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The John Adams Prize

To honour John D. Adams (1935–2015) FRHSV, Councillor (1966–2005), and to use his bequest of $10,000 to the RHSV in an appropriate manner, the RHSV has created a biennial prize. Since John Adams, a lecturer in Librarianship at RMIT for 27 years, was also the honorary indexer of the *Victorian Historical Journal*, indexing it for the years 1954–2013, the prize will be for the best article or historical note in the journal over a two-year period, commencing with Issues 287–290 (2017 and 2018).

The following terms apply to the prize:

- This biennial prize will be awarded for the best article or historical note on Victorian history in the four *VHJ* issues over two calendar years, beginning 2017–18.
- The prize will be awarded for an article or historical note that illuminates a significant element of Victoria’s history, is clearly and succinctly written, and is researched from original material.
- Members of the RHSV Publications Committee are ineligible for the award.
- The prize offered from the Adams bequest is $300 and three years’ free membership of the RHSV, which includes hard copies of the *VHJ*.
- A short list of five articles will be compiled by the *VHJ* editors active in the prize period.
- Short-listing will occur at the end of each two-year period, beginning in December 2018.
- Two judges will be chosen by the Publications Committee from academic and community historians and will report to the Committee by the following April.
- The John Adams Prize will be presented biennially at the RHSV AGM following its judging and will be announced in the ensuing June issues of the *VHJ* and *History News*.

Richard Broome, Chair, RHSV Publications Committee


**The John Adams Prize Judges’ Decision**

The judges appointed by the Publications Committee of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria recommend that the inaugural John Adams Prize should be awarded to Nicola Cousen for her article ‘The Legend of Lalor’s Arm: Eureka Myths and Colonial Surgery’, published in *VHJ*, vol. 88, no. 2, November 2017, pp. 212–34.

The criteria for the prize stipulate that it should be awarded to an article or historical note that illuminates a significant element of Victoria's history, is clearly and succinctly written, and is researched from original material. The judges found that all of the short-listed articles met these criteria; the quality displayed is testimony both to the excellence of the historical research presently carried on in Victoria and to the high standards of the *VHJ* editors.
Ms Cousen’s article is lively and well written. It revisits a controversy with particular resonance for Victorian history: the competing stories around the amputation of the arm of Peter Lalor, the hero of Eureka. The Eureka Rebellion remains a contested site, with interest groups still making claims on its lode of historical significance. Ms Cousen has cleared away the tangle of myths on a small section of the field, with findings that are relevant to the whole. Her research brings evidence from medical biographies and the history of medical practice to bear on the amputation and its aftermath. By showing how Lalor’s survival depended both on the commitment of a group of young doctors and on broader community support, Ms Cousen demonstrates the strength of the democratic impulse within goldfields society.

Emeritus Professor Patricia Grimshaw AM, FAHA, FASSA, FFAHS, University of Melbourne

Professor Emerita Marian Quartly, FFAHS, Monash University
Introduction

Judith Smart and Richard Broome

With one notable exception the articles in this number of the *Victorian Historical Journal* focus, unusually, on Victoria’s twentieth-century history, and are concerned with issues that gained prominence during the decades after World War II—migration, the Vietnam War, movements and challenges to the status quo associated with the ‘Sixties’, and the changing status of women. However, the remaining article and the three historical notes demonstrate the continuing diversity of interests among this journal’s readers and contributors, ranging from nineteenth-century exploration and settlement, to a leading early twentieth-century community activist, and finally to a previously neglected group of women war workers. A number of the articles and notes also raise interesting issues of heritage protection and interpretation.

The RHSV was privileged this year to hear Professor Peter Edwards, official historian of Australia’s involvement in Southeast Asian conflicts 1948–75, deliver the society’s Augustus Wolskel Lecture, published here as ‘Now We Know: A Half-century Perspective on Australia’s Vietnam War’. The war, he argues, ‘constituted a political earthquake in Australia’, and ‘Melbourne was the epicentre’. But fifty years on, it is time to reconsider some of the arguments both for and against Australia’s involvement, to acknowledge the superficiality of contemporary understandings, and to stress the importance of knowing the deep history of the region as opposed to its more recent past.

The RHSV conference, ‘War, Peace, Protest: Fifty Year Reflections on 1968’, followed on the heels of the Wolskel Lecture, and featured a stimulating keynote address by Associate Professor Seamus O’Hanlon, published here as ‘New People, New Ideas and New Attitudes: Melbourne’s Long Sixties’. This article discusses debates about what constitutes the ‘Sixties Generation’ and traces events and experiences during Melbourne’s ‘Long Sixties’ to illuminate the period’s impact on the city’s identity.

The third article, ‘The Victorian Mallee Fence: A Forgotten and Misunderstood Relic of Settling the Mallee Region of Victoria’, by John Pickard, systematically and meticulously examines the origins
and subsequent history of this attempt to control the spread of rabbits and dingoes in order to protect Mallee farms from their depredations. While most of the article is concerned with correcting mistakes in previous accounts of the fence’s early history in relation to name, original function, route, length and cost, significant attention is also given to its decline and to the need to recognise and mark its heritage importance as the first barrier fence erected in Australia.

Bruce Pennay adds to his many studies of post–World War II migrant camps in Victoria with this important reflective piece, ‘Imagining School at Benalla’s Migrant Camp’. This article focuses on heritage management and interpretation issues surrounding a schoolroom. It is Australia’s only surviving migrant accommodation centre school, part of the former camp, which was itself only added to the Victorian Heritage Register in 2016.

The final article, by Marilyn Bowler and Miranda Francis, ‘Opening Doors: The Effects of Teaching Studentships and Teaching on Women’s Lives in Victoria, 1950–2000’, draws on interviews with female recipients of Education Department studentships. The authors argue that the scheme enabled large numbers of women to gain a tertiary education that would otherwise have been impossible for most of them, and also provided them with lengthy and satisfying careers.

The ‘Historical Notes’ section of the journal begins with Martin Williams’ ‘Charles Bonney and the Fertile Kilmore Plains’. Williams traces Bonney’s significance as a pioneer of overland routes from New South Wales to Port Phillip and South Australia from 1837. He emphasises Bonney’s primacy in Kilmore’s foundation and the process by which his importance was subsequently erased by historians. In the second note, Gary Presland employs his unrivalled knowledge of the Field Naturalists Society and Melbourne’s local history to elaborate on the significant contribution of ‘F.G.A. Barnard: Naturalist, Historian and Committed Kewite’ to public life in this city. Finally, Judy Maddigan provides us with some new insights into the experiences of women’s work on the home front during the Great War in ‘The Forgotten “Girls” of World War I’. Maddigan draws on research conducted for an exhibition mounted by Melbourne’s Living Museum of the West in 2018 to recognise the ‘girls’ who worked in the Colonial Ammunition Company factory in Footscray.
We hope you enjoy this interesting array of articles as well as the many book reviews that follow. In this issue of the journal we also announce the short list for and winner of the first John Adams Prize for the article or historical note that illuminates most significantly an element of Victoria’s history published in the journal during 2017 and 2018.
Now We Know: A Half-century Perspective on Australia’s Vietnam War*

Peter Edwards

I thank the Royal Historical Society of Victoria for inviting me to give this year’s Augustus Wolskel Lecture and to join the list of distinguished historians who have previously delivered it. I particularly honour the memory of two who died in recent years and to whom I owe a great deal, Geoffrey Bolton and Ken Inglis.

We Australians like to discuss wars and their impact on Australian society in terms of major anniversaries. The problem with this is that major wars in the twentieth century happened with such regularity, at quarter-century intervals, that those major anniversaries often coincide. If we had not been devoting so much attention this year to the centenary of 1918, we might have been paying more attention to the fiftieth anniversary of 1968, a hugely important year in global politics. The French and the Americans have been reassessing a year in which both countries seemed close to revolution, amid tumultuous developments such as the humiliating withdrawal of Lyndon Johnson from the presidency, the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy, the Prague spring in eastern Europe, and ‘les évènements’ of May in Paris. Of most relevance to Australia’s place in the world, 1968 also saw the turning point in the most important battle of the Vietnam War, the battle for American public opinion.

If this is the right year for Australians to think anew about the Vietnam War, Melbourne is the right place. If the war constituted a political earthquake in Australia, Melbourne was the epicentre. The three prime ministers who respectively committed combat troops, escalated the commitment, and then began the withdrawal represented the electorates of Kooyong and Higgins. The Labor Party split of 1955 had been deepest in Victoria, so the strongest supporters of the war, B.A. Santamaria’s National Civic Council and its ideological stablemate, the Democratic Labor Party, were based in Melbourne, while Dr J.F. Cairns, MHR for Yarra then Lalor, was the unofficial

* Professor Edwards delivered this paper to the RHSV as the Augustus Wolskel Lecture on 14 September 2018.
leader of the protest movement. The most prominent student radicals were at Monash University; the battle between militant and moderate unions was fought largely at ACTU headquarters in Melbourne; and the biggest Moratorium march in May 1970 took place in Melbourne’s Bourke Street.

