to the fate of Gellibrand and Hesse.

In 'The Killing of Charles Franks and the Obliteration of Port Phillip's Convicts', Thomas Rogers cites the case of Gellibrand and Hesse as an example of how history has romanticised the deaths of two British free-settler gentlemen at the expense of the acknowledgement of their ex-convict guide. Rogers argues that Akehurst, the guide of Gellibrand and Hesse's exploration, who came from Captain Pollock's station could have prevented their tragic deaths.⁷ Rogers notes that Gellibrand and Hesse were remembered as having been 'presumed killed by "savages"' while he hypothesises that it is more likely that the two men had died of exposure.⁸ Michael Cannon argues that rumours and romance surrounding their disappearance, and the consequent vengeance meted out to Aboriginal people by search parties, 'inflamed the racial antagonism' between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in the Port Phillip District.⁹

Bruce Pascoe comments on the racial focus of the historical discourse surrounding the incident of two members of the British gentry's disappearance being sold as mysterious. However, he dismisses automatically any inquiry as jumping to the conclusion of 'slaughtered by savages'.¹⁰ Pascoe also discusses the fact that credence is given to Indigenous evidence in this case, exclusively in the instance of the Barabool Wadawurrung who gave evidence against the Gulidjan people, who they claimed admitted to having perpetrated the murders. Pascoe argues that this evidence was readily accepted by the search party, as it

was convenient to their commercial interests in removing the Gulidjan people from their land in order to occupy it for pastoral purposes. Pascoe also outlines Henry Allan's account of events, raising the question as to why historians such as Pescott and Hebb would omit this version of events which hold such crucial evidence.¹¹

In "Friendly" and "Hostile" Aboriginal Clans: The Search for Gellibrand and Hesse, Rogers also omits this account in his version of what happened to Gellibrand and Hesse, leading again to the conclusion that the bodies were never found. Rogers maintains this conclusion in his article "Friendly" and "Hostile" Aboriginal Clans: The Search for Gellibrand and Hesse'.¹² This erroneous conclusion is challenged below in the context of this and other evidence, which explains that the bodies were found, Gellibrand was positively identified, and his body sent home to Tasmania. In both these articles, Rogers has extensively studied different aspects of the disappearance of Gellibrand and Hesse, but neither examines in detail what happened to the bodies of the two men after their deaths, or the specific circumstances of their murder and as a result, he promotes the traditional understanding that the bodies were never found. Here we examine evidence to the contrary.

Who were Joseph Tice Gellibrand and George Brooks Legrew Hesse?

Joseph Tice Gellibrand was born in London in 1786.¹³ He studied law at the Bar in London and was admitted as a barrister in 1816. He was attorney-general of Van Diemen's Land from August 1823 until February 1826.¹⁴ Gellibrand was instrumental in the establishment of the Port Phillip Association that settled Port Phillip.¹⁵ He was the author of John Batman's controversial treaty with the Indigenous peoples of Port Phillip.¹⁶ George Thomas Lloyd describes Gellibrand as a 'spirited colonist and eminent barrister... with a more than ordinary share of energy and enterprise... and moral influence'.¹⁷

James Bonwick echoed these sentiments describing Gellibrand as:

A man of sterling and upright character, and held in high repute by all ranks and classes of society... one of the most earnest and faithful friends the natives of Tasmania and Port Phillip ever had... one of the first to show by precept and example that the Blacks were human beings... a defender of the oppressed, champion of freedom, denouncer of wrong... admired for his benevolence ... The loss of so useful and influential leader was a serious blow to the association and deprived the unhappy natives of their best and most powerful friend.¹⁸



Fig. 1 J.T. Gellibrand. In *Historical Photographs Relating to Tasmania / Photographed and Compiled by J.W. Beattie*, Hobart, 1912, no. 66 held in the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales (reference: F996/B).

George Brooks Legrew Hesse was born on 1 July 1798, at Chichester.¹⁹ He gained his B.A. (1823) and M.A. (1826) from Cambridge; and was admitted as a barrister in 1819.²⁰ Hesse leased a property on Elizabeth Street in Hobart in 1831.²¹ Lloyd describes Hesse as ‘a gentleman of estimable character, and first-class attainments in his profession as a solicitor; and who, during his short but successful career in Tasmania, had earned from his many friends, the title of “the honest lawyer.”’²²

‘Romance of the Otways’

James Bonwick writes in 1857 that ‘The most exciting incident of our early times, in connexion with the blacks, was the remarkable disappearance of Messrs. Gellibrand and Hesse.’²³ Similarly, Isaac Hebb’s *History of Colac* refers to the disappearance as: ‘One of the most Romantic incidents connected with the settlement of Port Phillip’. Hebb’s history was written over a twelve-year period and initially published in the *Colac*

Herald in serial form in 1888. Hebb coins the term ‘Romance of the Otways’. He refers to the mystery and stories surrounding this incident as ‘Legendary’ speculating in his opening chapter that Gellibrand and Hesse ‘Were either killed or died of starvation in the Otway Forest’. He argues this was ‘the sensation of the hour...for years afterwards’. Hebb devotes an entire chapter to this ‘mysterious disappearance’. He argues that ‘nothing of a definite or reliable nature was ever discovered to tell to the world how and in what manner these two explorers met their death or the place even where the two unfortunate gentlemen’s remains found a last resting place’. Hebb states that after Akehurst left Gellibrand and Hesse near Birregurra, ‘No white man ever looked upon the face of those two adventurous explorers’.²⁴

Twentieth century accounts of this story such as a newspaper article in the *Argus* in 1909 also claim that it is not known what happened to Gellibrand. The article reports that the story was of great interest in the early colonies and was revived after the turn of the twentieth century.²⁵ The author cites a variety of historical sources, arguing that there was doubt as to the authenticity of the identification of the bodies.

Gellibrand, Hesse and Akehurst departed from Dr Alexander Thompson’s station, ‘Kardinia’ in Belmont near Geelong, following the Barwon River to the junction with the Leigh, bordering Wadawurrung and Gulidjan countries, with the intention to follow the Leigh River in search of George Russell’s station at Shelford. They had intended to return from there to Captain Swanston’s station near Werribee, however the party made a mistake at the junction of the Barwon and Leigh rivers. They continued following the Barwon believing it was the Leigh. Gellibrand was convinced that the Warrion Hills near Lake Colac, were the You Yangs. Gellibrand and Hesse, had a disagreement with Akenhurst, their guide who had been a shepherd from Pollock’s station, who left the party near Birregurra and returned home.²⁶ Lloyd reports the argument in a lengthy dialogue, apparently relayed to him by Akenhurst at Captain Pollock’s station. After two weeks, when no word of Gellibrand and Hesse had arrived, three search parties were sent out, none of which came upon the missing men.²⁷

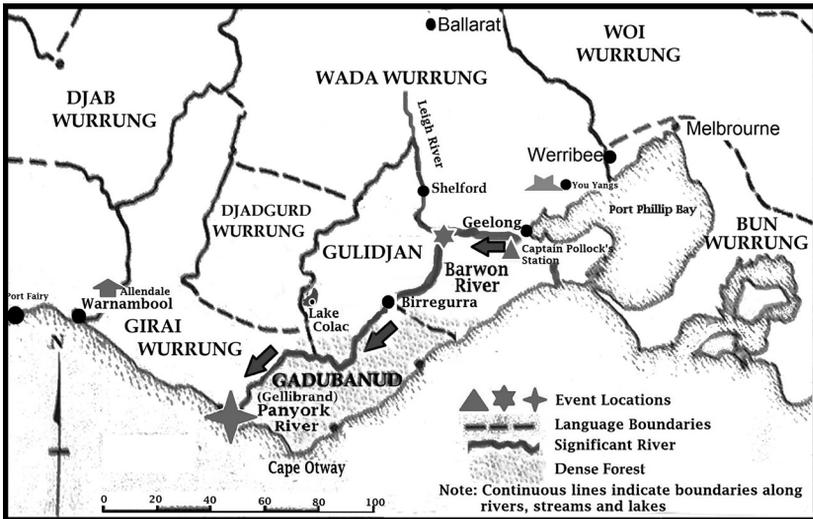


Fig. 2 A map illustrating the direction of the journey taken by Gellibrand and Hesse. Note the site of the mishap at the junction of the Barwon and Leigh Rivers, and the site where the bodies were discovered near the mouth of the Gellibrand River. Created by PMF Donovan, based on Clark, 1990.

Thomas Roadknight describes the first of three searches, which went to Colac and Corangamite and headed north to Buninyong rather than heading into the Otways, despite knowing that Akehurst, the guide, left them 'still following the Barwon, in the direction of the Cape Otway Forest.' The search was called off at Buninyong when it proved fruitless.²⁸

In 1837, Wadawurrung people were employed as guides to the search party and implicated individuals of the Gulidjan people as the murderers.²⁹ Consequently vengeance was carried out which resulted in the erroneous execution of a Gulidjan man named Tanapia, later found not to have been involved in the murder. The Gulidjan people on the shores of Lake Colac at the time were in possession of several of Gellibrand's personal effects and Tanapia admitted to having speared two horses matching the descriptions of those taken out by Gellibrand and Hesse.³⁰ This would agree with the fact that John Allan, in the article in the *Argus*, states that Gellibrand explained to the Baradh gundidj people of Girai wurrung country, that he had turned loose his horse further north as the Otway forest was too dense for riding.

W. L. Koenig writes in his 1933 *History of the Winchelsea Shire* that when accompanied by the Wodouro (a family of Wadawurrung people

from Winchelsea) the party attacked a tribe of Colijan (Gulidjan) people on 15 August, 1837, took a prisoner and found those people to be in possession of a pocket book, night cap and riding breeches, which they believed to belong to Gellibrand.³¹ If Gellibrand and Hesse turned their horses loose entering the Otway forest about 50 kilometres north of the present day Gellibrand River, the horses with their equipment were wandering in the vicinity of Lake Colac in Gulidjan country.

A Rescue by Indigenous People

The settlers John and Henry Allan of Allandale made an expedition into Giraiwurrung country to the Gellibrand River (see Figure 2) guided by Baradh gundidj people where he reportedly discovered the skeleton of Gellibrand. Allan spoke Giraiwurrung perfectly and was able to communicate with the Indigenous people. According to Allan their description of this man matched the physical description of Gellibrand. The skeleton was dressed in clothing that was consistent with what Gellibrand was last seen wearing - breeches with leather straps, a wide leather belt round his waist, a brace of pistols and watch in his pockets. The account describes that the white man had come from the north, through roughly 30 kilometres of thick scrub, and that his friend was dying of starvation up the river. The article describes that the body was buried under his Miam Miam (house) with his knees raised, his back lying roughly 30 centimetres below the surface, and then the dwelling burned above the grave.³²

George Allan, son of one of the Allan brothers, made a statement in the *Geelong Advertiser* of 10 June 1844 with reference to the 'testimony of the natives', that a white man 'came down the river (which runs north and south to Moonlight Head, and there discharges itself), between six and seven years ago, and lived with them about two months'. The author argues that, 'the prima facie evidence of the correctness of the supposition that the discovered skeletons are their actual remains is too strong to be doubted'. Evidence to support this is in letters between Allan and a 'professional report of a medical gentleman' in examining the skull, which agrees with the case of the teeth matching those of Gellibrand.³³ The reference here to two skeletons is notable because the key reason Hebb uses to refute this version of events is that only one skeleton was ever found.

John Allan took the skull and some other personal effects from the grave back to his station. The skull was missing a front tooth, as was Gellibrand. The Giraiwurrung version of events report that the

man was living among the tribe for two months until attacked by other Aborigines while sitting in camp mending his trousers. The dead white man had given a statement to the Giraiwurrung people who came to his rescue that he had crossed through the Otways from the direction in which Gellibrand was last seen, that he was in possession of Gellibrand's goods, and that his missing tooth and gold filling matched those of Gellibrand, therefore 'there is little doubt as to the identity of the body.'³⁴ Giraiwurrung people had 'lost no time in mentioning the circumstance [of the bodies of Messrs Gellibrand and Hesse] to the settlers in the surrounding country', however the settlers had dismissed the information 'owing to a want of confidence in the natives.'³⁵

Superintendent Charles Joseph La Trobe mentions in his personal correspondence in 1846, that he had previously camped near 'what there is every reason to believe was poor Gellibrand's grave.'³⁶ Several sources claim that Henry Allan of Allandale showed the grave sites to the Superintendent La Trobe while he was on an expedition to find the site of the future Cape Otway lighthouse in 1846, but no official record of this exists.³⁷

Had the settlers taken the word of Indigenous people seriously, there would never have been the 'mystery' of the whereabouts of Gellibrand and Hesse. The irony is when a search party was sent out at great expense to Mrs Gellibrand, it was Indigenous people such as the Wadawurrung of the Barrabool Hills, Tommy from Allandale station, the Wadawurrung man named Beruke (later named Gellibrand) who joined the Native Police, who were commissioned as trackers, and not local Indigenous people with direct knowledge of the two missing men.³⁸ However this is likely because the Giraiwurrung were not as well known to the organisers of the search parties. Perhaps the search parties believed that any Indigenous tracker would have the knowledge and skills to find the two men in the Otways.