I have borrowed the title of this article from a leading historian of the Cold War, John Lewis Gaddis, whose book, published in 1997 as *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*, reassessed the history and historiography of the Cold War in the light of new evidence. In that spirit, I thought it might be useful, with the benefit of half a century’s hindsight, to reconsider some of the issues debated so intensely in 1968. What do we know now that we did not know then? How do the assertions and arguments used by supporters and opponents of the commitment appear in the light of new evidence?

The Vietnam War gave rise to an extraordinary number of myths, some of which were quite false, while some had an element of accuracy. Some of those myths are still current, while some have implications for current and future policies. After the war, there was a tendency to say that anything associated with Vietnam was deeply flawed, if not immoral, and must be discarded; but on reflection we can see that a few babies might have been thrown out with the strategic and political bathwater.

Let me start with some of the myths and half-truths about a crucial motivator for the protest movement, the conscription scheme—more officially, the selective national service scheme—that operated from 1965 to 1972. One allegation, recently revived by the national serviceman who became deputy prime minister, Tim Fischer, was that the ballot system was ‘rigged’; and a story still circulating offers the view that Normie Rowe was conscripted so that Australia would have its Elvis Presley, a popular singer who accepted the draft. We can now trace how this story arose. Long after the war, Normie Rowe was driving along the Eastern Freeway, took the exit to Hoddle Street, and by his own admission was still travelling at freeway speed. He was pulled up by a policeman, who asked to see his licence. ‘That’s interesting, sir’, said the policeman, ‘You and I have exactly the same birthday’. ‘Oh’, said Rowe, ‘then you must have been conscripted for service in Vietnam’. ‘No’, said the policeman, ‘I was balloted out’. In Rowe’s mind, alarm bells rang: how could two men born on the same day have completely different results in the ‘birthday ballot’, what Arthur Calwell called the ‘blood lottery’?
In fact the answer was simple. When the ballot for men born in the first half of 1947 was held in March 1967, Rowe was in the United Kingdom pursuing his career. On his return mid-year he was subject, as the law provided, to a separate supplementary ballot for those who were absent from Australia at the time of their normal ballot. Rowe’s birthday, 1 February 1947, was not drawn in the first ballot, but it was in the supplementary ballot. The dates can be confirmed in the essay on the national service scheme by my colleague Sue Langford, which we published in a volume of the official history, *A Nation at War*.

Rowe was very unlucky, but the system was not rigged. The real objections to the Australian scheme were those known and debated at the time. It offended against the principle, set down in the *Defence Act 1903*, that compulsory military service could be applied within Australia but only volunteers would fight overseas; it was highly selective, drawing in about one in eight of the eligible cohort, while the others were able to pursue their chosen careers; and it was based on the birthdates of 20-year-old men, when the voting age was 21.

If one accepted those preconditions, the Australian scheme was probably applied more equitably than the American draft, where the well connected, including Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Donald J. Trump, could take advantage of exclusions and deferments written into the system; or the South Vietnamese version, where bribery could purchase exemption; or in North Vietnam, where party hierarchs reportedly ensured that their sons sought qualifications in Moscow or Beijing. By contrast, the son of the Australian minister for defence was called up, served and returned without complaint.

As Mark Dapin has shown, many of the claims made by anti-war protesters, and by those who protested against the anti-war protesters, are either demolished or must be highly qualified when one examines the factual background. I will only touch on some here. The Qantas flights that brought some veterans back from Vietnam landed at Richmond, outside Sydney, late at night, not to avoid protesters but to suit Qantas’s operational requirements. There were some unpleasant incidents, but by no means all returning veterans, whether national servicemen or regulars, were badly treated. All but one of the infantry battalions received a welcome home march, with the last as welcoming as the first, and the most memorable hostile demonstration was that of a lone woman at the first such march. There were probably, according
to Dapin, as many incidents of soldiers bashing demonstrators as vice versa. The disaffection of some returned veterans probably owed as much to inadequacies of agencies responsible for their repatriation as to protesters.

Perhaps more important in the long term, we should note that the national service scheme was not as unpopular as is generally portrayed. Men who had been balloted out or had been granted indefinite deferment and nineteen-year-olds too young for the ballot could volunteer for national service, and hundreds did so. Even at the height of the protest movement from 1970 to 1972, between 500 and 750 men volunteered for national service, whereas only around 60 failed to report without due cause. We can speculate on their motives. Some perhaps wanted to emulate the Anzacs of the two world wars; others had in mind benefits such as the defence home loan scheme. According to one anecdote, one said that his father had acquired a full set of false teeth from his service in the 1939–45 war, and he intended to follow suit.3

More important perhaps, it is now clear that national service was introduced for political rather than for military reasons. The army had to be forced to accept the scheme. To the extent that an expansion was required, it was justified more by reference to the existing conflict in which Australian forces were engaged, Indonesia’s Confrontation of Malaysia, than by a potential conflict on mainland Southeast Asia. When the decision to introduce conscription gained cabinet approval in late 1964, official documents referred to: first, a possible expansion of Confrontation westward onto the Malayan Peninsula; second, a possible expansion of Confrontation eastward across Australia’s only land border—the one separating western New Guinea, recently acquired by Indonesia, and the Australian-administered eastern half, still a decade away from becoming the independent state of Papua New Guinea; and only third, a possible commitment on mainland Southeast Asia, perhaps in South Vietnam, perhaps in Thailand.4 Very soon after the decision was announced, and before any national servicemen had been enlisted let alone trained, Australia committed one of its three infantry battalions to Confrontation. This was some months before it sent another battalion to Vietnam, the most important single step in that commitment.

This leads us to look at the war itself and underlines one of the main points that I want to make. The reasons for Australia’s commitment to the war, its contribution to the conduct of the war, and the effects of the
aftermath were obviously related to those of the United States, but they were not identical. When we talk of the history of the Vietnam War, we are often overwhelmed by the sheer mass of historical material—written or audio-visual—on America’s war. Never has the old saying, that history is written by the victors, been less true. An enormous amount of history has been written by Americans, about Americans and for Americans to explain the causes and the effects of their involvement in what many still regard as their nation’s greatest tragedy and trauma in the twentieth century. I cannot pretend to have read or studied more than a fraction, but I believe I can offer some observations on the nature of what we might call the mainstream or prevailing narrative and whether that has changed over the last 40 years or so.

It is instructive to compare some of the most popular and respected accounts of the late twentieth century, such as the many editions of Stanley Karnow’s *Vietnam: A History* and of George Herring’s *America’s Longest War*, with the recent eighteen-hour documentary by Ken Burns and Lynn Nowick, and the newest general history by British journalist and military historian Max Hastings. This leads us, I suggest, to see four developments: an expansion of one theme, a minor change in another, a major change in a third, and a continuing absence of a fourth.

First, as regards America’s war, the story today generally follows much the same narrative path as previously, but it has been expanded. We now know in immense detail what significant individuals and agencies in Washington, and their military leaders, diplomats and other officials in Vietnam itself, were saying and doing at critical times. Much has been written, often very powerfully, about the experience of those who served in combat and of those caught up in the intense social and political divisions on the home front. The Burns documentary is subtitled ‘an intimate history’; a pedantic academic might call it ‘a political and social history of US involvement in the Vietnam War’. Within that framework, the debate has been about how much blame to attribute to successive presidents, from Dwight D. Eisenhower through John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson to Richard M. Nixon, to senior officials, from John Foster Dulles through Robert McNamara to Henry Kissinger, and to senior military leaders, including Generals William Westmoreland and Creighton Abrams in Vietnam and the military hierarchy in Washington. In the 1990s an army major named H.R. McMaster published a book called *Dereliction of Duty*, based on his
PhD thesis, trenchantly criticising the joint chiefs of staff for their role in the ineffective decision-making on Vietnam at a crucial time. The overall trend has been to expand the number of American villains, and to push backwards in time from the Johnson and Nixon administrations to those of Kennedy, Eisenhower and even Harry S. Truman.

Alongside this prevailing narrative there has been for 40 years a persistent challenge from the right, as ‘revisionists’ have tried—if I may cheekily borrow a favourite mantra of 1960s radicals—to ‘subvert the dominant paradigm’. Some have been of the ‘coulda-shoulda-woulda’ school, as in: ‘We could’ve won the war; we should’ve done X; then we would’ve won by (date of choice)’. The X that was recommended varied from complete reliance on counter-insurgency and pacification to invading the North and/or using tactical nuclear weapons. As recently as 2017 the writer Max Boot has argued in *The Road Not Taken* that the US should have used the pacification and counter-insurgency techniques espoused by Edward Lansdale. Another variant, with titles like *Triumph Forsaken* and *Unheralded Victory*, argues that the US either had won or was winning, until Congress foolishly withdrew its support for South Vietnam in the early 1970s. Nevertheless, most academic and non-military historians of the Vietnam War have not seen fit to alter their narrative; the dominant post-1975 paradigm has not been subverted.

Arguments about America’s war in Vietnam are highly relevant to current concerns and debates about American military thinking. Major McMaster, who wrote *Dereliction of Duty*, became a three-star general and was regarded as one of the leading thinkers in the United States Army before serving for a year as President Trump’s national security adviser; Max Boot’s biography of Lansdale was very highly praised by General David Petraeus, who not only shaped strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan but also wrote the US Army manual on counter-insurgency; and the last sentence in Max Hastings’ epic history is given to an American serviceman who is asked what would have happened if his country had learned from the Vietnam experience: ‘We would never have gone into Iraq’.

The minor change that one can detect in the narrative is a slightly more nuanced view of the South Vietnamese. There is some recognition that, besides the unprepossessing cohort of corrupt politicians and power-seeking generals who dominated Saigon governments, especially in the revolving-door governments after the assassination of President
Ngo Dinh Diem, there were also genuine nationalists and decent people seeking an honourable life under a non-communist regime. There is a Melbourne connection here, for Dr Nathalie Nguyen of Monash University has written *South Vietnamese Soldiers*, which counters at least some of the charges often laid against the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). The ARVN was not a match for its communist opponents, but some units did fight bravely and effectively at times. Moreover, there is now a greater recognition that some of ARVN’s military failings were due to the way the Americans, like the French before them, created a Vietnamese army in the image of their own, dependent on transport and firepower, rather than one suited to the political, social and geographical context of Vietnam. President Diem, for all his many faults, was certainly better than those who followed and perhaps no worse than many a dictator today. American connivance in his assassination was probably, as Napoleon’s chief of police said when the regime executed the Duke of Bourbon, ‘worse than a crime, it was a mistake’.

The biggest single change in the mainstream narrative of the war came with the publication of *Hanoi’s War* by an American scholar of Vietnamese heritage, Lien-Heng Nguyen. It is quite remarkable that it took until 2012 before we had a reliable account of who was, as the Americans say, ‘calling the shots’ in Hanoi. For decades, we knew an immense amount about the politics and strategies of the losing side but very little about the politics and strategies of the winners.

In the last few years historians have written quite differently about the winning side. We now know that Ho Chi Minh was ailing, both physically and politically, long before his death in 1969; that he was removed from effective power even before 1960, when he was replaced as general secretary of the Vietnam Workers’ Party, the communist party, by Le Duan; and that Le Duan, with Le Duc Tho as his loyal deputy, was the real power in Hanoi until his death in 1986 after more than a quarter of a century in charge.

It is all too easy to throw around terms like ‘fascist’ and ‘Stalinist’, but Le Duan and his colleagues in Hanoi were genuinely Stalinists. They were as ruthless to their opponents on the left, the Trotskyists, as Stalin had been towards Trotsky. The land reform program in the mid-1950s resembled Stalin’s oppression of the kulaks. More than any other person, Le Duan was responsible for Hanoi’s determination never to
compromise on his goals: to unify Vietnam under hard-line communist rule, regardless of the cost in blood and treasure and rejecting the view held by Ho and others that the party should consolidate its position in the north before committing itself to armed revolt in the south.

Le Duan and his allies scorned Ho as too willing to compromise and Vo Nguyen Giap, the victor of Dien Bien Phu, as an egotist. Ho was retained as a figurehead because he was profoundly respected in Vietnam and abroad. Wilfred Burchett, the Australian journalist who wrote glowingly of the ascetic ‘Uncle Ho’, could not have written similarly about Le Duan, the ruthless Stalinist apparatchik. Le Duan led the North into four major offensives in 1964–65, 1968, 1972 and 1975, with the first three being costly military defeats. Ho and Giap opposed the Tet offensive, but Ho was exiled to Beijing and Giap to Budapest.

We have known for sometime that the National Liberation Front, the Viet Cong, was precisely that: a front. You may remember that, in the latter years of the war, they formed the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG), which would supposedly take over the South when the Saigon regime was defeated. The PRG foreign minister, Madame Nguyen Thi Binh, made an impression when she visited Australia and other countries. But after April 1975 the PRG was ruthlessly brushed aside and told that the war was all about unification of Vietnam under the rule of the communist party in Hanoi. The South was merged into the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to form the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, which was politically repressive, socially vindictive and economically disastrous in all the ways that characterise Stalinist regimes. Only in the mid-1980s, around the time Le Duan died after 26 years as party head, did Vietnam move to the model of liberalising the economy while maintaining a one-party state politically, ten years later than China under Deng Xiaoping.

We also now know much more about the complex relationship during the war between Hanoi, Moscow and Beijing. To portray the Vietnamese communists as mere puppets of the Chinese, as the Australian government did, was indisputably a major error. At the same time we need to recognise that Hanoi received considerable support from both the major communist powers, skilfully taking advantage of the intense rivalry between Moscow and Beijing for leadership of global communism. Some 330,000 Chinese personnel served in Vietnam. They were never in direct combat roles but played an important part in
infrastructure and supplies. The Soviets supplied many modern arms; and the Chinese and Soviet anti-aircraft batteries competed to see who could down the most American bombers. The logistics support from the two communist powers was crucial to Hanoi’s victory; but the politburo had to negotiate skilfully to secure that support while fighting the war on its own terms and disregarding Russian advice, which was often to moderate its ambitions, and Chinese advice, which was generally to use Maoist tactics.

Like Stalin in World War II, Le Duan and his colleagues in Hanoi mobilised the nationalism of their own people as well as the internationalism of communists around the world to maintain their resilience, despite the horrendous cost. There were some signs of dissent and war weariness but, as the journalist–historian Max Hastings emphasises, the Hanoi politburo had the advantage of total control of all forms of communication.

This leads us to reflect on what the Vietnam War was really about. Supporters of the western commitment said it was a theatre in the Cold War; protesters often claimed it was Vietnamese nationalism seeking and finally gaining national independence. Each side could present substantial evidence for their case. But, with what we now know, as far as the Vietnamese people were concerned it looks more like a competition over the political form of a post-colonial Vietnam. Would the communists gain the right to impose a hard-line Stalinist regime on all of Vietnam; or would there continue to be a separate state for the non-communist proportion of the population, a minority albeit a significant one, much less well disciplined politically, much less effective militarily? The communists thought they had won the former by defeating the French in 1954, but it was the Russians and Chinese, as much as the Americans, who insisted that they accept the division of the country.

Taking what we now know about the Americans, the South Vietnamese and the North Vietnamese, 50 years of hindsight suggests a pretty clear verdict on the arguments used by those who opposed the war. There was, for much of the war, a fairly clear division between the moderates and the radicals in the anti-war protest movement. The moderates said that, given the political, military, and diplomatic context, the war was simply unwinnable, even with massive intervention by the American superpower. The radicals or New Left, with many competing strands including Maoists, Trotskyists, anarchists and others who
admired Franz Fanon or Herbert Marcuse or other gurus, took their objections much further; they often romanticised the Vietnamese revolutionaries and sought to follow their example by overturning the norms and institutions of liberal, capitalist democracy. Those who said, some from as early as 1965, that the war was unwinnable look prescient. But those who chanted ‘Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh, the NLF is going to win’; or ‘One Side Right, One Side Wrong, Victory to the Viet Cong’, look at best naïve, at worst duped.

This leads me to the fourth dimension of 50 years of historiography on the Vietnam War. Because most accounts have been written by Americans, about Americans and for Americans, they often have little to say about the regional context, which was, of course, of great concern to Australia. Let me refer briefly to two aspects.

The first is the famous, should I say notorious, domino theory, the idea that a communist victory in South Vietnam would lead to a spread of communist or allied regimes throughout Southeast Asia.

With the benefits of hindsight, was it foolish to support the domino theory? In 1964–65, when Australia made its crucial decisions about committing combat forces, it did not look so odd. As I have noted, at that time Australia’s principal concerns were over the stability of Malaysia and Indonesia. There was real cause for concern. Tensions between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore were leading towards the expulsion of Singapore in August 1965. Indonesia’s communist party, the PKI, was the third largest communist party in the world, surpassed only by those of the Soviet Union and China, and President Sukarno boasted of his growing links with Beijing and other radical regimes. The future of Laos and Cambodia was clearly tied to the outcome of the conflict in Vietnam. Both Thailand and the Philippines faced communist insurgencies.