The information regarding the whereabouts of the bodies originated from a Giraiwurrung woman from the 'Barratt country' Tribe [near present day Gellibrand River], who was married to a Bethengall man of Giraiwurrung country. The woman was present at the murder and burial of Gellibrand and was able to positively identify the body. The woman, who unfortunately goes unnamed throughout this narrative, yet much of it is based upon her eyewitness account, had known Mr Gellibrand as he had lived among her people, who had built him a home among theirs, prior to his murder. She describes the configuration of

Mr Hesse's body as she saw it in the river 'about fifteen miles distant... lying face uppermost, untouched by either dogs or birds of prey'. She recounts that when Gellibrand had first come into contact with her tribe, he communicated that his friend [Hesse] was in trouble, but attempts by the Baradh gundidj people to rescue him were unsuccessful as he had already died.³⁹

Mr Gellibrand lived among the Baradh gundidj people 'on terms of perfect friendship' for two months, during which time his hosts made every effort to make him as comfortable as possible, 'administered to his wants' and shared their food and resources with him.⁴⁰ The woman distinguishes between the 'Barratt country' people (probably the Baradh gundidj people of Giraiwurrung country), to whom the woman belonged, the 'Bethengall tribe' (possibly the Badadgil gundidj who lived on Allan's station on the Hopkins River in Giraiwurrung country), to whom the woman was married, and the 'Panyork River Tribe' (Gadabanud) by whom Gellibrand was allegedly murdered (see Figure 3). John Allan held the woman's story in such regard, as to act upon her account, sending his brother Henry to meet with seven Baradh gundidj including the individual who buried Gellibrand and mourned over his grave, and search for Gellibrand's skeleton.⁴¹

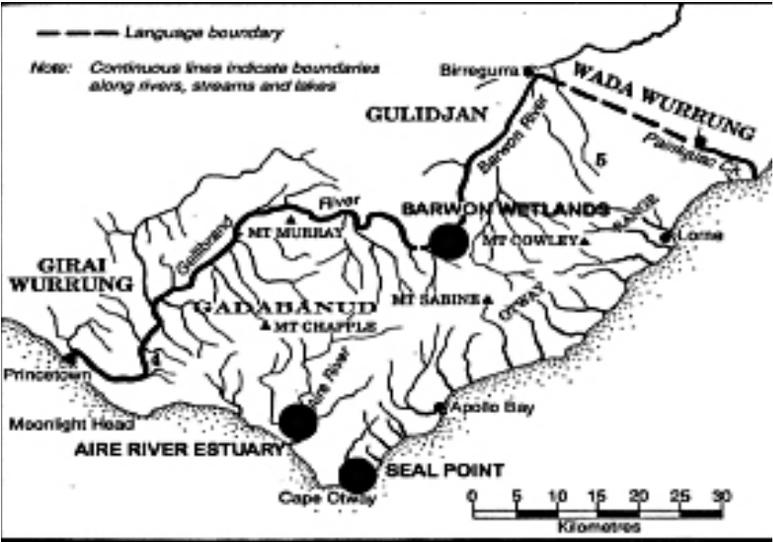


Fig. 3 Gadabanud Language Map bordering Giraiwurrung and Wadawurrung countries. Clark 1990.

An Attack by Outsiders

The Baradh gundidj woman described that the harmony between Gellibrand and her people was interrupted by conflict between feuding Indigenous peoples. She reports that the ‘Panyork River Tribe’ (Gadabanud see Figure 2), at first attempted to persuade Gellibrand to leave the Baradh gundidj, and being met with resistance, later returned, and attacked and killed him whilst he was sitting at camp mending his trousers while his tribe were out gathering food.⁴² According to the woman, one assailant seized Gellibrand about his throat, another held him by inserting fingers into his nostrils, while a third repeatedly jumped on his chest killing him. The Baradh gundidj mourned Gellibrand, exhibiting their traditional mourning customs of ‘painting themselves white, and cutting their foreheads, &c.’ This indicates that the Baradh gundidj had in the space of two months, come to see Gellibrand as one of their own. This happened frequently in the colonies as discussed by Clark and Cahir.⁴³ The woman outlined the manner in which the Baradh gundidj buried Gellibrand’s body and threw his pistols and gold watch into a creek by his grave.⁴⁴

The July article from the *Hobart Times* states that:

[T]he murderers of Mr Gellibrand were two men belonging to a very small tribe, then residing near the spot where the murder was committed. The tribe never exceeded seven men in number, and is now reduced to five; but the two principals in the bloody deed are yet alive, and could easily be captured. As a Bill is about being passed to admit the unsworn testimony of the aborigines in certain cases, and the tribe make no secret of the murder, there would be little or no difficulty in securing a conviction.⁴⁵

This would concur with the rivalry between the Gadubanud and their immediate neighbours to their east and west who refused to enter their territory for fear of the ‘Mainmait’ or ‘wild blacks’ as outlined by Clark.⁴⁶ This is in keeping with several accounts of the Gadubanud tribe, which identify them as numbering between seven and twenty-one. They were outlaws of the Gulidjan and Djargurd wurrung groups, who gathered as fugitives, inhabiting the territory between Blanket Bay and Parker Inlet on one side, to the Aire and Johanna rivers and probably to the Gellibrand on the other, for many generations.⁴⁷ The Gadubanud were also widely reported to murder non-Indigenous settlers who entered

their territory and eat their kidney fat.⁴⁸ Bonwick's history of Henry Allan's excursion into the Otways with Superintendent C.J. La Trobe, reports that the two white explorers who ventured into this territory were attacked and killed by young men from the area. Bonwick states that Allan was satisfied that these men were Gellibrand and Hesse.⁴⁹

This account is confirmed in 1862 by Lloyd whose account makes no mention of mystery or romance, but outlines in intimate detail the expedition from the point of view of the guide Akenhurst. Lloyd's account also confirms the Indigenous accounts, to which Lloyd attributes an 'air of truthfulness', the finding of the skulls, which he describes as being European and which matched the particulars of those of Gellibrand and Hesse, and other personal effects.⁵⁰

An Exhumation of Bones and Belongings

Henry Allan was the discoverer of Gellibrand's body near the mouth of the Gellibrand River. According to Henry Allan's account in the *Hobart Courier* the old Baradh gundidj man who pointed out Gellibrand's grave described how he had placed the body, his hat and trousers under his head. Allan excavated the 35 centimetre deep grave and the skeleton was exactly as the Baradh gundidj man had described; under the skull was 'part of a black beaver hat, part of a pair of trousers lined with leather, several buttons, and under the wrist bone of one arm a pearl button.'⁵¹ He attempted, unsuccessfully, to retrieve the pistols and watch, but was prevented by a storm. The Baradh gundidj search party pointed out the location of the grave of George Hesse, which due to the inclement weather, they promised they would help him find later and opted not to exhume the remains of Gellibrand at that point. Henry Allan took Gellibrand's skull from the grave, which was 'missing one of the front and three of the back teeth; the rest are very fine, rather large, and regularly set, with the exception of one in the lower jaw, which is a little overlocked.' The article states that if the accounts of the Indigenous informants and Messrs. Allan are true and correct, that 'there can exist no doubt but that the skeleton found by Mr John Allan was Gellibrand.'⁵² Allan claimed to have known the murderers of Gellibrand, however restitution was never sought by the crown or the Gellibrand family against those men.

This account gained currency in the popular history of the colony throughout the nineteenth century, as confirmed in Garryowen's *Chronicle of Melbourne*, which reports that 'Gellibrand's Skeleton

was found some months after and identified by the fact that of one of his teeth having been stuffed with gold; and one of the teeth in the discovered remains was in that condition.⁵³ Garryowen further goes on to state that there was some speculation as to the identity of the body, on the grounds that when Henry Allen (meaning Allan), the settler on whose account the 1844 article was written, contacted the Gellibrand family to report the discovery of the deceased Gellibrand, they did not respond, even though the teeth of the body matched the description of Gellibrand. Also, according to Garryowen, Allen (Allan) buried the bones, but kept Gellibrand's skull hanging suspended from the ceiling in his kitchen, where it remained until May 1847, when he sent it to Gellibrand's family in Hobart. The article from 1909 reports that later generations of the Gellibrand family were sceptical as to the identity of the skeleton.⁵⁴

The *Argus* article from 1909 features an account of Mrs M. Jones of Warragul, who in 1848 went to visit her brother-in-law (F. P. Stevens) in Port Fairy. There she claims to have seen a box containing a skeleton reported to be that of Gellibrand.⁵⁵ This would have been around the time Allan posted the remains to the Gellibrand family. Jones describes the skull in detail and confirms the missing tooth as in the Allan account. Jones claims that Mrs Gellibrand identified this skull by the teeth. This supports the Garryowen account and agrees with Hebb's history that Allan kept a skull he knew to be that of Gellibrand hanging from the ceiling in his kitchen for three years before sending it back to Hobart. The same article reports that in 1847 Gellibrand's son had come to the mainland and was guided by Henry Allan to the site of the grave and took his father's bones back to Hobart.⁵⁶ Hebb describes that Allan hung the skull in his kitchen in 1884, and the following year, guided Gellibrand's oldest son to the site of the grave, where the body and other personal effects were positively identified by the son and also by the Archdeacon and Mrs Braim, who had known Gellibrand well. According to Hebb, the body was then shipped back to Hobart in 1885. While there is a forty-year discrepancy in these dates, perhaps due to typographical errors in the reportage, or by error on Hebb's part, the stories agree that Gellibrand's body was positively identified and sent home.

A letter from Thomas Lloyd Gellibrand, son of J. T. Gellibrand, to Charles Swanston documents the despatch of the bones which he had received by courier and believed to be those of his father. Dr E.S.P.

Bedford was appointed on 16 August, 1847 to examine the bones.⁵⁷ A newspaper article in the *Camperdown Chronicle* in 1888 contains a statement from W. Gellibrand, another of J.T. Gellibrand's sons, explaining that the outcome of the examination in 1847 was inconclusive due to doubt regarding the height of the skeleton and the description of the skull.⁵⁸ The body viewed by Mrs Jones in Port Fairy the following year matched the description of Gellibrand's teeth. This may indicate that the first body sent to Hobart by the Allan brothers was that of George Hesse.

Hebb's Analysis of the Sources

Isaac Hebb's *History of Colac*, being written over a twelve-year period and initially published in the *Colac Herald* in serial form in 1888, was written in the context of other romantic histories of the British settlement of Port Phillip and the colony of Victoria written in the 1880s, such as Rolf Boldrewood's *Old Melbourne Memories* and Garryowen's *The Chronicles of Melbourne*.⁵⁹ These tended to romanticise the players in colonial history as heroic pioneers. Hebb bases his construction of the Gellibrand myth or the 'Romance of the Otways' on his analysis of several sources including an article in the *True Colonist* of 19 May 1837, G. T. Lloyd's account, and James Bonwick's 1857 *Discovery and Settlement of Port Phillip*.

The article in the *True Colonist* of 19 May 1837, describes how in Geelong on 18 April of that year, an Indigenous man (presumably Wadawurrung from Barabool), had the day previous come from the west, describing the massacre of two white men by the Gulidjan people. His claim was complete with the names of the murderers, details of their attack, and its precise location. Based on this information an expedition set out for Lake Colac. In this process, the party met with a Wadawurrung war party bound to retaliate upon the Gulidjan as restitution for the murders. The parties proceeded together, discovering the tracks of horses which matched those of Gellibrand and Hesse. They were followed as far as Lough Calvert (reported in the article as nearly dry), and from there followed an Indigenous path to Lake Colac, where a man named Tanapia, who was accused of being one of the murderers, was captured.

The article describes that Tanapia confessed to having found the bodies on the north shore of the lake, partly stripped and thrown them into the lake. The article also reports that Tanapia confessed to having speared the horses who galloped off, struck with spears. This explains

why in Koenig's version of events, the Gulidjan were in possession of some of the personal effects of the missing men, however Koenig does not mention the two bodies thrown into the lake. Hebb explains this by reminding readers of the dangers learnt of during the Tasmanian 'Black War' of taking accusations between warring tribes implicating each other in crimes.

The 1837 article in the *True Colonist* also reports that during the interrogation of Tanapia, a Gulidjan woman was killed by the Wodouro while hiding in the reeds of Lake Colac, and Tanapia himself was then ceremonially speared to death. The party entered the reeds to search for the bodies of Gellibrand and Hesse, but soon discovered that they were within reach of Gulidjan spears before they were seen, and opted to retreat.

Hebb argues that no evidence came to light after the publication of this article to verify the claims it made as to the bodies being stripped and thrown into the lake, and points out that the testimony given to implicate Tanapia and the Gulidjan people in the murder was given by the Wadawurrung of Barabool Hills with whom the Gulidjan were at enmity. This accusation, according to Hebb, 'may, no doubt, be set down solely to the tribal jealousy and ill-will of their more ferocious neighbors[sic]'.⁶⁰ Rogers echoes this sentiment, and discusses how early free settlers of Port Phillip categorised the Aboriginal peoples of the District, and how local Aboriginal clans might have utilised this search party for their own political ends. Hebb then critiques Lloyd's version of the events that describe Gellibrand and Hesse arriving at the camp of 'some of the natives' – Hebb doesn't say which natives – but that both men died shortly after their arrival, from hunger and exhaustion.⁶¹ Excepting the claim that Gellibrand lived among the Baradh gundidj for only two days, rather than several months, and the omission of the murder,⁶² Lloyd's version of this story matches that of the Baradh gundidj woman from the 1844 article from the *Hobart Courier*.⁶³ Hebb refutes this account on the grounds that the story describes two men, yet he claims that no account of Mr Hesse's body was ever recorded, and therefore, that this eyewitness account must be erroneous. Hebb never references the article reporting two skeletons being exhumed or the article explaining that the Baradh gundidj knew where the second body was, yet were unable to obtain it due to the storm.⁶⁴ Notably, Lloyd describes two skulls having been found.

Why, when the details of this case were well known up until Hebb's works, were they still widely disputed, long after the discovery of the body? Why was there still a claim that the death was a mystery and the bodies never found? The Allan brothers were respected figures in their communities both by the hierarchy of the colony and the local Indigenous people. John Allan spoke fluent Giraiwurrung and was able to collect testimony from eyewitnesses to the murder.⁶⁵ One possible reason for this case to be considered unsolved, is that the Aboriginal testimonies were given in a context where their evidence was inadmissible in colonial courts. Hebb's claim that 'no reliable evidence was ever found' would suggest that earlier accounts from the Baradh gundidj clan were disregarded. That would be to say that the descriptions of the Baradh gundidj and their confirmation that the body was in fact that of Gellibrand, is not supporting evidence, and neither are the personal effects along with the body, watch, pistols and buttons described in the article. It is important that while Hebb refers to this article, he omits the details offered by the accounts of the Indigenous people which explicitly outline the details of the final hours of Gellibrand and Hesse's lives and the circumstances of their deaths, in favour of a story of an unsolved mystery.