What we now know, but few foresaw in 1965, was that by 1968 the whole situation had changed. Indonesia was governed by a western-oriented regime, which was ruthlessly eliminating real or alleged communists; Indonesia’s Confrontation of Malaysia had ended peacefully; Malaysia and Singapore were like a successfully divorced couple, functioning better as neighbours than as an unhappy union; Thailand and the Philippines were more secure; and these five nations had formed the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). As early as 1967 the CIA reported to President Johnson that the regional and global implications of an American withdrawal from Vietnam
would not be as catastrophic as many had argued in 1964–65, but, having committed his nation, Johnson evidently felt that he could not face becoming the first US president to lose a war.

We will never know just what the regional ramifications would have been if the Saigon government had collapsed in 1965, as seems certain in the absence of massive western intervention; but it is highly likely that those ramifications would have been profound. That is why some in Australia still justify the commitment by the argument most famously expressed openly by the leader of one of the crucial dominoes, Singapore’s Lee Kuan Yew. That is, the American intervention was justified because it delayed the fall of Saigon by ten years, from 1965 to 1975, by which date Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia were much better able to cope with the new regional balance. It is an argument either totally overlooked or given short shrift by American historians. From their perspective, the political, social, economic and military costs suffered by the United States were hugely disproportionate to the benefits in a region of secondary importance to American interests; but Australians are entitled to think that the strategic equation from our point of view is more favourable.

There is another sense in which we still pay too little regard to the regional context. That is what we might call the ‘deep history’. Hanoi was founded in the year 1010. For the next millennium, people of the Red River delta showed both the intention and the ability not only to defend their independence from whoever was ruling their powerful northern neighbour but also to expand their influence across the Indochina peninsula. That involved wars and rivalries with various kingdoms and polities in the coming years. It took until the sixteenth century for Hanoi to reach the Mekong delta. In the nineteenth century the Vietnamese and Thais fought several wars. In this light, the alliances and enmities of the twentieth century take on an added dimension, quite separate from the impact of European colonialism, international communism, or their respective opponents.

How does all this reflect on Australia’s involvement? The commitment, so important to us, hardly figures in most American accounts of the war. I think the only reference to Australia in the eighteen-hour Ken Burns documentary is the suggestion that the Australians were the source of one of the racist terms that American soldiers applied to the Vietnamese, and I suspect that the reference
was wrong. As one might hope from a British author, Max Hastings pays a little more attention to ‘Aussies and Kiwis’. Given the size of the respective commitments by the United States and Australia, this imbalance is perhaps not surprising; but we need to understand just how and why Australia came to be committed to the Vietnam War. It was not simply a matter of Australia loyally supporting the US ‘all the way’. The world’s greatest superpower and a modest middle power differed in their strategic goals as well as in the scale of their commitments. The dominoes that concerned the United States were first France and then Japan, while Australia had more immediate concerns about the region to our near North. Both Canberra and Washington based their policies on mistaken assumptions—but they made different mistakes.

In current debates over Australian strategy, Vietnam and the 2003 invasion of Iraq are often cited as two adventures in which we uncritically followed the United States, two examples of what are often disparaged as Australia’s habit of fighting ‘other people’s wars’. In fact, there were at least two fundamental differences between the Vietnam and Iraq commitments.

First, Iraq was about regime change, Vietnam was not. In Vietnam the United States and its allies were seeking to defend a regime, not to overturn the status quo. Whether the South Vietnamese regime had the legitimacy and capacity to survive were the central issues as far as both Hanoi and Saigon were concerned. The American aim was to prevent Hanoi from taking over the state south of the seventeenth parallel; it was never the goal to overthrow the communist regime in Hanoi. Some critics on the right said that the Americans should have invaded the North, but President Johnson knew that to do so would precipitate a massive response from China and perhaps spark a world war with the possible use of nuclear weapons.

In that sense, the Vietnam commitment was comparable to the first Gulf War of the early 1990s, when President George H.W. Bush led a coalition that pushed Saddam Hussein back from his attempt to incorporate Kuwait but—in my view, wisely—did not push on to Baghdad and remove Saddam from power. Today the mantra underlying Australia’s approach to world affairs is support for the rules-based international order. In that context it is much easier to defend the Vietnam commitment than the invasion of Iraq.
The second difference is a simple matter of geography. Vietnam is much closer than Iraq. Since the 1850s, if not earlier, there has been a tension between two points of view about the most effective way of ensuring Australia’s security. The dominant perspective has held that our security depends on a close alignment with powerful allies who share our values as well as our interests, and that this in turn requires us to play our part in defending that alliance wherever our contribution would be most effective. Most commonly that has been within a few hundred kilometres of a line through the Mediterranean Sea, the Suez Canal and the Red Sea; hence names like Gallipoli, Villers-Bretonneux, Tobruk, and Alamein have resonated in our military history. Critics have long alleged that this approach gets us into ‘other people’s wars’, and that we should focus on making as many friends and as few enemies as possible in our region, however we define that concept. Governments always say that they have found the right balance, so that our alliances support our regional relationships and vice versa.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the Australian government argued it had found the right balance in what was known as ‘forward defence’. This, *pace* the critics, was not merely a conflation of the fears of the Red Peril and the Yellow Peril. The government indicated that it would only commit forces to Southeast Asia, not the Middle East (despite pressure from our principal ally to do so), and that Australia would only fight alongside Britain, the United States or both, in a multi-racial coalition to avoid the perception that white nations were dictating the future of Asian nations. This strategic approach worked well in the 1950s and early 1960s, including small but successful commitments to the Malayan Emergency and the Indonesian Confrontation. There is ample evidence that, when faced with the question of involvement in Vietnam in 1964–65, Menzies thought that he was simply applying the same formula that had worked so well in the previous fifteen years of his prime ministership. What we now know is that he failed to understand several major differences.

First, Australians at all levels—in government, business, the media and the general public—knew much less about the mainland of Southeast Asia, especially the former French colonies in today’s Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, than they did about maritime Southeast Asia, especially the former British and Dutch territories that today are Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. Australian politicians, officials,
diplomats and military leaders had fewer opportunities to make independent assessments of political and military situations, and to exercise independent diplomacy, in and around Vietnam than was the case in the islands and peninsulas between Sumatra and New Guinea. Australia also had less confidence in, or opportunity to influence, our principal ally’s military and political strategy.

Second, Menzies underestimated the risk that the United States might be defeated or forced into a humiliating withdrawal. Given his personal experience as a young man of military age in 1917, and then as a young prime minister in 1939–41, it is not surprising that Menzies, like many of his generation, assumed that the crucially important point was to ensure that the United States was engaged in the struggle. The danger, as they saw it, was American isolationism, not imperial overreach.

Taking these points together, Menzies and his colleagues did not realise that the Americans themselves knew so little about the region, and greatly overestimated their ability to succeed where the French had failed.

A famous Chinese proverb, quoted but not originated by Sun Tzu, is sometimes rendered as: ‘Know yourself, know your enemy, and in a hundred battles win a hundred victories.’ The lessons of Vietnam for Australian strategists cannot be expressed so succinctly, but a prosaic summary might be as follows: before committing to a distant intervention alongside an ally, be sure that you know yourself, that you know your enemy, that you know your ally, and that you know not just the recent history but also the deep history of the contested territory and its surrounding area. Then, and only then, will you have a reasonable chance of success.

Notes
3 Mark Dapin, *The Nashos’ War: Australia’s National Servicemen and Vietnam*, Sydney, Viking, 2014. This lecture was given before the publication of Mark Dapin, *Australia’s Vietnam: Myth v. History*, Sydney, NewSouth, 2018, which discusses these myths at greater length.
4 Edwards, pp. 311–12.


10 Hastings, p. 752.


13 Hastings, pp. 533–43.
New People, New Ideas and New Attitudes: Melbourne’s Long Sixties*

Seamus O’Hanlon

Abstract

For that most iconic of twentieth-century decades, the 1960s, start dates, end dates, and the significance of particular events have spawned a mini-version of a wider historical debate about the usefulness or otherwise of dividing the past into neat temporal periods and defining moments. So, too, just who and what constitutes the ‘Sixties Generation’ is subject to debate and constant reinterpretation. This article charts the stories of various people, places and events in Melbourne’s ‘Long Sixties’ to assess the short- and long-term impacts of these on the city’s history and continuing sense of itself.

Introduction: The Idea of the ‘Long Sixties’

Historians have long debated the usefulness of dividing historical periods into neat calendar-specific segments. While in popular culture and commentary, years, decades and centuries are often used to divide the past into neat historical fragments, in reality the world does not change that much at midnight on the 31 December each year, nor on the last day of a decade or a century that happens to end in a ‘9’. As historians we now often refer to ‘long’ and ‘short’ decades and centuries, and recognise that historical periods often overlap temporal ones. We also debate the usefulness of terms such as ‘generation’, as well as more traditional markers of difference such as class, race or gender as tools of historical analysis. However, in political debate and in much popular history and culture, generational labelling has become ubiquitous in recent years. But, as with decades and centuries, most historians now recognise that neat and often arbitrary generational demarcations do not stand up to much detailed historical scrutiny.

* This article is a revised version of the keynote address for the RHSV conference ‘War, Peace, Protest: Fifty Year Reflections on 1968’, delivered 16 September 2018.
For that most iconic of decades, the 1960s, start dates, end dates and just who and what constitute the ‘Sixties Generation’ has spawned its own mini-version of this wider historical debate. British historian Arthur Marwick argued that the Sixties began in many western countries in the late 1950s and, in the case of his own country, Britain, in 1958 following the release the year before of the Wolfenden Report into what were deemed ‘moral’ issues—the legalisation of homosexuality and prostitution, ‘permissiveness’ and censorship among others. Marwick sees the end of the Sixties as coming in 1974 with the miners’ strikes, the oil crisis and the end of the long post-war boom.\(^1\) Poet Phillip Larkin saw the British sexual revolution of the 1960s as beginning in 1963 ‘between the end of the “Chatterley” ban/And the Beatles’ first LP’. Alas these sexual freedoms came much too late for him.\(^2\) In the United States the election of John F. Kennedy in November 1960 and his inauguration two months later is a timely break point, but equally we could go back to 1957 and Elvis Presley’s appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show, or perhaps forward to Martin Luther King’s ‘I have a Dream’ speech in Washington in 1963. The Beatles’ arrival in New York in 1964 and the ensuing ‘British Invasion’ might also be said to mark the decade’s beginning, while its end could be easily linked to any number of dates in 1968, the moon landing in July 1969, or maybe the stabbings at Altamont later that year. Equally plausibly the end date might be 9 August 1974 when Nixon resigned as president. Other countries and people have different start and end dates, or major anniversaries that symbolise the Sixties.

For pedants the 1960s began on 1 January 1961 and ended exactly ten years later, but cultural historians increasingly argue that there is a major difference between the 1960s and ‘the Sixties’. While the former is about a decade, the latter is about an idea, a state of mind, a time when the young and the oppressed rose up and challenged established power structures and conventional ideas.\(^3\) The Sixties is about opposition in other ways too. It is the antithesis of the supposedly dull, staid 1950s and an almost prelapsarian time of freedom before the economic and social backlashes of the 1970s and 1980s. For far too many libertarian men—from both the Left and the Right—the Sixties is also fondly recalled as a time when they had the freedom to exploit women and children, whether socially, sexually or in myriad other ways. As such, for many women the decade of change is not the Sixties but the 1970s when many finally stood up for their rights, when the personal became highly political.
For those like myself who were born in the early years of the 1960s, being corralled in popular memory with the post-war ‘baby boom’ generation has always been somewhat problematic. In popular understandings we should have more in common with those born in 1946 than we do with those born in 1965—wherever in the world we happen to live—because those who were born after 1 January 1946 are Baby Boomers, while those born after 1 January 1965 are Generation Xers. But this is a newish demarcation. Until relatively recently those of us born in the years from the mid-1950s through to the mid-1960s were known as Generation X, or sometimes as the ‘punk’ or ‘blank generation’, and we and our musical and cultural icons saw ourselves in direct opposition to the ageing hippies and pop and rock stars of the 1950s and 1960s (and indeed the early 1970s). Nor do we recognise in our life experiences the idea that for the generation born before 1965 jobs were plentiful and unemployment almost non-existent. Anyone who remembers the recessions of the second half of the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s, or indeed the early 1990s, knows this was not the case. Our experiences of youth and early adulthood were thus very different from those of people born just after World War II and again from those who were born in the 1970s, 1980s and beyond.

Individual years, decades and indeed generations can have particular meanings but not necessarily in the way that marketeers or pop historians would have us believe. Important dates can also have deeply personal associations as well as public ones. And sometimes those public associations coincide with and amplify some of those deeply personal ones, often in ways that are completely counter to the dominant narrative. In particular, 1968 provides a number of important examples of this; the Tet Offensive, protest in Paris and Berlin, the crushing of the Prague Spring, the riots that followed Martin Luther King’s assassination and, later, those that marred the Democratic National Convention in Chicago and featured in the days following Bobby Kennedy’s assassination are all important in geopolitical terms, but they are also the days when thousands of people across the world lost loved ones. As such these dates are anniversaries in a very public sense but also in very private ones. In this way as in others, much of what was political in the Sixties (and perhaps more so in the Seventies) was also incredibly personal. In short, the significance and meanings of notable dates, eras and events are historically contested, geographically
specific and culturally determined. What is important in one place or culture can have very different meanings in others. Decisions about importance are also often intensely personal and subjective.

Melbourne’s Long Sixties
While recollections of the Sixties in Australia, as elsewhere, often look to the protest movements and the ‘events’ of 1968 as significant, I want to take a more social and cultural angle on some of the events and meanings of the long 1960s that were significant in Melbourne and elsewhere in Australia. I do not do so simply to be obtuse or contrary but for solid historical and legacy reasons to which I will return at the end of the paper.

Economics and Immigration I
While the 1960s is popularly remembered as a decade of economic prosperity, it is often forgotten that it began with a ‘credit squeeze’ and a recession that nearly cost Robert Menzies the prime ministership in 1961. The recession also hit a lot of ordinary people and businesses hard. In Melbourne one of its most famous casualties was Stanley Korman, a rather colourful character who emerged from Melbourne’s interwar Polish Jewish community to become a major rag trader and then property developer in both Victoria and Queensland in the late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. He is responsible for, among other buildings, the Stanhill flats in Queens Road. He also owned the Chevron Hotels in Melbourne, Sydney and the Gold Coast. Alongside another Melburnian, Bruce Small of Malvern Star bicycles fame, he is usually credited with kickstarting the Gold Coast as a tourist hub. Korman was also responsible for the suburb of Gladstone Park near Melbourne Airport, and it was this along with too-rapid growth in ancillary companies that brought him undone. As Peter Spearritt and John Young note in their Australian Dictionary of Biography entry on Korman, although he was ‘portrayed in the press in the 1950s as an imaginative and successful entrepreneur, Korman took risks that ultimately collided with the duties inherent in running public companies’. This is a polite way of saying he was a crook, and indeed he did go to jail for a few months in 1966 before re-establishing himself in Las Vegas where he died in 1988. However, his earlier successful career trajectory was a harbinger of some of the big social and economic changes that were to hit Melbourne in the 1960s and beyond.
As noted, Korman was a member of the Polish Jewish community that settled in Melbourne in the interwar years, mostly in Carlton. These ‘Continental Jews’, as they were then known, were one of the first large groups of non-British or non-Irish migrants to settle in what was until then an essentially bi-cultural city. They were later joined by numerous German and Austrian refugees from Nazism and, after the war, by survivors of the Holocaust.\(^5\) From the late 1940s onwards the numbers of Continental European-born Melburnians were bolstered by waves of immigrants from all corners of Europe and a few places beyond. These immigrant groups were to have a huge impact on the business, cultural and morphological shape of Melbourne in the 1960s, 1970s and beyond, and in many ways they helped to create the contemporary city we know today.

**Flats**

As with Korman, many of the early Jewish immigrants—such as the Bardas, Besen and Gandel families—started out in the rag trade before becoming major property players, especially in the retail sector. The Smorgons expanded from a butcher shop in Carlton into steel making, property and numerous other industries, while the Pratts turned box making into a global recycling business. Other members of Melbourne’s new immigrant communities quietly set about building businesses through food processing, retailing and small-scale property development, especially the building of flats, which transformed whole suburbs in the 1960s. As I have argued elsewhere, in building these flats and ‘densifying’ the suburbs they helped to bring ‘a little bit of Europe’ to the city. For a short period in the late 1960s, and for the first time ever, more flats were built in Melbourne than houses, a profound (albeit short-lived) challenge to Melbourne’s idea of itself as a ‘city of homes’.

**Sex**

The thousands of ‘six-pack’ blocks of flats built across inner Melbourne by these entrepreneurs were emblematic of another major change in the 1960s—demographics. In the mid-to-late years of the decade the number of teenagers and twenty-somethings in Melbourne grew rapidly, the logical outcome of the early post-war baby boom; the babies of the 1940s were now the teenagers and young adults of the late 1960s. And, while the stories of protest and revolt of some of these teenagers and young adults have been well told, for many thousands of other young
Melburnians the embrace of change in this period did not involve protest or revolt but simply a change in personal, social and sexual habits. Whereas in 1964 the overtly sexualised behaviour of some teenagers during the Beatles tour shocked some older Melburnians, by the early 1970s the idea that young people were sexually active and might have multiple sexual partners before settling down with one was becoming pretty well accepted. The Pill helped with this of course, but so too did all the new flats in providing a little bit of privacy and independence, and thus a place to have sex away from the prying eyes of parents, neighbours and the authorities. While clues to the story of change in Melbourne in the Sixties can be found in student magazines and images of protest, they can thus also be found by simply walking the streets of St Kilda, Balaclava and East St Kilda, where thousands of these flats were built in a very short period from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s.