The author of the 1909 article in the *Argus*, claims that his grandparents, who knew Gellibrand and Hesse, and were involved in the search, doubted the skeleton found at Gellibrand River was Gellibrand's body, thinking it instead to be George Hesse.⁶⁶ Dr Bedford confirmed that this was probably not Gellibrand.⁶⁷ The author explains that his grandmother was on good terms with the Indigenous people on the border of Gulidjan and Wadawurrung countries, who claimed that they had not killed Gellibrand and Hesse, but had attributed the deaths to devils in the Otway ranges.⁶⁸ This is not to say that Gellibrand was not murdered by Aborigines, rather, being that he had lived with the Baradh gundidj and was on friendly terms with them and the Wadawurrung, the Boonwurrung and the Woiwurrung, only that he was not killed by those particular Aborigines.⁶⁹

Perhaps oversight of the fact that the area discussed encompasses five Indigenous countries who were at enmity with each other, contributed to the confusion as to who killed Gellibrand and Hesse. The 'romance of the mystery' trope in this case can be attributed largely to Isaac Hebb and James Bonwick. Hebb collated several reliable

sources of evidence on and critiqued them to dispel the evidence to build a narrative of mystery. Bonwick referred to the disappearance and the erroneous restitution, but did not explore the Baradh gundidj account. Hebb made several oversights, including the oral testimonies of Indigenous peoples.

Cahir discusses the difficulty with incorporating evidence from Indigenous oral histories into mainstream history which ‘traditionally ... have deleted or down played [Indigenous oral tradition which] as a source of data has been relegated into the precincts of folklore.’ This difficulty is partially responsible for the lack of credence given to Indigenous testimonies in this and other cases, resulting in an under-representation of Indigenous voices in colonial history. Cahir argues that ‘[t]he relationship between power, racism, and history in Australian histories is clearly illustrated by many historians.’⁷⁰

All sources presented here agree on the following facts, with some variations omitting one part or another from the Allan brothers’ account: Gellibrand was ‘last seen alive by white people’ with Hesse around Birregurra, following the Barwon into the Otways on 22 February, 1837.⁷¹ They followed the Barwon River mistaking it for the Leigh, having missed the river junction, releasing their horses and marching through 30 kilometres of thick Otway rainforest where they met the Baradh gundidj people of Giraiwurrung country. Some weeks later, unable to save Hesse, Gellibrand lived with the Baradh gundidj people until he was murdered by Gadubanud people near the mouth of Gellibrand River while his hosts were away hunting. His body was buried on Giraiwurrung country until it was exhumed by the Allan Brothers of Allendale on 23 May 1844.⁷² The skull from Gellibrand’s body hung suspended from the ceiling in Allan’s kitchen until the body was finally posted back to the Gellibrand family in Hobart for a post-mortem examination in around 1847. A second body was sent from Port Fairy the following year. Although the coroner’s findings were inconclusive, the Gellibrand family believed the body examined by Dr Beford in 1848 to have been Hesse. Thus the body, whose teeth matched the description of Gellibrand’s, must be Gellibrand. Therefore, the ‘mystery’ surrounding the fate of Gellibrand and Hesse is born of James Bonwick’s histories and Isaac Hebb’s *History of Colac*.

The evidence presented here offers a solid explanation as to what really happened to Gellibrand and Hesse in 1837. A thorough

examination of newspaper articles of the time, which offer gravity to the role of the Allan Brothers in engaging with Indigenous testimonies, has offered crucial evidence to the truth of the story when cross examined with other evidence which alone was inconclusive. The Indigenous voices of this history offer new depth and dimension to the clues. Taking these facts into account, no doubt can remain as to the fate of Gellibrand and Hesse.

Notes

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- 2 Francis Peter Labillière, *Early History of the Colony of Victoria: From Its Discovery to Its Establishment as a Self Governing Province of the British Empire*, vol. 1. Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1878, Chapter 4; Wilhelm Ludwig Koenig, *The History of the Winchelsea Shire: Winchelsea, Lorne and Birregurra*. Winchelsea: Winchelsea Shire Council, 1933, pp. 82–3; P.C. James, *Gellibrand, Joseph Tice (1792–1837)*, *Australian Dictionary of Biography* 1, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1966; Massola, p. 21.
- 3 Lloyd, pp. 485–9; Les J. Blake, *Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe, Victoriana Series*, no. 1, 1975, pp. 18, 81; *Colonial Times*, 10 July 1844, p. 3; *Geelong Advertiser*, 24 June 1844, p. 2.
- 4 Hebb, pp. 3, 4, 178, 184, 185.
- 5 David (Fred) Cahir, *The Wathawurrung People's Encounters with Outside Forces 1797–1849: A History of Conciliation and Conflict*, Ballarat, University of Ballarat, 2001, pp. 7–12.
- 6 James Bonwick, *Discovery and Settlement of Port Phillip*, Melbourne, George Robertson, 1856; Hebb, pp. 3, 4, 178, 184, 185.
- 7 Akenhurst is also variously referred to as Akers, Acres, sometimes William and sometimes Robert.
- 8 Thomas Rogers, 'The Killing of Charles Franks and the Obliteration of Port Phillip's Convicts', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 87, no. 1 (2016), pp. 126–7.
- 9 Michael Cannon, *Historical Records of Victoria: Foundation Series Vol 2a. The Aborigines of Port Phillip 1835-1839*, vol. 2a Melbourne, 1981, Chapter 10, *The Disappearance of Gellibrand and Hesse*, pp. 271–2.
- 10 Bruce Pascoe, *Convincing Ground: Learning to Fall in Love with Your Country*, Melbourne, Aboriginal Studies Press, 2007, pp. 70–72.
- 11 Trevor Pescott, *The Otways*, Melbourne, Rigby Limited, 1976; Rogers, June 2016 pp. 126–7.
- 12 Thomas Rogers, "'Friendly" and "Hostile", Aboriginal Clans: The Search for Gellibrand and Hess', *History Australia* vol. 13, no. 2, 2016, pp. 275–85.
- 13 Joseph Tice Gellibrand was the second son of William Gellibrand of London and later of South Arm in Van Diemen's Land, and Sophia Louisa, née Hynde. In 1819 he married Isabella Kerby of Lewes, England, who bore him nine children.
- 14 Cannon, p. 271; Enid Campbell, 'Trial by Commission: The Case of Joseph Tice Gellibrand and His Dismissal from Office as Attorney-General in Van Diemens Land', 1989; Joseph

- Tice Gellibrand, 'Proceedings of the Supreme Court before His Honour the Chief Justice', Hobart, 1825.
- 15 Lloyd, pp. 317, 483.
 - 16 James Boyce, *The Founding of Melbourne & the Conquest of Australia*, Melbourne, Black Inc., 2012, pp. 52, 56, 57–73; Lloyd, p. 313; James Bonwick (ed.) *Early Days of Melbourne*, Melbourne, Jas. J. Blundell & Company, 1857, pp. 70–80; Bonwick, *Discovery and Settlement*, pp. 60, 68.
 - 17 Lloyd, p. 483.
 - 18 James Bonwick, *The Wild White Man and the Blacks of Victoria*, Melbourne, Fergusson & Moore, 1863, as cited in Hebb, p. 179.
 - 19 George Brooks Legrew Hesse was the oldest son of Obadiah Legrew Hesse, a barrister, and Margaret Hesse, of Somerset Place, London.
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 - 24 Hebb, p. 4.
 - 25 *Argus*, 13 November 1909, p. 6.
 - 26 Lloyd, pp. 485–9; Henry Gyles Turner, *A History of the Colony of Victoria: From Its Discovery to Its Absorption into the Commonwealth of Australia* vol. 1, Melbourne, Longmans, Green and Co., 1904, pp. 160–1.
 - 27 Lloyd pp. 485–9; Cannon, p. 271, pp. 485–1.
 - 28 Thomas Roadknight, diary entry reproduced in *Argus*, 13 November 1909, p. 6.
 - 29 Cannon pp. 271, 278.
 - 30 Ian D. Clark, *Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria*, Melbourne, Department of Geography & Environmental Science, Monash University, 1990, p. 275.
 - 31 Koenig, pp. 82–3.
 - 32 *Colonial Times*, 10 July 1844, p. 3.
 - 33 *Geelong Advertiser*, 24 June 1844, p. 3.
 - 34 *Colonial Times*, 10 July 1844, p. 3.
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 - 36 Blake pp. 18, 81.
 - 37 Wayne David Knoll, 'The Justification of Joseph Tice Gellibrand: A Thesis: A Return to the Frontier History of Colonial Victoria, with a Focus on Cultural Understanding and Relationship' MA Thesis, University of Melbourne, Australian Centre/ School of Culture and Communication, 2001.
 - 38 John Norman McLeod, 'Letter No 4. To His Excellency C. J. La Trobe, Esq. 18 August 1853,' in *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, Melbourne, Heinemann, 1898; *Argus*, 13 January 1934, p. 10; Cahir pp. 68–70, 138–140; Cannon pp. 271, 278–283; *Argus*, 14 August 1920, p. 6.; *Courier*, 9 August 1844, p. 2; 'Messrs. Gellibrand and Hesse', *The*

- True Colonist Van Diemen's Land Political Despatch, and Agricultural and Commercial*, 19 May 1837, p. 568; Hebb, p. 4; Massola, *Journey*, p. 22; The Wadawurrung man named Gellibrand who joined the Native Police is not the Gulidjan man also named Gellibrand who died of old age on 31 January 1878 Massola; Hebb; William Thomas, No. 13 in *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, pp. 70–72.
- 39 *Courier*, 9 August 1844, p. 2.
- 40 Clark, p. 185
- 41 *Courier*, 9 August 1844, p. 2.
- 42 According to Wayne D. Knoll, the Panyork River, which on Ian D. Clark's spatial organisation map borders Girai Wurrung and Gadubanud Territory, was later named Gellibrand River, in commemoration of this event.
- 43 Ian D. Clark and David A. Cahir, 'Understanding "ngamadjidj": Aboriginal Perceptions of Europeans in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, no. 13, 2011, p. 105.
- 44 *Courier*, 9 August 1844, p. 2.
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- 58 *Camperdown Chronicle*, 22 November 1888, p. 3.
- 59 Hebb; Rolf Boldrewood, *Old Melbourne Memories*, vol. 287, Melbourne, Macmillan and Company, 1896; Finn, *Chronicles*.
- 60 Hebb, p. 184.
- 61 Hebb, p. 185.
- 62 Lloyd, p. 185.
- 63 *Courier*, 9 August 1844, p. 2.
- 64 *Geelong Advertiser*, 24 June 1844, p. 2; *Courier*, 9 August 1844, p. 2.
- 65 Corris, pp. 25–52.
- 66 *Argus*, 13 November 1909, p. 6.
- 67 Crowther, Gellibrand and Bedford, *Letters*.
- 68 *Argus*, 13 November 1909, p. 6.

- 69 Joseph Tice Gellibrand, 'A Memorandum of a Trip to Port Phillip in 1836' in Charles Edward Sayers (ed.), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, Melbourne, pp. 279–99.
- 70 Cahir, pp. 9–16.
- 71 Hebb, p. 4
- 72 *Geelong Advertiser*, 24 June 1844, p. 2.

HISTORICAL NOTE

The Day Georgiana McCrae Got It Wrong

Barbara Minchinton

Abstract

Georgiana McCrae's diary, which was edited and published as Georgiana's Journal by her grandson Hugh McCrae, has been used by generations of researchers as an important resource for the social history of early Melbourne. A curious entry relating to one of Victoria's early surveyors, George Smythe, raised questions that led to detailed research into his background in an effort to verify Georgiana's claims. The results reveal that both Georgiana's entries and her editor's assumptions are not necessarily reliable, providing an excellent example of why diaries and personal memoirs from even the most revered sources need to be approached with a critical eye.

I have been chasing George Smythe on and off for years, so I was quite chuffed to find him mentioned in Paul de Serville's *Port Phillip Gentlemen*.¹ At the same time it was puzzling, because I would never have imagined my George Smythe—bushman-explorer-cum-surveyor—in the esteemed company of de Serville's gentlemen, much less sitting down to dinner with Georgiana McCrae.² As it turned out my instincts were right—it was not my George Smythe being referred to at all. Georgiana McCrae's diary had simply got it wrong. Reaching that conclusion, though, meant challenging my assumptions about revered historical sources and doing some extensive research before experiencing one final, inspired 'aha! I wonder if ...' in the middle of the night, so I should begin my story at the beginning. It starts over a decade before Georgiana's dinner party in 1841.

George Smythe's father Benjamin was a Scottish civil engineer who took his wife and five adult children to Western Australia as part of Thomas Peel's ill-fated emigration scheme.³ In December 1829 Peel's emigrants were offloaded from the *Gilmore* onto the beach near Fremantle, and over the next few months disease and malnutrition took a heavy toll. One of George's sisters, however, had married the Captain of the *Gilmore* at Cape Town on the journey out, and George,

at least, seems to have readily gained employment as a surveyor with the government of the colony, suggesting that the family was not as badly off as some.⁴ Nevertheless, patriarch Benjamin left Swan River for Launceston within eighteen months of arriving, and four weeks later his wife and an unmarried daughter followed.⁵ By then Benjamin had set up his first business in Launceston from his lodgings at the Commercial Tavern. Initially he advertised his talents as ‘GENERAL DRAUGHTSMAN of Surveys, Plans and sections of Bridges, Railways, Tunnels, Canals, Canal Locks, and every other matter connected with Surveying, Civil Engineering and Mechanical Drawing’, but not long afterwards he had decided to set up a school for ‘Young Gentlemen.’⁶ There was obviously a great need for educational establishments catering to what the *Launceston Advertiser* referred to as ‘the middling classes of life’, because (it opined) ‘it is truly distressing to observe the number of persons in this Colony who can neither read nor write. Even persons of substantial property there are, who cannot write their name. We remember hearing of a Coroner’s Jury ... where out of twelve men of respectability, *ten made their mark* to their proceedings.’⁷ So when Benjamin’s wife and daughter Martha arrived from Western Australia the family might have expected to earn a good income as teachers; they set up a complementary school for Young Ladies.⁸ George Smythe obviously came from an accomplished family, although their school(s) never offered to teach a language other than English, suggesting that they were of the middling educated classes rather than breathing the same kind of aristocratic air as Georgiana McCrae. ‘French was to her as a mother tongue,’ wrote Norman Cowper in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, ‘and she was well grounded in Latin and Hebrew’.⁹ In 1833 Henry joined his parents and sister in Launceston, but the following year the family circumstances changed again.¹⁰ Henry launched his own business as a surveyor in Launceston, and Martha went to Sydney in the company of Patricius William Welsh and his wife (remember the name, it becomes significant later in the story), leaving the Smythe parents to run the school on their own.¹¹ Meanwhile, George Smythe remained in Western Australia, exploring and surveying and getting involved in murder cases (more anon).

In 1835 Henry Wilson Hutchinson Smythe, son of Benjamin Smythe and younger brother of George Smythe, created a ‘PLAN of the Town and Suburbs of Launceston, Van Diemen’s Land’ showing

not only ‘the Names of many of the Streets [which] are yet unknown to the Oldest Inhabitants’, but also ‘the situation of places of Worship, Government Buildings, Offices and Stores, Banking Establishments, Auction Marts, Principal Inns, Wharfs, Landing Stairs, &c, &c.’ It is a beautiful piece of work, eventually engraved by ‘Mr Carmichael (the Engraver of Major Mitchell’s Map of New South Wales)’, a copy of which is now proudly displayed and heavily used by visitors researching local history at the Launceston Public Library.¹² But overall the Smythes’ forays into education and business in Launceston were not proving financially successful, despite the extraordinary range of their talents. Henry offered ‘to give lessons in Drawing’ while his business as a land surveyor got going, but the numbers attending Benjamin’s boarding school gradually declined.¹³ In 1838 he attempted to increase his income by offering lunchtime sessions to anyone willing to pay fees; on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays he taught ‘NAVIGATION, the Lunar and Stellar Observations ... Geometry, Trigonometry, and all the sailings, Keeping a Journal and finding the Longitude by the Chronometer’ and ‘Finding the Longitude by Lunar and Stellar Observations’, while on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays there was ‘English Grammar and Composition, Ancient and Modern History, Geography, Astronomy, and the use of Globes’ to be learned.¹⁴ But it was all in vain; early in 1839 Mr and Mrs Smythe closed their Academy and sailed for Sydney.¹⁵ By this time, their daughter Martha had married and had her first child at Parramatta, but she was no longer in New South Wales. In 1836 she had moved to Port Phillip with her husband, Captain William Lonsdale. Governor Bourke had appointed him as Port Phillip’s first police magistrate.

From the beginning of the official Port Phillip settlement, then, George and Henry Smythe’s sister Martha was there amongst the government élite. So, when Governor Bourke needed to increase the number of surveyors in the district it is not surprising to find that Henry Smythe (known more commonly in the official records as ‘H.W.H. Smythe’) was quick to apply, and the first to be appointed. He took up his position as Assistant Surveyor late in 1837, which perhaps contributed to his parents’ decision to leave Launceston soon after.¹⁶ Two years later we find George Smythe also applying for survey work at Port Phillip, but by that time surveyors were employed by contract rather than on salaries.¹⁷

George Smythe was seven years older than his brother Henry, and a far more experienced surveyor. He was also more experienced at

travelling in rough country amongst rough characters, not to mention dealing roughly with Indigenous people, although he had good reason to be grateful to some of those he had met in Western Australia. In 1831 he had been part of an expedition that attempted to travel from Fremantle to King George's Sound at Albany, going inland via the headwaters of the Canning River; after 53 days, 20 without provisions and three without water, they were found by 'a party of natives' who 'had been sent out to meet them'. After eating two horses that had died along the way, they had survived their time without provisions by existing 'wholly upon native figs, grubs taken from the grass-tree, and a nut in external appearance much resembling the nutmeg, which was palatable and easy of digestion'; they 'reached the Sound in a very weak state', and probably wouldn't have arrived at all without the help of the Indigenous people.¹⁸ George Smythe and his companions spent a month at the Sound recovering from their ordeal before returning to the Swan River settlement, where Smythe continued with his survey work.

Working as a surveyor in Western Australia in the 1830s was really the job of an explorer; Smythe was often 'furnishing reports' about a new area's 'unbounded resources for pastoral purposes', which meant, of course, that he was in the vanguard of an invasion.¹⁹ Smythe did his best to get on with the people whose land he was assessing and measuring and preparing for sale to others, but it was a delicate job. In 1833 he facilitated a meeting between two fractious groups of Indigenous men, probably including some he had met at King George's Sound, but a year later he took part in the infamous 'Battle of Pinjarra' in which 'the governor personally led a posse of twenty-five police, soldiers and settlers to punish some seventy natives of the Murray River tribe in retaliation for several murders and "the pertinacious endeavours of these savages to commit depredations of property". ...Fourteen Aborigines and one police superintendent were killed.'²⁰ Other accounts suggest that up to thirty people were murdered.²¹

Despite the risks and challenges involved in working amongst 'these savages', however, Smythe's survey companions proved as dangerous as the Aboriginal people, and a good deal less predictable. In 1836, when one of two soldiers from Smythe's survey party was 'the worse of liquor', he attempted to shoot a constable they had fallen in with on their way back from the bush.²² It was Smythe who 'seized the prisoner' and restored peace. George Smythe was a big man, 'nearer

seven feet than six' according to Michael Cannon, and physically strong.²³ During one expedition, exploring along the Swan River to the north and east of Perth, the travelling group decided 'to halt for half an hour to take refreshment'; instead of resting, Smythe 'said he would take a run down to the plain and see what it was like.' His extra effort resulted in the location of a wide salt river, and he returned 'bearing in hand two of those splendid pink-feathered cockatoos ... the existence of which in this Colony had often been doubted'.²⁴

Smythe was a bushman. He was also used to the rugged ways of men. In 1838 'a quarrel arose ... between two privates of the 21st Regiment, attached to Mr Smythe's surveying party'. The quarrel, strange to tell, arose 'out of a difference of opinion upon some literary work, and from words they came to blows'. Smythe allowed the fight to go 'eight or nine rounds' before attempting to separate the pugilists, but one of them took exception to his interference and attacked him. After settling that encounter, Smythe must have thought things would calm down, but the soldier returned some time later with a gun, 'and seeing Mr Smythe standing in the room, he deliberately pointed his musket at him and fired. The ball happily passed under Mr Smythe's arm-pit, merely grazing his shirt'. Unfortunately, rather than being grateful for his escape, 'Mr Smythe, supposing the gun to have been loaded with blank cartridge for the purpose of intimidating him, laughed at his folly, when the man instantly drew another cartridge from his pouch, and was in the act of ramming it down, when he was secured, and the gun wrested from him'.²⁵ The man was sent to Fremantle by boat to stand trial for attempted murder, but on the way he jumped overboard and drowned.

From these tales we can see that George Smythe lived an often graceless life in Western Australia, but throughout his time there he was also moving with some of that colony's most powerful men. His journey to King George's Sound in 1831 was alongside Fremantle's chief magistrate Captain Thomas Bannister, and the murderous excursion to the Pinjarra in 1834 was led by (Sir) James Stirling. Smythe also explored south of Fremantle with the Surveyor-General John Septimus Roe in 1835, and accompanied the wealthy George Fletcher Moore (a lawyer and senior member of government) and Colonial Secretary Peter Broun on an excursion when Moore was looking for the inland sea.²⁶ These were all bush assignments; camp living and tough conditions, and even though they put him closely in touch with the colony's leaders he does

not seem to have socialised with them when not in the bush. When he decided to leave Western Australia and join his brother and sister in the Port Phillip District, his experience ‘under Colonel Colby and the Surveyor General at Swan River’ was ‘sufficient to remove any doubt (if such existed)’ in the mind of the Surveyor General of New South Wales about his competence, but it did not automatically give him entrance to the best social circles.²⁷ He was taken on as a contract surveyor at Port Phillip a few months later, but he never became a member of the Melbourne Club, despite his brother Henry Smythe and brother-in-law William Lonsdale being amongst the founding members.²⁸

On 4 April 1840 Robert Hoddle instructed G.D. Smythe ‘to proceed to trace the eastern side of Port Phillip ... and complete the survey to Western Port’.²⁹ This he did, and submitted his surveys for payment by the end of the year. Which brings me to the point of this story, because early in the following year (1841) Georgiana McCrae arrived in Port Phillip, and she says in her diary that she made her social *début* ‘at a dinner given in honour of P.W.W.’s sister, after her recent marriage with Mr George Smythe’.³⁰ Her grandson, who edited her journal, added that George Smythe was ‘Mrs Captain Lonsdale’s brother, known among the early settlers as “Long Smythe” on account of his height’, and explains that ‘P.W.W.’ was “Paddy” Welsh, ‘a top-sawyer in finance until his crash in ’43 ... the unprincipled principal director of the Port Phillip Bank’.³¹ So it is here that we come to the crux of my problem. No doubt you will remember that it was Patricius William Welsh (P.W.W.) and his wife who accompanied Martha Smythe, George’s sister, from Launceston to Sydney in 1834 prior to her marriage to Captain Lonsdale (Chief Magistrate of Port Phillip). Which means that Georgiana’s story about her ‘*début*’ makes sense, because it seems perfectly reasonable for George Smythe’s wedding party to be held at P.W.W.’s, and for P.W.W.’s wealth and position at the bank to explain his invitation to the newly arrived aristocrat, Georgiana McCrae. It’s just that George Smythe did not marry until 1847; and he did not marry P.W.W.’s sister.

When I first encountered this diary entry I assumed that I had missed something. Perhaps George Smythe had been married in 1841 and his first wife had died? The wife that I knew about in 1847 had been a widow (her husband was an engineer in Launceston and died in 1846), and George was not young when he married her, so he certainly could have married in 1841 (he would have been 32) and then been widowed.

But I could find no record of an 1841 marriage, no death record for this first wife, and no sign of a sister for Paddy Welsh either. So who had George Smythe married? It was time for lateral thinking, and my first thought was that Hugh McCrae might have got it wrong, and perhaps there had been another George Smythe who married in 1841? As coincidence would have it, Captain George Brunswick Smyth (often misspelled as ‘Smythe’, just as my George Smythe was often misspelled as ‘Smyth’) was in the Port Phillip District at that time, and (goodness me!) he had married in 1840. Not quite a ‘recent marriage’ in March 1841, but perhaps recent enough given that he had married in Sydney? I looked closer—very carefully—but there was no connection between Captain George Brunswick Smyth’s wife, Constantia Matthews Alexander, and P.W.W., so I reluctantly dismissed that theory. Unfortunately, disappointingly, there was no other George Smythe who fitted the description either, though there was another very wealthy business man in Sydney of that name. After days of concentrated research through BDMs, Ancestry.com, TROVE and publications from and about early Melbourne, I still had no George Smythe who fitted the picture, no sister for Paddy Welsh, and no explanation for Georgiana’s diary entry, but I had a lot of names and dates and relationships going around in my head. Lying awake one night, I thought of another question: If Paddy Welsh didn’t have a sister, who might Georgiana have described that way? It was at that point that the lightbulb in my head went ‘ping!’

As we have already seen, George Smythe’s brother Henry (H.W.H. Smythe) was an Assistant Surveyor at Port Phillip in 1841, but he had lived at Launceston for a number of years, and he was married there in February 1841. His wife’s maiden name was Jessie Allan. Paddy Welsh, I remembered, had married a woman from Launceston too, and her maiden name was also Allan. Could they have been sisters? Sure enough, Jessie Allan’s father was George Allan of Launceston, and P.W.W.’s father-in-law was also George Allan of Launceston.³² If the wedding party was not for P.W.W.’s sister, but for his *wife*’s sister, that would make sense! At last the jig-saw was falling into place. Except for one thing. If P.W.W.’s sister(-in-law) married George Smythe’s brother rather than George Smythe, and Georgiana McCrae was at the party, how did she get it so wrong? I can understand that in the nineteenth century some families referred to ‘sisters-in-law’ as ‘sisters’, but surely she would not have mistaken the bushman ‘Long Smythe’ for his (presumably shorter) brother Henry, the gentleman of the Melbourne Club?³³

That question had a much simpler answer, found in Georgiana's published diary and the foreword to the second edition. As the foreword explains: 'The journal consists mainly of entries in her diary made by Georgiana day by day as events took place; occasionally she made additions which were nearly contemporaneous with the entries; but the whole was written out again in her old age and she then added notes on the changes she had seen taking place around her since she had made the original entries. Wherever possible these notes have been shown as "Supplements", and the contemporaneous additions have been indicated by placing the year in which they were made at the beginning of the paragraph.'³⁴ The diary entry that caused this flurry of curious research is on a page headed 'Supplement' for 'March 1841'. It was not an original entry, but one that had been added later, and even Georgiana McCrae might mis-remember dinner party details.

This story describes a week in my research life. It was not a week I set out to spend in this way, or one that produced an important chapter for the project I was working on; rather it was a distraction that prevented me from following the path I preferred to be on. But like all passionate researchers, once the question arose and my curiosity was aroused, I could not leave it unresolved. In the end, we cannot know when that paragraph of Georgiana's was actually written, or why her memory on this occasion failed her, but the problem and its resolution provide an excellent lesson on the frailty of human memory and the hazards of using re-written diaries as the basis for writing history.

Notes

- 1 Paul de Serville, *Port Phillip Gentlemen: and Good Society in Melbourne Before the Gold Rushes*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 59.
- 2 De Serville quotes an entry from Georgiana McCrae's diary, *Georgiana's Journal*, edited by Hugh McCrae, 2nd edition, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1992, p. 30.
- 3 Alexandra Hasluck, 'Peel, Thomas (1793–1865)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/peel-thomas-2543/text3459>, published first in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 27 November 2015; the passengers on the *Gilmore* are recorded on WA Passenger Arrivals Fremantle 1829–1890.
- 4 Susan Smythe married Captain William Henry Geary of the *Gilmore*, 3 November 1829; *Launceston Advertiser*, 23 May 1831, p. 163, 'Mr SMYTHE, of the Surveyor General's Office'.
- 5 *Launceston Advertiser*, 16 May 1831, pp. 155, 157.
- 6 *Launceston Advertiser*, 4 April 1831, p. 111.
- 7 *Launceston Advertiser*, 25 April 1831, p. 134.