These flats are tangible historical evidence of how a demographic bulge merged with new ideas about morality and acceptable social behaviour and a rising entrepreneurial class to profoundly change Australia’s dwelling stock and residential patterns. Like the protest movements and music of the 1960s, the advent of these new ways of living was an international phenomenon. It is no accident that the six-pack blocks we find in East St Kilda and elsewhere in Melbourne are strikingly similar to the ones that were being built at the same time in places such as Los Angeles, Vancouver, Toronto and a number of other rapidly growing immigrant cities. There was a baby boom across the western world in the late 1940s, and by the late 1960s its children were growing up. They needed places to sleep and places to have sex—hence these self-contained flats. They also needed places to study and to work—hence the new and expanded universities, colleges, office buildings and factories of the era.

**Fun**

As young people the baby boomers also wanted places in which to have fun. By the mid-1960s Melbourne’s teenagers and the ‘twenties-set’, as they were then called, were beginning to assert their economic influence, especially their discretionary spending power (counted in dollars from ‘the 14th of February 1966’). As in other cities around the western world, mid-to-late 1960s Melbourne saw the emergence of a distinct youth-focused economy oriented around fun, and 1966 was a
particularly big year for fun. Prime Minister Robert Menzies’ retirement in January was no doubt a cause for celebration by many, and what better way to celebrate than staying at the pub for a few more hours when six o’clock closing was abolished a few weeks later? But, while there is some evidence that young people began to stay on in the pubs, for the most part these traditional drinking venues remained inhospitable places for any but aggressively heterosexual older men.7

Younger more modern people looked elsewhere for fun as well as advice on where to find it. Go-Set, launched in 1966, was a weekly magazine aimed at teenagers, the first edition appearing in the same week that Menzies retired and just before the pubs began to stay open late. Go Set exemplified the new youthful Melbourne emerging in the late 1960s. Each week the back pages of the magazine were full of advertisements for a range of new clubs and venues across Melbourne where young people could go to hear new bands, or increasingly to dance in what became known as discotheques. Perhaps the best remembered of these are Bertie’s, opened in 1966 and housed in an old gentlemen’s club on the corner of Spring and Flinders streets, and Sebastian’s, which followed in 1967 at the Carlton end of Exhibition Street. These two clubs, and numerous others such as the Catcher in Flinders Lane, were
arguably the springboard that gave Melbourne its reputation as a live music city, a status it still holds today—and which in the post-industrial era is now seen as one of its competitive economic advantages.

**Culture**

By the early 1970s (or for our purposes, the final years of the long Sixties), many of the social and cultural changes that had seemed so radical to many Melburnians just a few years earlier were becoming increasingly mainstream. They were also beginning to have political impacts. If in Britain the social Sixties began in 1957 with the release of the Wolfenden Report and the political Sixties in 1964 with the election of Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson, arguably in Melbourne the political Sixties did not begin until 1972 with the retirement of Premier Henry Bolte and his replacement by the more modern and urbane Rupert (Dick) Hamer. The election the following December of a new-look federal Labor government under Prime Minister Gough Whitlam solidified the idea that 1972 was a year of change. However, while these two events represent important political moments they are arguably reflective of emerging social and cultural movements that were already changing the city rather than drivers of them.

The impacts of the La Mama, Melbourne Theatre Group and Pram Factory writers and actors on the culture of Melbourne (and Australia more generally) have been well documented, as have the stories of Melbourne-based filmmakers who helped to restart the local film industry at this time. What is sometimes overlooked is the role of television dramas such as *Homicide* and *Division Four*—both of which were filmed in and around inner Melbourne—in presenting 1960s and 1970s Australia as an urban society rather than a rural one. The soap opera *Number 96* also gave us a (fictional) taste of the lives of flat dwellers in inner Sydney. As a kid growing up in Adelaide in the 1970s I got to know the back lanes of South Melbourne, not by visiting Melbourne but from watching what was perhaps in hindsight too much television. I may also have gotten a rather distorted idea about flat life from *Number 96*. Australians also learnt about bohemian inner Melbourne from the Skyhooks’ first album *Living in the Seventies*, released in 1974, which again presented Australia as an urban society rather than the rural one depicted in then-popular bush ballads and folk tunes and in some of the new films increasingly presented as heralding the revival of Australian cinema in the same period. I did not visit Carlton or Lygon Street until
the early 1980s, by which time its ‘trendy’ heyday had long passed, but growing up in Adelaide in the mid-1970s we thought Skyhooks had told us all we needed to know about it, as well as what ‘Toorak Cowboys’ were, and that when ‘Balwyn’ called it was time to start worrying.

Economics and Immigration II

I began this journey through the long Sixties in Melbourne with an economic and immigrant focus and will finish in the same way. As I have said, there is no question that the election of the Whitlam government in December 1972 brought major social and political change to Australia. The formal end to the White Australia Policy in 1973 profoundly altered Australia’s sense of itself and its place in the world. But often overlooked in histories and popular recollections of the Whitlam government are some important economic changes that were to have significant effects on Melbourne and indeed Australia for decades to come. The decision announced in August 1973 to cut tariffs on imported manufacturing goods by 25 per cent, followed by the appointment in 1974 of Gordon Jackson to enquire into the future of Australia’s manufacturing sector, had profound implications for Australia, and especially its major cities, arguably still playing out today. Jackson’s committee recommended that tariffs be reduced and that, rather than prop up old and dying industries such as the textiles, clothing and footwear (TCF) sector, Australia should instead embrace free trade and high-value-adding manufacturing. The recession of the mid-1970s put implementation of those ideas on hold, but ten years later the Hawke Labor government (Hawke was a member of the Jackson Committee) set about applying some of its recommendations, especially around reducing industry protection. However, while Jackson and Hawke had wanted to move up the manufacturing value chain, for the most part recent governments, and especially those in power since the 1990s, have moved towards services rather than production, meaning that Australia is now essentially deindustrialised.

Whether this is a good or a bad thing is obviously a matter of opinion, but it has had a huge impact on our cities, especially Melbourne and Sydney. Just as a walk around the streets of East St Kilda can tell us a lot about changes in Melbourne in the 1960s, so too can a stroll around places like Southbank tell us much of the story of the city in the decades since the end of the long Sixties. So too does a comparison of images of Southbank from that time and today show us that Melbourne is now
a very different place. The old factories have gone from Southbank, replaced by office buildings, residential towers, numerous hotels, a convention centre and a giant casino. These buildings reflect an economy that is no longer based on production but instead on consumption, on construction, services, education and leisure (i.e. fun), rather than on making things. Southbank and central Melbourne more generally have been internationalised and today cater for the wants and desires of international business people, tourists and visitors as much as, if not more than, the interests of locals. Like the centres of many cities around the world, central Melbourne is now a global space, linked by people, ideas and technology to the world beyond our shores.

**Conclusion: Legacies**

Like the rest of Melbourne, Southbank is now also extraordinarily multicultural, home to new Melburnians, students and visitors from across the globe. Perhaps the biggest legacy of the long Sixties in Melbourne is the recognition that isolation and hanging on to old ideas and values, whether personally, as a community, or indeed as a nation, was a losing game. To my mind the most important and enduring of the legacies of the long 1960s for Australia are not the protest movements (although these are important) but the decision to open up the country to the world. The beginning of the end of the White Australia Policy from the mid-1960s onwards was the harbinger of this, although the impacts of these policy changes were not really apparent until large numbers of Vietnamese refugees arrived in the city in the wake of the fall of Saigon in 1975. So, too, lower tariffs, the acceptance of new economic ideas about free trade, and ‘enmeshment’ with Asia were hugely significant developments that came from the long Sixties although they were not really manifest in major ways until the 1980s.

The opening up of Australia to Asian (and more broadly non-western) immigration, international products and ideas, and the embrace of personal, sexual and cultural freedoms from the 1960s onwards have had a profound impact on Australia, our sense of ourselves and our place in the world. However, this is arguably an urban story rather than a national one. The great changes that came out of the long Sixties—demographic, social, cultural and economic, and yes political—changed the nation profoundly, but even more so the two major cities, which are now not only very different from their pre-1970s selves but also from the rest of the country. Whether these differences
are sustainable economically, socially and most importantly politically in a country and a world that seem to be retreating from some of the inclusive values of the long Sixties appears at present to be very much up for debate.

Notes


The Victorian Mallee Fence: A Forgotten and Misunderstood Relic of Settling the Mallee Region of Victoria

John Pickard

Abstract
The Victorian Mallee Fence was erected in 1885/86 along the line separating blocks and allotments in the Mallee region of north-western Victoria. The 205-mile-long barrier cost £13,790, and its function was to prevent rabbits moving south from blocks and dingoes moving north from allotments. Within five years the Fence was irrelevant as subdivision and settlement extended further into the Mallee. Subdivision overtook the Fence, so it was never tested as a barrier. Earlier errors and confusion about its history, name, function, route, length and cost are redressed in this article.