- 8 *Launceston Advertiser*, 27 June 1831, p. 205.
- 9 Norman Cowper, 'McCrae, Georgiana Huntly (1804–1890)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mccrae-georgiana-huntly-2392/text3157>, published first in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 2 December 2015.
- 10 *Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal*, 9 February 1833, p. 21 and 23 February 1833, p. 30.
- 11 *Launceston Advertiser*, 10 April 1834, p. 2; Martha was probably heading for Port Macquarie; her sister Susan's husband had been appointed Harbour Master in 1832, and Martha married there in 1835. State Records Authority of New South Wales; Kingswood, New South Wales, Australia; *Returns of the Colony ('BlueBooks'), 1822–1857*; Collection Number: *Series 1286*; Publication Year: 1832.
- 12 *Cornwall Chronicle*, 5 September 1835, p. 4.
- 13 *Launceston Advertiser*, 10 April 1834, p. 2; *Launceston Advertiser*, 11 December 1834, p. 2; *Cornwall Chronicle*, 13 May 1837, p. 3; *Launceston Advertiser*, 16 November 1837, p. 2.
- 14 *Cornwall Chronicle*, 28 April 1838, p. 71.
- 15 *Cornwall Chronicle*, 9 March 1839, p. 2.
- 16 *Historical Records of Victoria: Foundation Series Volume 5: Surveyors' Problems and Achievements, 1836–1839*, Edited by Michael Cannon and Ian MacFarlane, Melbourne, Victorian Government Printing Office, 1988, p. 144.
- 17 *Historical Records of Victoria Volume 5*, pp. 318–53.
- 18 *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 31 May 1831, p. 2.
- 19 *Western Australian Journal*, 8 February 1834, p. 230.
- 20 *Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal*, 26 January 1833, p. 15; F. K. Crowley, 'Stirling, Sir James (1791–1865)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/stirling-sir-james-2702/text3791>, published first in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 26 November 2015. For a contemporary report see *Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal*, 1 November 1834, p. 382.
- 21 Pinjarra Massacre Site, <http://monumentaustralia.org.au/themes/conflict/indigenous/display/61063-pinjarra-massacre-site>, accessed 27 November 2015.
- 22 *Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal*, 6 February 1836, p. 646.
- 23 Michael Cannon, *Old Melbourne Town: Before the Gold Rush*, Melbourne, Loch Haven Books, 1991, p. 360.
- 24 *Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal*, 18 June 1836, p. 714.
- 25 *Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal*, 14 April 1838, p. 59.
- 26 *Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal*, 18 June 1836, pp. 711–13.
- 27 *Historical Records of Victoria Volume 5*, p. 341.
- 28 Ronald McNicoll, *The Early Years of the Melbourne Club*, Melbourne, Hawthorn Press, 1976 pp. 95–115; William Lonsdale was present at the formation of the Melbourne Club in 1839, but withdrew and was only elected in 1851, see Ronald McNicoll, *Number 36 Collins Street: Melbourne Club 1838–1888*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin/Haynes, 1988, pp. 2–5.
- 29 *Historical Records of Victoria Volume 5*, p. 352.
- 30 *Georgiana's Journal*, p. 30.
- 31 *Georgiana's Journal*, p. 30.

- 32 If I had read Paul De Serville's entry for Henry Wilson Hutchinson Smythe in Appendix II of *Port Phillip Gentlemen* more closely, of course, I would have learned this earlier, but I had only taken note of the reference for George Douglas Smythe in which he repeats Georgiana McCrae's error: 'Married Miss Welsh, sister of P.W.Welsh', p. 195.
- 33 Other sources claim that it was, in fact, George's brother Henry who was known as 'Long Smythe', see <https://www.daa0.org.au/bio/henry-wilson-hutchinson-smythe/biography/> accessed 13 December 2015. This is a question that remains unresolved.
- 34 *Georgiana's Journal*, p. ix.

REVIEWS

Judging for the People: A Social History of the Supreme Court in Victoria 1841–2016

Edited by Simon Smith. Allen & Unwin, Sydney 2016. pp. xxvii + 308. \$60.00, hardcover.

Produced under the auspices of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria (RHSV) and commemorating the 175th anniversary of Supreme Court sittings in Victoria, this beautifully presented volume, made possible through the full support of the chief justice of Victoria, the Hon. Marilyn Warren AC QC, contains immeasurable riches. For that reason, one could say it is a gift to the people of Victoria, like the gold rush in whose midst John Waugh notes ‘[t]he Supreme Court of the new colony of Victoria was born.’ It will be an actual gift to those admitted to practice in Victoria in 2016, bestowed upon them as a welcome to the profession. More broadly, it will be a significant and enduring gift to those interested in legal and social history in Victoria.

Following a foreword by the chief justice, in which she acknowledges a debt of gratitude to the late Peter Balmford for materials he compiled that formed a basis for a Supreme Court history, the book is organised into three sections that are further broken down into twelve chapters and a conclusion. Fascinating contributions are provided by Janine Rizzetti and Susan Reynolds on ‘Establishment of the Court’; Jane Mayo Carolan, Simon Smith, John Waugh, Susan Priestley and Charles Parkinson on ‘People of the Court’; and Mark Finnane, Don Garden, Kathy Laster, Stephen Cordner and Fiona Leahy, and Peter Gregory on ‘The Court at Work.’ There are also discrete contributions within these chapters by Joanne Boyd, Nicole Lithgow and Nadia Rhook that illuminate particular topics. Beginning with the arrival of the first resident judge of the then Supreme Court of New South Wales for the District of Port Phillip, John Walpole Willis, and spanning the evolution of the court to the present day, the pieces in this book are wonderfully informative, often amusing, and also very poignant at times.

Andrew Lemon, in the conclusion, opines that ‘[t]his remarkable book may be unique among official court histories, because it seeks to both demystify the Supreme Court and, maybe more importantly, to put a human face on all of its workings.’ That human face is strongly

conveyed not only through the substantive and interesting text but also through the extensive use of historic documents, photographs and illustrations. The book would have benefited from a complete list of illustrations, given they represent a substantial part of the volume. They tell a story in their own way. One such example can be found in the eleven portraits of every chief justice of the court, the first ten being men and all except Sir John Madden and Sir William Irvin bewigged, while the eleventh is a woman, standing and sans wig. This is particularly significant given that this year saw the court's abolition of wigs—signalling the approach of the very first woman chief justice of the court, the Hon. Marilyn Warren.

The book is especially instructive when it comes to the changing attitudes within the legal profession over 175 years to all manner of subjects, including the presence of women. An early chancellor of the University of Melbourne who had also been chief justice of the Supreme Court, Sir John Madden, fulsomely praised Flos Greig upon her graduation—the first female law graduate in 1903—yet the idea of professional women was something he did not relish. The third Supreme Court librarian, Eustace Halley Coghill, forced to appoint a woman in December 1944 because World War II had made recruiting educated male library assistants problematic, was 'sorry to see women advance one step further'. In the 1970s, however, the Hon. Justice Kenneth Marks, in the face of deep opposition to the appointment of females as associates, chose Lee Scott Carmody as his associate. Earlier, in 1923, Joan Rosanove had been refused rooms in Selborne Chambers because she was a woman. But in 1965 she became Victoria's first female Queen's Counsel. The Hon. Rosemary Balmford was the first female judge appointed to the court, in March 1996. And the chief justice of Victoria, the Hon. Marilyn Warren, paved the way in Australia for women to be appointed leaders of superior courts with her own appointment in 2003.

Clearly a collaborative labour of love, the book consists of contributions willingly given pro bono by individuals and institutions. There was also strong support for the project from the legal profession of Victoria, including from various law firms, the Law Institute of Victoria, the Victorian Bar, and the Victorian Legal Services Board and commissioner, and the ranks of its retired members. The chief justice's reference to the 'continued vision and tenacity' of Simon Smith, the

RHSV and the staff of the Supreme Court points to the feat that the publication of a book of this kind represents.

This is a marvellous record. It would be interesting to know the reaction of the people who receive the book upon being admitted; does it elicit feelings of pride, delight, belonging, a determination to maintain standards? Whatever the range of reactions, it is sure to fulfil hopes to stimulate further research into, and writing of, legal history and to mark very proudly the 175th anniversary year of the court.

Kim Rubenstein with Marina Loane

Respectable Radicals: A History of the National Council of Women of Australia 1896–2006

By Marian Quartly and Judith Smart. Monash University Publishing, Melbourne 2015. pp. xiv + 497. \$39.95 paperback.

The history of internationalism has been popular in recent years, with immense scholarly interest in how cross-border interactions, institutions, and networks reshaped political activism. The contribution of *Respectable Radicals* by Marian Quartly and Judith Smart is timely and represents an important strand of this ‘international turn’, placing national stories in dialogue with a wider global space. The work focuses on the National Council of Women of Australia (NCWA) and its engagement with the International Council of Women (ICW). This organisational history is richly detailed and built upon multi-site archives and oral histories, populating the history of the NCWA with personalities and recovering the ideas that inspired their actions.

The ICW was founded in 1888 in the US, and promoted the ‘council idea’, which sought to bring together women engaged in public work in an umbrella structure where ‘existing women’s groups of all kinds could gather under its canopy at national and international levels to discuss matters of common interest’ (p. 2). Following on from this initiative, influential suffragist Margaret Windeyer brought the idea to Australia in 1896 when she convened the first NCW meeting in Sydney. Councils then grew independently in each state. A real strength of the book is its description of the diversity amongst the state councils, which all developed separately. Illustrating the suspicion towards Federation at the time, this work outlines the complexity of integrating state-based networks into a national framework. The ICW head office encouraged

the separate state organisations to amalgamate into a national body, but the councils resisted until finally unifying in 1931. It was their internationalism that eventually encouraged their acceptance of a national identity.

By the 1970s the federal council (NCWA) claimed to represent 'well over a million women nation-wide through the affiliates of its constituent state councils'. This was much larger than any unaffiliated women's association. Quartly and Smart therefore use the term 'mainstream' to describe the work of the councils. The NCWs followed the tradition in women's politics of promoting a 'non-party' line, allowing for both conservative and progressive membership representing a wide cross-section of women within Australia. But, while this allowed for an inclusive reach, it often stalled the work of council, which had to deal with political tensions not just externally but internally. Therefore, while it 'consistently espoused and lobbied for the causes on the agenda of liberal feminism', it often did not initiate campaigns for radical reform and 'followed rather than led' (p. 20).

This book is structured into four parts, charting the long history of the organisation both chronologically and thematically. The parts cover the time periods: 1896–1931, 1931–1950, 1950–1970 and 1970–2006, and within each the chapters are divided into themes showing internal politics, domestic campaigns, and international engagement. Alongside this ambitious and broad structure are 25 short biographies of prominent members. These form an integral part of the story; by understanding the women involved we can understand more about the organisation itself. Many women in the early years were comfortably middle class with the financial resources that enabled the travel required; one such was Tasmanian president Emily Dobson who travelled to Europe an astonishing 33 times to represent the Australian organisations. These biographies also detail how many women fashioned their engagement as explicitly maternalist, a theme that weaves right through the history of the organisation. At times detailed focus on the internal politics of the councils obscures who the affiliated organisations were, and the nature of engagement with other women's groups not associated. As there were over 600 connected societies at the federal council's peak, and the book surveys a huge geographical area and chronological span, it is understandable that there are more areas of interest to pursue than possible in the confines of this book.

During the 1970s when the women's liberation movement provided many more radical spaces for women advocating change the NCWA often clashed with other groups and the prime minister's new adviser for women's affairs. From 1995 onwards membership of the NCWA declined, forcing a reliance on government funding to sustain activity. Surviving became the NCWA's achievement, given that its function was diluted by the development of 'national machinery to improve the status of women' (p. 468), an object for which the leaders had lobbied while yet making much of their work redundant.

The NCWA served as a parallel institution, but one that was far from decoupled from a broader set of national and international political structures. Through exhaustive research, *Respectable Radicals* touches on the many campaigns and priorities of the NCWA over its many years of operation, showing how important the organisation is to the history of women in politics in Australia. Writing the history of an organisation presents obvious challenges, in finding balance between the internal and the external realms, and the nature of their relationships. In the case of the NCWA, the multiple interacting scales, which range from the globally political through to the rich local web of affiliated societies and the diversity of personalities and politics, pose an acute challenge. Quartly and Smart have succeeded in navigating these difficulties with a work that serves as a model of an engaging and relevant organisational history.

Kate Laing

These Walls Speak Volumes: A History of the Mechanics' Institutes in Victoria

By Pam Baragwanath and Ken James. Published by the authors (Ken James knjames47@gmail.com), Melbourne 2015. pp. 704. \$85.00, hardcover.

This is a BIG book, the result of a mammoth effort by the authors. Pam Baragwanath has enthusiastically devoted many years to the study of mechanics' institutes and has researched and published extensively, frequently spoken about them and has campaigned for their recognition and preservation. Her interest developed when she purchased the Healesville Mechanics' Institute and Free Library and then published its history in 1992. From there she studied mechanics' institutes across

Victoria and published a history of 400 of them, *If Walls Could Speak*, which was launched fifteen years ago by Dr Leonie Foster, then RHSV director.

Ken James, now a retired schoolteacher, has been an assiduous researcher and a prolific author of short histories of many subjects, mainly aspects of local and community history. Pam Baragwanath made a wise choice when she recruited him to her project to rewrite and expand her histories of Victoria's mechanics' institutes. Ken helped track down and wrote about many new ones, including the long-forgotten West Melbourne Literary Institute on which he published a separate small book. The number of institutes now recognised and detailed in *These Walls Speak Volumes* is about a thousand. That is a major achievement but, sadly, one result of the work of these two historians is the revelation that many of Victoria's mechanics' institutes have been sadly neglected.

The term 'mechanics' institute' describes a range of public bodies that may also have included an athenaeum, a literary institute, a free library, a public lending library, a free reading room, a miners institute or a school of arts. Mechanics' institutes and mutual improvement societies emerged in Britain in the 1820s, founded in the belief that knowledge and education were the keys to a population and workforce that would be not only more skilled and productive but also more moral and law-abiding. Public subscriptions and donations were collected in a growing number of cities, towns and villages, with much of the institutes' early emphasis devoted to technical education for working men, especially skilled working men known as mechanics. The institutes worked largely through providing instruction and demonstration, establishing libraries of informative and improving literature, and delivering public lectures and education on similar matters. Self-help and improvement were fundamental values in early and mid-Victorian Britain, a period that proclaimed the importance of high moral rectitude and hard work as the means to advance both individuals and the nation. Mechanics' institutes were key places for the exposition of these values of progress.

The predominantly British migrants to the Australian colonies brought these cultural values and institutions with them. The first mechanics' institute in Australia was in Hobart in 1827, with others following in New South Wales and the first in Melbourne, now the Melbourne Athenaeum, at the remarkably early date of 1839. During

the Victorian gold rushes of the 1850s and in the decades following there came a new generation of literate immigrants from Britain with middle and lower middle-class values and aspirations. Not surprisingly, a common objective was the establishment of mechanics' institutes in the new towns and suburbs they built across the colony. The institutes were intended to demonstrate local sophistication and to foster literacy, knowledge and morality. The major organised fundraising that was required, often at the same time as for churches, schools and other public bodies, demonstrates an enormous commitment to the institutes and their values.

About a thousand mechanics' institutes were built in Victoria in the second half of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century. Their roles were more diverse than those prescribed by the original British template; they not only contained libraries and education classes but also served as community centres and public halls (often the only one), for public entertainments, schools (about a third were used at some stage as schools), church services, town halls, lodges, sporting clubs and museums.

One example of the importance of mechanics' institutes discussed in *These Walls Speak Volumes* comes from Drouin. Several institutes were built in the region, including three using the name Drouin—Drouin South in 1888 and Drouin West in 1910, which no longer exist, and the Drouin Mechanics' Institute (later also the Memorial Hall) established in 1878. A timber building was erected and operated for many years as a public library and a public hall for various entertainments including balls, concerts and plays. It was also used at times for court hearings and as shire offices. The current building was constructed in the 1920s and still operates as part of the West Gippsland Regional Library as well as the Drouin branch of the Warragul & District Historical Society, which keeps its collection there. Strangely, there is now another mechanics' institute in the Drouin area. The former Buln Buln Mechanics' Institute has been moved to Drouin West where it is now an artists' studio and gallery. As in Drouin, many of the buildings and institutions that survive in Victoria continue to play significant cultural and heritage roles in their communities, including twelve still operating as libraries in their original buildings, and twelve that are used for municipal libraries in refurbished buildings.

The book has made me much more conscious of the rich heritage attached to these institutions and now as I pass through suburbs, towns and cities I frequently notice them and stop for a look, from Bendigo's magnificent building in Pall Mall opposite the equally magnificent court and post office, to the tiny Gormandale hall in South Gippsland. *These Walls Speak Volumes* records the diversity of function and contribution by Victoria's mechanics' institutes to the state's life, and their significant role in our history and heritage. It also shows that, through neglect or lack of recognition, too many have been discarded and demolished. The surviving buildings form part of our historic and built cultural heritage, and deserve greater recognition and protection. We should be very grateful to Pam Baragwanath and Ken James for their work on this huge project.

Don Garden

Lost Relations, Fortunes of My Family in Australia's Golden Age

By Graeme Davison. Allen & Unwin, Sydney 2015. pp. xi + 274. \$32.99, paperback.

'Family history may be the oldest kind of history. Since Old Testament times families have collected genealogies and handed down stories of their tribe.' Thus begins the conclusion of Graeme Davison's latest book, *Lost Relations: Fortunes of My Family in Australia's Golden Age*. Clutching the 'arrival story' told by his great-great aunt Jane, Davison embarks on the search for his tribe, tracing his mother Emma May Hewett's ancestry. He sets out to tell 'the story behind Jane's story, the one she must have known but did not tell'. Now, generations on, 'Little remains in writing of the Hewetts' own words,' a common obstacle faced by those in search of their own 'Lost Relations'. Davison distinguishes his quest for personal identity, the fragile thread of belonging and being, from the academic historian's more solid 'search for general historical truth'. Whilst still relying upon the historian's craft, he employs a 'dialogic concept' to shape his narrative structure in this project: a structured stream of consciousness that the author characterises as 'continuing a conversation with my significant others'. The personal walks in front of the universal, daunting, dangerous and inviting: 'Rather than silence or invention, I invite the reader to accompany me on my journey, sharing my discoveries, disappointments and surprises.'

Drawing on the psychoanalytic ideas of Erik Erikson conceived around 'the goal of old age' and the concept of 'integrity', Davison suggests that a significant outcome of engaging in family history, of 'placing oneself in the intersection between one's own unique life cycle and the history of our times, may be a step towards the integrity Erikson sees as the ultimate goal of life' (p. 237).

The Hewetts' Australian story begins with the arrival at Hobson's Bay of the author's 48-year-old widowed great-great-grandmother and her eight children in July 1850. The event, if not the family's feelings, have been passed on as a memory-baton, re-told to readers in the book's introduction. It is a very short 'arrival story', just seven lines. In sum, 'after a four-month journey from England' the ship landed at Sandridge (Port Melbourne). The passengers, including the Hewitts, 'climbed down the ship's ladder' and 'walked three miles across the swamp to Prince's Bridge' to their first resting place in their 'Promised Land', the Globe Inn in Swanston Street (p. ix).

Davison's subsequent research reveals that this arrival experience was the result of a strike by the crew of the *Culloden*—described by one source as 'a stout, bluff-built, and serviceable merchantman'. It was the *Culloden's* first voyage, with 38 'distressed needlewomen' (assisted migrants under a scheme set up by Sidney Herbert and his wife) emigrating with families such as the Hewetts and well-to-do individuals like artist William Strutt. Davison's depiction of the selection of passengers and the ship's later fate is evocative, the account enriched by Dickensian allusions and homely illustrations. My favourite, captioned 'At the Female Emigration Society's Home in Hatton Garden the needlewomen made preparation for their long voyage' (p. 60), has personal resonance because my Clark/Brant family 'tribe' came from Holborn and Clerkenwell whose streets, including Hatton Garden, I have recently trodden in search of their deposits.

Lost Relations is told in 241 pages, with nine interlocking chapters, plus a short introduction setting out the author's purpose and method of inquiry and a probing conclusion that reflects on the author's journey as a 'family historian'. Thanks to Davison's narrative flair and analytical sophistication, each chapter can be read as a separate sub-story of the genealogical tree. Readers and researchers alike will be grateful for the extensive bibliographical notes for each chapter as well as a comprehensive index. Of particular significance in *Lost Relations* is the

role of Methodism (and Wesleyanism) shaping the author's Australian ancestral identity. When 'religion' is married to 'identity' in this way we begin to see relationships between our interior and exterior selves.

The *Culloden* 'had no sooner berthed' than four of the eight Hewett children married fellow passengers, quickly taking their life chances in Victoria's 'colonial marriage market', their stories told in chapter 4 'Five Weddings and a Funeral'. One of the 38 'distressed needlewomen', Elizabeth Fenwick, would marry Robert Hewett (the author's great-great grandfather) nine months after arrival. A world away from the Hewett's Hook Farm rural yeomanry, steadily being squeezed out by 'large-scale capitalist farming', Robert's new seamstress wife Elizabeth was a Londoner, also from a large family becoming poorer as progress threatened livelihoods and family unity in their Westminster neighbourhood. Elizabeth's story resonates with many of us as historians and individuals—my great-grandmother Phoebe Camden, a servant girl, arrived in Victoria alone on the Emma Brahe before marrying her butcher husband, Thomas Taylor. Two of Robert Hewett's sisters, Lucy and Susan, went on to marry the two Maxfield brothers, leaving their mark in Kilmore, Longwood and later in Flynn's Creek, Gippsland. As well as the emigrants' cycle of marriage, babies and expansion of ancestral soil, there was death. Widow Jane's eldest child, Henry, died in mysterious circumstances far away from the rest of the family at Little Billabong: 'a sad and lonely fate but not an unusual one', reflects Davison.

Davison follows the spreading family's changing worlds—after 'pregold' inner-Melbourne, the lands of gold and colonial growth at Wesley Hill, Campbell's Creek, Williamstown, Essendon and Richmond Hill. Finally, we farewell great-aunt Jane, the last of the *Culloden* emigrants, who died at 96 at the Old Colonists' Home in Fitzroy, having been described in an interview by a *Herald* reporter in 1926 as 'the most wonderful old lady I have ever met'. Davison shares his recent discovery of her unmarked grave where she rests in death between 'the solid granite tombstones of two worthy Presbyterians' (p. 234). In constructing his Hewett genealogy, Davison also uses silences to deconstruct the meaning of a worthwhile life lived with 'little fuss'. And, in pursuing the relations between language, life and memory, he notes that each generation seems to undergo a psychic 're-invention of tradition' and shares some thoughts about his family's self-improving perceptions, part of deeper generational shifts in psycho-social consciousness.

By the time the youngest of Robert and Elizabeth's children, Frank Deacon Hewett, died in 1954, his parents' story had been shaped to provide a suitable pedigree for a respectable public servant. Robert was now described as a 'contractor', not just a carpenter, while Elizabeth was said to have come from aristocratic 'Berkly Square' rather than humble Old Kent Road. She emigrated 'with her family' rather than as a 'distressed needlewoman'.

Davison finds a filtered voice to break the family silences and raises new questions in the process. And the secrets he unfolds cause him to interrogate his own moral and class consciousness. 'Once opened', he writes, the 'skeletons in his family simply fell out'. 'As a historian I had no choice but to include them in my story, but the point of revealing them is not healing so much as an enlarged understanding.' Intimacy and rigour are the hallmarks of this book, together with tenderness, especially when the author records the unpayable debt to his grandfather Vic Hewett: 'the printer, bibliophile, Methodist preacher ... More than anyone else, he modelled and encouraged my interest in history and literature' and his influence through the books inherited 'mapped my intellectual journey'. A work such as *Lost Relations* will become a classic, to be read and studied, gleaned and gathered as 'nuts in May' in our ongoing quests for family identity and much more.

Marie Alice Clark

Wild Bleak Bohemia, Marcus Clarke, Adam Lindsay Gordon and Henry Kendall—A Documentary

By Michael Wilding. Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne 2014. pp. 580. \$39.95, paperback.

'In that wild bleak Bohemia south of the Murray, I went through Gethsemane ...'

Henry Kendall's lament portends the atmosphere of *Wild Bleak Bohemia*. A group biography of colonial Melbourne's talented and troubled literary souls inhabiting a Gothic imaginary is conceived here as *A Documentary*. Clarke (1846–1881) and Gordon (1833–1870), are both emigrant-gentlemen, and Kendall (1839–1882), is native-born, a twin, without pedigree. Wilding painstakingly resurrects his subjects' stimulating, often sad, shambolic subculture. A one-page preface sets the scene. Paul de Serville likens the book's structure to 'a specialist

museum, literary lives unfolded sequentially in 542 densely documented pages broken only by 'pauses' every few pages. Archival sources are provided for each writer along with an extensive bibliography, but there is no index.

After winning the 2015 Prime Minister's Award for Non-Fiction, Wilding said:

I thought what I want to do is go back to the earliest newspaper reports, earliest diary entries, the earliest letters to tell the stories about them, but not comment on it, not digest it and not re-phrase it ... to go back to the original footage ... as if it is like a History Channel documentary ... this is going to be like a straight doco and I think it worked ...

This approach is of critical relevance to the discipline of history's evolving self-reflexivity. In 2013 Wilding spoke of the genesis of his second 'documentary' in an interview with Teresa Burns thus: 'I began it thinking I would write a novel, and once more the materials overwhelmed me. There are even fewer connecting bits in my own words ... It was a matter of getting things in sequence.' (*Journal of the Western Mystery Tradition*, no. 24, vol. 3, 2013)

Wild Bleak Bohemia opens with Clarke writing from the Wimmera to his confidante, Cyril Hopkins, in England. His future he declares is 'in the womb of time'. The book's final paragraph bluntly records the deaths of Marian Clarke, 1914, Margaret Gordon, 1919, and Charlotte Kendall, 1924, each outliving her spouse by 33, 29 and 42 years respectively, an unusual and glaring statistic for this time, especially given the 'wild bleak' world these women inhabited. Maggie's and Charlotte's letters reveal visceral emotions evoked by their daughters' tragic deaths, while each poet-father's ache is preserved in memorial verse to Annie and Arulen. The sweep of this group biography encompasses dark and light layers, the minutiae of everyday life laid bare within the words of their own making. This, I think, is Wilding's outstanding creative act. In his own words (to Burns), in writing such a biography,

I surrender that ego of the artist, and submerge myself into another world, start shuffling documents around, putting them in order, seeing what emerged once I'd established an accurate chronology and found enough sources ... finding materials in unexpected and arcane sources. And in aesthetic terms, it was an extension of the modernist technique of collage.

There is an integrity of spirit here; author and reader engaging with these talented, 'wild' and damaged writers is immensely satisfying but, that said, it is a hard slog. A biography of this dimension, especially one employing a 'modernist technique of collage,' produces problems of dissonance and discursiveness that make an introduction and index essential.

T.F. Chuck's cover photograph of the Argus Office captures the immediacy of place and the importance of newspapers as the lifeblood of culture and communication; the *Argus*, the *Colonial Monthly* and the short-lived *Humbug* are stitched into the seams of Wilding's storyline. Perhaps Clarke is at work in the Argus Office. Clarke wrote: 'I was fond of art and literature; I came where both are unknown.' Thus began a literary tradition now revived in this book: Clarke the 'weird melancholic' journalist, city-lover and possibly the first colonial flaneur; Gordon, enigmatic emigrant, daredevil steeplechaser and taciturn poet writing long energetic verses such as the conversational 'From the Wreck'; and Kendall, the native-born poet of 'visionary light', who ended his life as an inspector of state forests, and whose coffin held 'the mortal part of the most gifted poet who ever graced the pages of Southern literature'. Listen to 'Bell-Birds'—'Songs interwoven of lights and of laughs ... /So I might keep in the city and alleys/The beauty and strength of the deep mountain valleys:/Charming to slumber the pain of my losses/With glimpses of creeks and a vision of mosses'.

In 1988 Peter Pierce argued that both our literary ancestry and the tradition's character remain unsettled, hence I think the timeliness of Wilding's study. Pierce refers to H.S. Heseltine's dissenting voice, arguing that the history of Australian literature was of a piece with an international 'romantic and post-Romantic phenomenon', but arriving earlier in the colonies. He says 'the fundamental concern of the Australian literary imagination [is] to acknowledge the terror of the basis of being'. This notion of an uncanny Australian sensibility resonates with Wilding's three Bohemians; each trod their colonial terrain and expressed their ontological terror: Clarke's extraordinary short story *Pretty Dick* exemplifies this journey.