Introduction: Defining and Dividing the Mallee Region
The early pastoral settlement of the Mallee region of north-western Victoria and its transition to a productive farming region were neither simple nor easy. Settlers faced an indifferent government in Melbourne, short-term leases, recurrent droughts, the mammoth task of clearing mallee by hand, rabbits and dingoes. Rabbits had been spreading north-west from near Geelong since the 1860s through a mix of natural expansion and deliberate releases. Rabbits found mallee an ideal habitat, exacerbating the devastation of the landscape. Dingoes were also causing havoc among the flocks, forcing pastoralists to re-employ shepherds. Deterioration of the country in the 1870s caused many lessees to abandon their holdings.

On 12 October 1883, in an effort to relieve some of these problems, the Victorian parliament passed The Mallee Pastoral Leases Act 1883. The primary purpose of the Act was to encourage Mallee settlement by means of leases with liberal conditions and to ensure that the country be free from vermin. Like other land legislation of the time, this measure had a difficult gestation and followed earlier bills that had been defeated in parliament. The Act defined the Mallee region as all unalienated crown land ‘in the North-Western district of Victoria wholly or partially
covered with the mallee plant’. This vast tract of 11,535,500 acres (20.5 per cent of the colony) was divided into two unequal areas. Schedule 1 defined the boundary on cadastral boundaries from the Murray River near Swan Hill to latitude 36° S, then west to South Australia with a southerly dog-leg (Figures 1 and 2). The Mallee Country (9,317,760 acres) was to the north (s3 and Schedule 1), and the remaining 2,217,740 acres south of the boundary was the Mallee Border (s13 and Schedule 2).

The Mallee Country was divided into large ‘blocks’ intended for pastoralism, and no maximum size was specified. Existing pastoral lessees had a right to a 20-year lease on one block, and leases on the remaining blocks were to be auctioned. Subdivision of blocks was not permitted (s21(2)), but several lessees subdivided their leases without ministerial consent. The Mallee Border to the south was divided into ‘allotments’ with a maximum area of 20,000 acres (s14). Section 19 allowed conversion of blocks to allotments with the consent of the minister. Although both the blocks and allotments were intended for grazing, many settlers on the allotments were wheat farmers.

To redress problems of vermin, lessees of blocks were obliged to destroy them (primarily dingoes and rabbits) (s21(1), but there was no requirement to erect vermin-proof fences around either blocks or allotments. Sections 43 to 53 established ‘vermin districts’ and elected ‘Local Committees for the destruction of vermin’.5 The committees were funded by rates levied on landholders based on the area occupied and numbers of stock carried (s46). Using these funds, committees could ‘take proper and lawful measures to ensure the destruction within its vermin district of all vermin’, including paying ‘scalp-money’ (s45).

Dividing the Mallee into two regions recognised the inherent limits of the region and, more importantly, provided ‘for a slow and organized penetration of closer settlement from the fringe’.6 While the Act assisted the lessees, it did little to reduce two of the root causes of their problems: rabbits and dingoes in Victoria and South Australia. South Australians wanted a fence along the border to stop the western movement of rabbits from Victoria. Mallee lessees supported this, and a second fence in the mallee. This led to two barriers, the Victorian Mallee Fence (1885–86) and the Victorian Border Fence (1887–89), the latter to be funded equally by Victoria and South Australia.

The Mallee Fence is usually described as running from near Swan Hill to latitude 36° S, and then west to the South Australian border.
But its location, origins, function and cost are poorly and inaccurately described in most accounts of the Victorian Mallee's history. In this article, I chronicle the background to the Mallee Fence, and correct previous misunderstandings.

The History of the Mallee Fence
Edward Harewood Lascelles (1847–1917) was the primary driving force behind proposals for the Mallee Fence. He was a complex mix of merchant, innovative pastoralist, entrepreneur, and benevolent landlord. After the passing of *The Mallee Pastoral Leases Act 1883* he took over leases on Lake Corrong and Tyrrell Downs. Ignoring the requirement for ministerial consent to erect improvements, Lascelles was indefatigable, investing heavily in wire fences, rabbit-proof netting fences, and poisoning rabbits and dingoes. He recognised the farming potential of much of the mallee country and lobbied continually for better conditions to encourage mallee settlement.

Following a meeting with Lascelles on 16 January 1885, Minister of Lands Albert Tucker convened a conference of vermin boards in...
Melbourne on 30 and 31 January. Delegates included representatives from the boards and others such as public servants administering both *The Mallee Pastoral Leases Act 1883* and the *Rabbit Suppression Act 1880*. Mallee lessees met before the conference, and Lascelles participated as chairman of the North-Eastern Vermin Board, suggesting:

> the desirability of running a rabbit-proof fence between the allotments and the blocks on the 36th parallel, the Government to erect the fence, charging the owners of the land 6 per cent. interest on the outlay. He had fenced 30,000 acres at £75 per mile, and regarded the money as thoroughly well spent. The fence should be 16 gauge, 1¾in. mesh, and 3ft. 6in. high.⁸

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This appears to be the first proposal for the Mallee Fence, but there is no mention of who would benefit: lessees on blocks or those on allotments. Charging lessees interest on the Fence was a means of making beneficiaries gradually repay the government investment. The proposal was accepted by the subsequent Conference of Vermin Boards, which resolved ‘to put up a [rabbit-proof] fence on the division line between the blocks and the allotments from the South Australian border to Tyntynder, near Swan Hill’.9

After the conference, a deputation presented Tucker with the resolutions, but mindful of the likely capital cost of the barrier the government opted for the safe choice and did nothing. But the pressure did not stop. After another conference of vermin boards in Melbourne on 17 June 1885, a large delegation waited on James Service (premier), Graham Berry (chief secretary) and Tucker with the same resolutions. Disgruntled settlers fed up with inaction, board members, and ten members of parliament were in the delegation. By this stage, 91 per cent of the Mallee Country and 75 per cent of the Mallee Border was leased, even if not occupied.10 William Madden (MLA for Wimmera) concluded his introduction of the delegation by saying that the lessees were ready to go to great lengths in the way of helping themselves, but they considered that, as the land would fall into the hands of the Government before many years were over, some of it in a very few years, the Government should bear some portion of the cost of doing that which, in their opinion, was necessary, viz. the erection of fencing which would be both rabbit and dog proof.11

The delegation pressed for action on a barrier between the blocks and allotments, but the premier was not sympathetic, questioning the value of netting against rabbits, although Lascelles’ experience convinced him of its necessity. Lascelles repeated the calls from the January conference for a barrier fence within the Mallee ‘on the division between the blocks and the allotments from the South Australian border to Tyntynder, near Swan-hill’.12 Within a few days (probably on 23 June 1885), cabinet approved funding of £14,000 or £15,000 for about 150 miles of fence, with the lessees on both blocks and allotments to pay 2½ per cent. Wire was ordered from England, and the plan was to have the barrier fence completed before the end of the year. There was no suggestion that it would be dingo-proof, but the subsequent specification was for a fence to exclude both rabbits and dingoes.
Responsibility for erecting the Fence fell to the North-Eastern Vermin Board (114 miles from ‘Tyntyndyer’ to Galaquil) and its North-Western counterpart (58 miles from Galaquil to the border) (Figure 2). The North-Eastern Vermin Board was first to act and, at its meeting on 25 July, agreed to erect its portion of the Fence. To avoid any disagreement over the best structure to use, the board erected two miles of test fences near ‘Tyntyndyer’. Following an inspection by both boards on 21 August, the North-Eastern Vermin Board approved final specifications on 31 August. Over 100 miles of netting had already been shipped from England, with the balance to arrive by mid-December, ‘by which time the posts and stakes will be in position, and the work of stapling on the netting can be quickly performed’.

In November 1885, Thomas Hewitt Myring (head of the NSW Rabbit Branch) toured Victoria seeking first-hand information on controlling rabbits, and especially the usefulness of fences. He was accompanied by an anonymous reporter from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and they inspected work currently underway on the Mallee Fence. No specification appears to have been published before the Fence was erected, but the reporter’s description complements an abbreviated specification published in April 1886 when the Fence was nearly complete:

Two kinds of netting are to be employed. One length, three feet high, will run along the bottom six inches in and 2 feet 6 inches out of ground, and above that a 2-feet netting of a larger mesh will be fixed. A barbed wire 4 inches above the upper netting will be stapled on the head of every post, and run through the straining posts 2 inches from the top. Four staples will be used on every post, viz., one at the head of the 3-feet netting, one at the top and bottom of the 2-feet netting and one on the top of the post for barbed wire. The ordinary posts must be 6 feet 8 inches high and 60 feet apart, with 8 feet straining posts at intervals of every five chains. The ordinary posts will be 1 foot 10 inches and the straining posts 3 feet in the ground.