Wilding spends several pages documenting contemporaries' accounts of Gordon shooting himself in the 'tea-tree at the end of Park Street'. I have known this area since I was a young child, spending many summers at Brighton's beaches. My brother was accidentally killed

nearby. Each of us draws something special from Wilding's splendid biography—a still life in words, his *Documentary* achieving his aesthetic 'of the modernist technique of collage'. 'At rest! Hard by the margin of that sea/Whose sounds are mingled with his noble verse/Now lies the shell that never more will house/The fine, strong spirit of my gifted friend ... /Who sang the first great songs these lands can claim/To be their own.' (Kendall's elegy to Gordon).

Marie Alice Clark

Modern Love: The Lives of John and Sunday Reed

By Lesley Harding and Kendrah Morgan. Miegunyah Press (in association with Heide Museum of Modern Art & State Library Victoria), Melbourne 2015. pp. xiv + 401. \$45.00, paperback; \$19.99, E-book.

In 1981 Richard Haese published his trail-blazing study of the cultural ferment of the 1930s and 1940s, *Rebels and Precursors: The Revolutionary Years of Australian Art*. It focused on a largely Melbourne-based group of painters that included Sidney Nolan, Albert Tucker, Arthur Boyd and John Perceval, but also introduced us to a remarkable couple, John and Sunday Reed, who were crucial patrons of this emerging art scene.

Since then most of the principal players in this scene have died, a number of rich sources have become available, and now Lesley Harding and Kendrah Morgan, senior curators at the Heide Museum of Modern Art, have given us something like the whole story of John and Sunday and Heide in their biography, *Modern Love*. And what a story it is. One pre-war visitor to Heide was overwhelmed by the creative ambience of the place, feeling that he had 'got a toe hold in the Garden of Eden'. The bohemian fusion of art and sex in these semi-rural surroundings did initially lead to a flowering of joy and creativity, but it also became entwined with estrangement and betrayal and, particularly in the Reeds' later years, much sadness.

John and Sunday both came from well-to-do families (she was a Baillieu) and, when they met in 1930, she was recovering from a disastrous first marriage. Her philandering husband had infected her with gonorrhoea requiring a hysterectomy that meant she was unable to have children. John, already quietly rebelling against the social restraints of his family upbringing, had sought out stimulating

bohemian company, and Sunday soon joined him in this pursuit of edgy modernism. Soon after their marriage in 1932 the open form it would take became evident in their friendship with the bawdy, irreverent young painter, Sam Atyeo; as Harding and Morgan put it, 'their relationship with him would become a benchmark for all those that came after' (p. 37). Soon Sunday and Atyeo, seemingly with John's consent, were lovers; later it became a foursome when John entered a relationship with Atyeo's girlfriend, Moya Dyring. The Reeds, then living in a South Yarra apartment, were looking to acquire a property on the outskirts of Melbourne, and, one day in 1934, driving with Atyeo through Heidelberg, they noticed a small crowd gathered at auction round an unassuming Victorian farmhouse. Atyeo urged John to stop and buy it—and thus Heide was born.

At the heart of *Modern Love*, however, is the web of relationships that developed at Heide with the arrival in 1938 of young Sidney Nolan. Like Atyeo, Nolan had a working-class background; Atyeo's father was a chauffeur, Nolan's a tram driver. John Reed had acquired a reputation as a collector of contemporary art, and, when Nolan called to show him some drawings, 'something about the young man convinced him that here was a rare human being who had a definite statement to make' (p. 90). Sunday agreed, and advancing Nolan's career became their joint mission. It seemed inevitable that Sunday and Nolan would become lovers, though there were obstacles—Nolan had recently married, and Sunday was in a relationship with a young *Herald* reporter and enthusiast for modern art, Peter Bellew. But by 1940 the predestined affair had begun. Sunday became intimately involved in Nolan's painting, as well as grooming the brash, headstrong youth for his role as a mature artist, capable of mixing in art circles.

Through all the domestic sexual politics of Heide, John, and to a lesser extent, Sunday, were active in the public sphere, helping found the Contemporary Art Society in response to Attorney-General Menzies' plans for an Australian Academy of Art as a bastion of traditional values. Then in 1941 John met poet Max Harris, 'the controversial, intellectual gamin' of Adelaide (p. 126) who had helped launch the radical modernist journal *Angry Penguins*. John persuaded Max to join him in a progressive publishing house, Reed & Harris. Today, *Angry Penguins* is largely remembered for the Ern Malley Hoax, in which poets James McAuley and Harold Stewart submitted some poems they had

concocted, accompanying a letter written by Ethel Malley on behalf of Ern, her dead brother. Max was enthusiastic about the poems, as was John, though he did have some doubts about the identity of Ern Malley. When the poems were published in *Angry Penguins*, McAuley and Stewart triumphantly went public, claiming to have exposed modernist poetry for the nonsense that it was. Subsequently it was argued that McAuley and Stewart had, through a process of free association, let their poetic imaginations run riot and created memorable poems despite themselves.

Through the 1940s and 1950s other significant participants appeared in the Heide ménage. Albert Tucker, although he was involved with Reed & Harris, kept his distance from Heide, but his sometime partner Joy Hester, also a painter, joined the Heide community for a time, enjoying a close relationship with Sunday, particularly after the birth of her child Sweeney, whom the childless Reeds would later adopt. Brisbane poet Barrett Reid, usually known as Barrie, turned up in 1946, walking into the farmhouse and seeing, for the first time, 'real painting, free and authentic' (p. 182); he became a habitué.

The financial support the Reeds gave artists was often crucial, but, through their connections, John and Sunday were also able to pull strings. When Nolan was called up for military service in 1942 they worked to prevent him being sent overseas. Sunday personally sought the support of Labor Attorney-General H.V. Evatt, a great supporter of the arts; she also called on their psychiatrist friend, Reg Ellery, in an attempt to get Nolan an exemption. When in 1944 Nolan went absent without leave, the Reeds helped him go into hiding, John arranging false papers for him. The climax in Nolan's relationship with the Reeds came in 1947 with the completion of the Ned Kelly paintings, in which Sunday had had great emotional investment. With the Reeds' support, Nolan went to Queensland for a holiday; there he reassessed his position and future career. The separation became a long-distance coolness; the coolness descended into conflict over ownership of the many paintings left behind at Heide. Sunday, although a very strong personality, was emotionally fragile, and had a 'nervous breakdown' (not her first). Nolan's marriage to John's sister Cynthia emphasised his rejection of Sunday.

Harding and Morgan handle these complex emotional relationships with deft assurance, centering the narrative in the extraordinary marriage

of John and Sunday. However, I have issues with two undocumented assertions. Of Sweeney as a boy it is said that ‘a number of people believe that, tragically ... he had been “interfered with” by Barrie [Reid]’ (p. 261). This sounds too much like gossip to warrant inclusion. Similarly, I am concerned about Sweeney being mentioned as a suspect in the notorious 1975 murder of respected art curator Brian Finemore on the basis of an unidentified newspaper report.

In 1976 Cynthia Nolan, in poor health, committed suicide. In the following year Sweeney, restless and unhappy, took a lethal dose of drugs and whisky. Both seemed to have carefully planned their deaths. The Reeds’ major concern was the future of Heide, which the government finally agreed to buy and develop as a park and gallery, with the Reeds’ considerable art collection at its core. John, meanwhile, was experiencing a painful return of bowel cancer for which he had previously had surgery. In December 1981 he carefully stage-managed his own death with Sunday and Barrie at his side. Ten days later Sunday, unable to imagine life without him, took an overdose of sleeping pills. It was, for both of them, the end of a remarkable journey, creative, passionate and, ultimately, tragic. *Modern Love* is an important record of that journey.

John Rickard

J.P. Campbell: Pictorialist Photographer at Home and at War

By Alan Harding. Connor Court Publishing, Ballarat 2015. pp. xviii + 329. \$39.95, paperback.

James Pinkerton Campbell, the subject of this excellent biography, was born in Sunbury, Victoria in 1865. His peripatetic parents soon moved to central Gippsland where the young James grew up. Gippsland remained an area of great significance in Campbell’s life, although he followed his parents’ pattern and travelled widely within Australia and overseas. Devoted to photography as an art form, and as a source of income, Campbell subscribed to the pictorialist school, though his images are often harder in focus than those of other adherents of pictorialism. But there is no doubt about the art in Campbell’s work. Throughout his career, he produced high-quality work of natural scenes, industrial objects and human activity. Harding certainly convinces me that Campbell deserves to be resuscitated and appreciated more.

Campbell had a talent for combining jobs. As a travelling salesman in the early 1900s he found the time to take distinctive photographs of Gippsland scenes, many of these beauty spots such as Agnes River Falls and the Snowy River becoming better known as a result. First published in newspapers in 1902, Campbell did not become a professional photographer until 1909. Harding's account of Australian photography is detailed, as is the story of Campbell's journeys across country that was both rugged and poorly served by transport. Fortunately, Campbell was robust and bold, qualities that assisted him becoming the first photographer with the Commonwealth Department of External Affairs in late 1911. He travelled to the Northern Territory where he worked hard capturing a wide range of subjects, including Aboriginal Australians. These latter images were largely ignored by official publications, which were intent on promoting the image of the Territory as a suitable place for commercial development and white settlement. Campbell used them anyway as the basis of commercial postcards, and this 'sideline' plus his penchant for 'artistic' effects ensured his dismissal from public service. It was the first of several examples of Campbell's ability to get on the wrong side of his bureaucratic superiors. Harding is judicious in presenting both sides of the argument.

Then came the First World War. I am amazed that Campbell got into the Light Horse in 1914, given he was already 49. (He took the precaution of deducting four years from his age.) The photographs of the period reveal his true age, I think, but he was undoubtedly fit and a skilled rider. Family obligations—he was by this time a grandfather—did not bother him unduly; his marriage was often conducted at a distance and the emotional centre of his life was fellow photographer Lilian Pitts. Their correspondence is used extensively by Harding, who describes their relationship as 'problematic' but probably platonic (p. 65).

Campbell was wounded at Gallipoli but remained in the Light Horse in the pay section, skilfully working up the images he took for commercial gain. By early 1918, he was the official photographer to the AIF in the Middle East succeeding Frank Hurley. Once again he crossed authority, this time in the person of H.S. Gullett, the official war correspondent, and at the best of times an opinionated personality. Just a few days before the Armistice, Campbell was dismissed from the field. Opinions at the time varied about the quality of Campbell's war work and the technical difficulties were cruel. Yet Harding is right to point

to some extraordinary images such as the picture of a Light Horseman taking a shower near Jericho (p. 193). Other photographs did not suit the hard-nosed realism of Gullett (and C.E.W. Bean). Campbell's preference for 'the misty, the unclear, the informal' was at odds with the desire for triumphalism and heroics (p. 160).

The final stage of Campbell's life was back where he grew up—Gippsland. Campbell was employed first by the Mines Department in 1919 and then with the State Electricity Commission of Victoria in administrative roles near the new power station at Yallourn. Given the desire to publicise this large-scale enterprise, Campbell soon found himself in demand as an official photographer. Once again his artistic tastes were not always easy to reconcile with official requirements, nor with the demands of the New Photography, which was replacing pictorialism. Yet the photographs Campbell took of Yallourn and surrounds are, as Harding points out, often elegant and telling, true images of modern industry. One example is the beautiful 'Elevated Electric Railway' of 1928, the last year of his career as a photographer with the SEC (p. 273). He stayed on, not always happily, in clerical roles until shortly before his death from cancer in 1935.

Harding's primary and archival research is thorough. Photographs have been disinterred from private collections, official records, postcards, journals and brochures. It is a rich record and Harding is at his best when describing how Campbell approached his work. Campbell's inner life, except in the Pitts correspondence, is not examined deeply—this is perhaps appropriate for a man whose devotion to the camera often excluded other interests in his life.

Richard Trembath

Victoria and the Great War

Edited by John Lack and Judith Smart with John Arnold. Special issue of the *La Trobe Journal* (State Library of Victoria), no. 96, September 1915.

This *La Trobe Journal* special issue, *Victorians and the Great War*, explores the impact of the war in that state, more especially on Melburnians, in ten interesting articles. The editorial declares 'Little, if any, good came out of Australia's involvement in a war that today should be lamented rather than celebrated'. But Australia's political leaders, in the middle of an election campaign, seemed eager to enter

that war, as Douglas Newton shows in ‘Australia’s Leap into the Great War’. He condemns them for making offers of military assistance to Britain before she had declared war on Germany, although the British had sent a ‘warning telegram’ across the empire on 29 July. However, his assertion that Australia, by her reckless offers of support, bears some responsibility for Britain’s decision to enter the war is unconvincing.

Joan Beaumont in *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War* (2014) argues that Australia emerged from the Great War a ‘broken nation’. Fissures opened up along class and religious lines that might have closed in time but for the war. This is well illustrated in Judith Smart’s article ‘A divided national capital: Melbourne in the Great War’. She challenges the view that Australians generally responded with enthusiasm to the declaration of war. Enthusiasm for the war was predominantly Protestant. The Catholic Church initially supported the war but without the ‘bellicose enthusiasm of the Protestant clerics’. There was less support for the war among working-class folk, who had to cope with the rising cost of living and the inability of the federal government to control prices, even though Commonwealth power grew at the expense of the states during the war. They were further alienated by the conservative preaching of thrift as patriotic sacrifice and the sense that the burden of the war was not shared equally. Conscription was the most divisive issue, particularly in 1917, ‘the worst year of the war’, when Billy Hughes inflicted a second referendum for conscription on a war-weary population.

In his article “‘The great war madness of 1914–18’: families at war on Melbourne’s eastern and western fronts’ John Lack explores the attitudes of both sides of the divide through the study of two families, drawing on the diary of Thomas Purcell, a devout Catholic, retired and living in Yarraville and Brian Lewis’s memoir, *Our War: Australia during World War I*, published in 1980, concerning a middle-class Presbyterian family living comfortably in Armadale when the author was a schoolboy. Four of the seven Lewis sons enlisted. Brian observes that ‘enlistment was expected as a middle-class duty’—*bourgeois oblige*, Lack suggests. Catholic working-class families may not have felt the same class obligation to enlist, but the Catholic Archbishop, Thomas Carr, promised that Catholics would play their part in this ‘just war’. Two of Purcell’s sons enlisted in July 1915. Purcell recorded that ‘unfortunately’ they both passed the medical. Lack follows both families through the

war. Tom Purcell attended anti-conscription rallies, peace meetings and longed for the end of the war, from which his two sons returned wounded. The Lewis family became disillusioned as the war dragged on and recruitment declined but still supported the war, hoping for victory. Purcell did not become a hater. Lack concludes that the nation was even more divided at the end of the war than at the beginning.

Bart Ziino's 'War and private sentiment in Australia during 1915' is a study of diaries and letters across Australia when a greater commitment to the war was emerging. Recruitment was going up and reached its highest point in mid-1915. The Australia Day appeal at the end of July was well supported by Victorians. But by the end of that year 'the political middle ground' was falling away. Ziino draws on Tom Purcell's diary among others, but the overall view he presents seems closer in feeling to the Lewis family than the Purcells. The signs of social division over the war were already apparent in the increasing recrimination against those who did not enlist and support for conscription.

Women played a prominent part in opposition to conscription in Melbourne as Kate Laing shows in 'World war and worldly women ...' Vida Goldstein's Women's Political Association formed the Women's Peace Army in July 1915. Shortly before this the Sisterhood of International Peace formed under the auspices of the Reverend Charles Strong, founder of the Melbourne Peace Society in 1905. Composed mostly of pacifists, its approach was less combative than the Women's Peace Army, which opposed conscription openly. The Sisterhood, however, gradually came round to this position. After the war the Peace Army disbanded and the Sisterhood became the Victorian Branch of the Australian Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

The harassment of Australians of German descent in Melbourne and Victoria is not directly discussed in this collection, but Rosalie Triolo examines the 'complicated relationship with the Germans' in Victoria's *School Paper*, 1910–1918—'Keeping your eyes on Germany'. Triolo maintains that the ongoing representations of Germans were 'nuanced'. The *School Paper* certainly contained nothing like Norman Lindsay's gross caricatures of the German soldier. But there can be little doubt that the *School Paper* made its young readers aware of Germany as 'the enemy', without resorting to the prevalent, frenzied anti-Germanism. Nevertheless the Quakers petitioned against the 'war propaganda' of the

School Paper in 1917. Its defence of German–Australians late in the war is instructive; they were superior in character to anti-conscriptionists, shirkers, strikers and other Australians on the home front who were not doing their utmost for the war effort. Its outlook was close to that of the Protestant supporters of the war, such as the Lewis family. They stood by their German friends and relatives.

Several articles seem tangential to the theme of this special issue. In ‘John Springthorpe’s War’ Joy Damousi tells the story of a remarkable and controversial Melbourne physician who joined the Medical Corps of the AIF in 1914. He showed great concern for the fighting men and related to this was his support for conscription. He understood the extreme psychological distress experienced by so many at the front, known as shellshock but hardly understood. After the war Springthorpe battled with the Department of Repatriation for proper recognition of the psychological dimension of shellshock. Jillian Durance’s article ‘Too good to lose: the Showgrounds Camp Band 1915’ gives a full description of Major General Bridges’ funeral in September 1915 in which the Showgrounds Band took part. She also tells the story of three bandmen from country Victoria who played in the procession, but soon decided that they wanted to be soldiers rather than bandmen confined to Melbourne. They survived the war although one lost his arm and could no longer play the trombone so took up the euphonium. ‘In search of Stroud Langford’ is Catherine Tiernan’s account of her research into the life of a young single soldier killed on Gallipoli on 9 May, remembered always by his mother but unknown to nieces and nephews and their descendants. Tiernan has found out little about this soldier–uncle, but she has restored his name to the family history.

The last article by Bronwyn Hughes, ‘Remembrance: Victoria’s commemorative stained-glass windows of World War I’ is a revealing survey of windows installed in various Victorian churches in memory of soldiers killed in the Great War. They are part of what George Mosse has called ‘The cult of the Fallen Soldier’. The windows express the virtual sanctification of the fallen soldier and at the same time suggest that the Great War was a religious crusade. It made the sorrow of many bearable and victory something they could celebrate.

Walter Phillips

Sport in Victoria: A History

Edited by Dave Nadel and Graeme Ryan. Ryan Publishing, Melbourne 2015. pp. xxiv + 286. \$59.95, paperback.

Published under the auspices of the Australian Society for Sports History, founded in 1983 after a series of conferences dating from 1977, this volume indicates how much has been achieved since. The beginnings derived from a few aficionados with interests in a limited range of sports and themes. The burgeoning of sports history as a major sub-discipline with a respected journal, considerable presence in undergraduate courses and graduate studies, and a substantial published literature has all come in the past 40 years.

The book comprises two short essays, 'Why Sport in Victoria' and 'Something Special about Sport in Victoria?' written by the co-editors, followed by alphabetically arranged entries contributed by a diverse range of writers. Bringing these together suggests immense editorial effort and skill. One test of this effort is to seek information on the more obscure sports. 'Biathlon', 'Rogaining', 'Hurling and Camogie', 'Trugo' and 'Handball (Gaelic)' are all there. So too are 'important events' in the sporting calendar, including 'Austral Wheel Race', 'Warrnambool Racing Carnival' and 'Bells Beach Surfing Classic'. Another category applies to clubs. All the previous VFL football clubs, as well as Port Melbourne and Williamstown, have entries, as do significant tennis, rowing, golf, racing, rugby union and league, soccer, and yachting clubs. It is difficult to find any gaps.

The entries vary in length from up to ten pages on athletics, Australian football, cricket, cycling, golf, Indigenous sportsmen and women, the Melbourne Olympic Games and netball to single paragraphs on bocce, the Cox Plate, darts, and Victoria Derby Day. The authors of major entries—often with associated smaller entries—are seasoned writers: for example, Andrew Lemon on anything to do with racing including greyhound racing and fox hunting; Roslyn Otzen on school sport; and Dave Nadel on Australian football. Many of the entries are simply chronological accounts of the sport in Victoria, useful information in a guide to the history of sport in this state in all its manifestations. There are several standout entries; Paul Jenes on athletics not only guides us through Victorian participation, including the founding of Little Athletics, but supplies a significant piece on

Peter Norman and his stand on human rights on the podium at the 1968 Olympics. Perhaps this indicates that there was a place for more material in the entries on the clashes between politics and sport, notably the anti-apartheid protests over the 1971 Springbok tour and the athlete defections during the Melbourne Olympics in 1956. The Hungary/Soviet Union 'bloodbath' in water polo is noted but the underlying international tensions of 1956 were perhaps somewhat glossed over in statements about the 'friendly games'.

The two introductory pieces are somewhat cursory and sometimes repetitive. They both emphasise the significant place of sport in Victoria's history, especially in terms of spectator participation. Both give similar reasons for this: nineteenth-century wealth; the continuing growth of infrastructure; the holding of big international events; the funding of clubs by members rather than poker machines. A rationale for the structure of the book and details about the assemblage of writers would have been helpful, as would some comment on where this book is placed in the sports history literature. Unlike the *Oxford Companion to Australian Sport*, this book has no overall bibliography. Even the longer items fail to acknowledge sources. An index would have made the text more accessible by enabling people and events to be tracked across entries. A little more information about contributors would also be useful. These quibbles aside, this is a book that tells much about sport in Victoria.

Don Gibb

Notes on Contributors

John Burch is a History graduate from Melbourne University with further qualifications in Education, Criminology and Social Work. Retired after a career in the Public Service he is pursuing a number of personal projects relating to conservation in the Mallee.

Fred Cahir is an Associate Professor in Aboriginal Studies at Federation University Australia. His PhD 'Black Gold: the role of Aboriginal people on the Gold Fields of Victoria' was awarded the Australian National University & Australian Historical Association 2008 Alan Martin Award. His research interests include: Victorian Aboriginal History; Central Victoria Aboriginal History; Aboriginal History; Australian Frontier History; Aboriginal Heritage Tourism History; Traditional Aboriginal Knowledge; Toponyms.

Patricia Clarke, OAM, FAHA, FFAHS, is a writer, historian, editor and former journalist, who has written extensively on women in Australian history and on Australian media history. Her twelve books include several biographies of women writers and others on the role of letters and diaries in the lives of women. She is a member of the ADB's Commonwealth Working Party, was a member of the National Library's Fellowship Committee, 1996-2016, is a former president of the Canberra & District Historical Society and edited the *Canberra Historical Journal* for 14 years.

Ian D. Clark is a Professor of Tourism at Federation University Australia, Ballarat. His PhD from Monash University was concerned to document Aboriginal land tenure and dispossession in western Victoria. His research includes Indigenous tourism, regional tourism, cultural heritage management, the history of tourism, Victorian Aboriginal history, and Victorian toponyms. He has written extensively on Victorian Aboriginal history including editing the journals and papers of George Augustus Robinson.

Marie Clark is a member of the RHSV Publications Committee and was editor of the *Victorian Historical Journal* 2011–12. She is vice-president of the Nepean Historical Society. Currently she is studying theology and researching her London and Limerick ancestry.

Peter Davies is a research assistant in Archaeology at La Trobe University. He is the author of several books, including *An Archaeology of Institutional Confinement: The Hyde Park Barracks 1848-1886* (Sydney University Press,

with Penny Crook and Tim Murray, 2013). He also co-edits *Australasian Historical Archaeology*.

Paul Michael F Donovan is a PhD Candidate at Federation University Australia, Ballarat, specialising in colonial relations with Indigenous Victorian Cultural Heritage and Tourism. He has a Masters in Cultural Heritage from Deakin University and experience in museums and community collections, research, public presentations and education consulting. He has also published on Indigenous folklore and Australian Cultural Heritage. His research interests include Indigenous folklore, Museum collections and Australian History.

Charles Fahey teaches history at La Trobe University. He is currently working on a history of mallee landscapes.

Don Garden OAM, FRHSV, FFAHS, taught history at the University of Melbourne where he is now an honorary fellow. His books include a history of Victoria, a number of local histories, an environmental history of Australia and the Pacific, and the study of a number of nineteenth-century El Nino events. He is president of the RHSV, president of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies, and a member of the Australian Heritage Council.

Don Gibb, FRHSV, is an honorary fellow and a former associate professor at Deakin University. He is a former RHSV Council member and a member of the society's Publications Committee.

John Lack is an Associate Professor (retired) and a fellow in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at Melbourne University. He is the author of *A History of Footscray* (1991).

Kate Laing is a PhD candidate at Latrobe University. Her thesis looks at the history of women's internationalism in Australia through a study of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. She completed a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) and a Master of US Studies at the University of Sydney, and was a National Library of Australia summer scholar in 2014.

Susan Lawrence teaches historical archaeology at La Trobe University. She is past-president of the Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology, a member of the Heritage Council of Victoria's Archaeology Advisory Committee, and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities and the Society of Antiquaries of London. She is the author of several books,

including most recently (co-authored with Peter Davies) *An Archaeology of Australia Since 1788* (Springer 2011).

Marina Loane has an arts degree from the University of Melbourne and is an independent researcher.

Barbara Minchinton is an independent researcher and a volunteer at the Public Record Office Victoria. She has worked on numerous projects including the history of land selection in the Otways, the urban archaeology of Little Lon, and Victoria's soldier settlers.

Walter Phillips is a graduate of the University of Adelaide and the Australian National University and taught history for some thirty years at La Trobe University, retiring in December 1996. His publications have been mainly in Australian religious history, including *Defending 'a Christian Country': Churchmen and the Defence of Christianity in New South Wales in the 1880s and After* (1981) and *James Jefferis. Prophet of Federation* (1993). Since his retirement he has given several series of lectures to U3A classes, and more recently he has become immersed in the history of the Great War.

John Rickard, FAHA, FRHSV, is emeritus professor at Monash University. He has written widely on Australian cultural history and biography, and his most recent book is *An Imperial Affair: Portrait of an Australian Marriage* (2013).

Kim Rubenstein is a professor in the ANU College of Law and a Public Policy Fellow at the Australian National University. She is also a barrister and solicitor of the Supreme Court of Victoria.

Richard Trembath teaches history at the University of Melbourne. He has published several books, mostly with other authors. His last two major publications were *Witnesses to War: The History of Australian Conflict Reporting* (with Fay Anderson), and *Defending Country: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Military Service since 1945* (with Noah Riseman). He is currently working on the growth of complementary and alternative medicines in Australia and one day would like to write a biography.

Jodi Turnbull is a senior research assistant in Archaeology at La Trobe University. She also manages Geographic Information Systems at a Melbourne heritage consultancy.

About the Royal Historical Society of Victoria

The Royal Historical Society of Victoria is a community organisation comprising people from many fields committed to collecting, researching and sharing an understanding of the history of Victoria. Founded in 1909, the Society continues the founders' vision that knowing the individual stories of past inhabitants gives present and future generations, links with local place and local community, bolstering a sense of identity and belonging, and enriching our cultural heritage.

The RHSV is located in the heritage-listed Drill Hall at 239 A'Beckett Street Melbourne built in 1939 on a site devoted to defence installations since the construction of the West Melbourne Orderly Room in 1866 for the Victorian Volunteer Corps. The 1939 building was designed to be used by the Army Medical Corps as a training and research facility. It passed into the hands of the Victorian government, which has leased it to the society since 1999.

The RHSV conducts lectures, exhibitions, excursions and workshops for the benefit of members and the general public. It publishes the bi-annual Victorian Historical Journal, a bi-monthly newsletter, History News, and monographs. It is committed to collecting and making accessible the history of Melbourne and Victoria. It holds a significant collection of the history of Victoria including books, manuscripts, photographs, prints and drawings, ephemera and maps. The Society's library is considered one of Australia's richest in its focus on Victorian history. Catalogues are accessible online.

The RHSV acts as the umbrella body for over 320 historical societies throughout Victoria and actively promotes their collections, which are accessible via the Victorian Local History Database identified on the RHSV website. The Society also sponsors the History Victoria Support Group, which runs quarterly meetings throughout the state to increase the skills and knowledge of historical societies. The RHSV also has an active online presence and runs the History Victoria bookshop—online and on-site.

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