Specifications of wire netting fence to be erected on line dividing the mallee blocks and allotments:-

The posts to be of box, pine, or gum timber, barked, and charred, 6ft. 8in. by 8in. by 4in. at small end; round posts, 5½in. by 5½in. at small end; straining posts to be 8in. by 1ft. at small end.
Posts 10ft. apart, with straining posts at every 5 chains; posts 1ft. 10in. in the ground, straining posts 3ft. in the ground. Round sides of posts to be placed against netting (broad side), 3ft. wire netting to be sunk 6in. in the ground, leaving 2ft. 6in. out of the ground. The trench in which netting is sunk must be sunk perpendicularly to allow netting to run in a straight line with posts.

Two feet netting to be placed above and joined to the 3ft. netting. Barbed wire, 4in., above 2ft. netting to be stapled on top of every post, and run through straining posts 2in. from top, 4 staples to be used in every post, viz.—1 for top of 3ft. netting, 1 top and bottom 2ft. netting, 1 on top of post for barbed wire. One No. 10 galvanised wire to be run through every post 2ft. 4in. from top of post; 2 nettings to be joined to No. 10 wire by No. 16 wire in 3 joints, equal distance apart between each panel of fencing. Barbed wire to be connected by 2 pieces of No. 12 wire at equal distances between each panel.

Fence as per … sample erected at Tyntyndyer … Work to be completed 31st January 1886.17

This specification is essentially identical with a wire netting fence ‘four feet ten inches in height’, defined as ‘vermin-proof’ in s2(2) of The Mallee Amending Act 1885 passed on 18 December 1885 while the Fence was being erected. To encourage erection of vermin-proof fences, a bonus of up to £5 per mile was included for fences erected after 1 January 1885 and for three years after passage of the Amendment Act (s7). Equally important were Sections 4 and 5. Section 5 required an incoming lessee to pay a moiety of the value of vermin-proof fences in good condition and allowed a similar payment for clearing. Recognising that restrictions on leasing in the 1883 Act were too restrictive, Section 4 allowed lessees of blocks to also lease allotments, and for any lessee to have more than one allotment. Sections 10 and 11 formalised the original proposals of Lascelles and others that lessees should pay for the Fence through an annual ‘fencing rate.’

Initial progress on erecting the eastern section of the Fence was satisfactory, although barbed wire was not delivered until after March 1886. There are no further details on the construction of the eastern section, but it was completed well before November 1886 when an inspector from the adjoining Eastern District Vermin Board criticised both the poor clearing along the Fence, leaving many stumps that were
shooting and ‘will soon bury the fence’, and the ‘very trumpery character’ of the gates.\(^\text{18}\)

The members of the North-Western Vermin Board deferred any decision on their 58 miles until after inspecting the trial fences near Swan Hill on 21 August. There is no published record of their chosen specification. They called for tenders for clearing and erection three times before accepting bids from J.W. Duffy for 27 miles at £35 9s per mile and from W. Robinson for 27 miles at £40 per mile on 19 February 1886.\(^\text{19}\) The Fence was ‘approaching completion’ in April 1886, but there are no further press reports on its erection. Wood posts were used from Galaquil to west of Lake Hindmarsh, but in the sandier country lacking suitable trees iron posts were used.

The completion date of the Mallee Fence is unknown, but it is likely to have been mid-1886. Given its apparent importance, the months of agitation leading to its approval and claims of how essential it was for settlement, it is surprising that no announcements were made. This was the first imperceptible stage of the Fence’s slip into obscurity, although initial reports were enthusiastic:

> the fence had more points about it than its immense length and the excellence of its construction. It had revived the drooping hopes of the mallee block-holders in their war with the rabbits and wild dogs, and had inspired renewed endeavours, which were being crowned with success … At every station visited between Swan-hill and the South Australian border we found that the war against wild dogs and rabbits was being waged vigorously; we saw very few rabbits, only heard of a comparatively small number of dogs, and observed as a sure sign of the improvement effected that increased numbers of sheep were being put upon the runs.\(^\text{20}\)

Within five years of its erection, however, the Fence was apparently irrelevant and virtually forgotten. This is clearly shown in the report of the Select Committee upon the Settlement of the Mallee Country established by the Victorian government to inquire into ‘the best practicable means in the interests of the State for promoting the settlement of the people upon the mallee country’.\(^\text{21}\) Its primary focus was the propriety of allowing lessees (e.g. Lascelles) to subdivide their leasehold blocks and sell them to intending wheat farmers. Although not permitted, this was common and is an example of what historian J.M. Powell calls the difference between official and popular appraisals.
of the capabilities of the land. The committee questioned 67 witnesses in Melbourne and regional towns in and near the Mallee. Very few responses to the 3,933 questions even mentioned the Fence. Among the few that did, most were en passant, using a descriptive name, and a few used the Fence as a geographic reference (Table 1).

Only one question was directed towards the Fence specifically, exposing the woeful ignorance of the member concerned (Edward John Dixon MLA), who was unaware that it was a government fence:

Q. 3868. By Mr. Dixon.—Who erected the wire fencing below the 36th parallel, between the fringe allotments and the blocks?—[Lascelles] The Government and the lessees, through the Vermin Boards, have paid 5 per cent. on it ever since. It is the Government’s fence, and they charge that on it to recoup themselves.23

More significant than the very few mentions of the Fence is its complete absence in the evidence of S.J. Black (chief inspector of rabbits) (Q. 1582–1593). If he had thought it was of any past or future value, surely he would have raised it? If nothing else, he should have been lauding its virtues as a tacit demonstration of the government’s commitment to settling farmers in the Mallee region. The select committee had several opportunities to examine the value of the Fence, but it was not interested, and neither were the witnesses. No member of the select committee questioned its effectiveness, or whether the first cost was justified. The reason is that, by this time, settlers were already well established beyond the Fence in the Mallee Country (primarily due to the efforts of Lascelles and some others), and rabbits and dingoes were considered under control as mallee was cleared.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TERM</th>
<th>WITNESS</th>
<th>QUESTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>References to the Fence itself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a fence 200 miles long of wire netting, and dog-proof fencing</td>
<td>Albert Tucker (minister of lands who introduced <em>The Mallee Pastoral Leases Act 1883</em>)</td>
<td>748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a divisional fence, a vermin-proof fence</td>
<td>John G.W. Wilmot (attorney for many Mallee region lessees),</td>
<td>1937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a fence</td>
<td>Hugh McCann (crown lands bailiff, Dimboola)</td>
<td>2093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the fringe fence</td>
<td></td>
<td>2095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the 36th parallel</td>
<td>Arthur Scott (farmer in allotments)</td>
<td>2130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the fence</td>
<td></td>
<td>2232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the 36th parallel</td>
<td>Pharez Phillips (large mallee landholder and entrepreneur)</td>
<td>2570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ferdinand Oehm (farmer, Warracknabeal)</td>
<td>3010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the wire fencing below the 36th parallel between the fringe allotments and the blocks</td>
<td>Edward John Dixon (MLA, member of select committee)</td>
<td>3868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the Mallee Fence as a geographic reference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the wire netting*</td>
<td>William Bennett (crown lands bailiff, Dimboola)</td>
<td>1316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the wire fence</td>
<td>Richard Baker (MLA for Lowan)</td>
<td>1735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the dividing fence</td>
<td></td>
<td>1737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the vermin fence</td>
<td></td>
<td>1750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No mention of Mallee Fence</td>
<td>S.J. Black (chief inspector of rabbits, Victoria)</td>
<td>1582–93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: References to the Mallee Fence in evidence before the 1891 Select Committee upon the Settlement of the Mallee Country

* Several ambiguous references to ‘the wire netting’ are omitted here. The context of most suggests they refer to the material rather than the Mallee Fence.
A similar range of terms was used by witnesses at public hearings of the Victorian Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways (1895) enquiry into mallee railways. Again, none of the witnesses commented on its effectiveness or value.

Inspectors employed by the vermin boards ensured that the Fence was maintained in a vermin-proof condition, and that adjoining lessees and selectors controlled rabbits and destroyed any mallee that would harbour them. In 1895 an inspector recommended that the government sell the Fence to lessees. The government agreed, amending the legislation in 1896 to allow the Board of Land and Works to sell sections of the Fence to adjoining landholders (s34 *The Mallee Lands Act 1896*). In January 1897, the government valued it at £25 per mile, to be paid in five equal annual instalments. But this and a similar proposal in August 1898 at £20 per mile lapsed. From 17 March 1899 the government announced sales of portions of the Fence in the *Victorian Government Gazette*, continuing throughout 1899 and then irregularly to 19 August 1908.

At one stage the Fence was under the control of the Western Wimmera Vermin Board but was later transferred to the Wimmera Shires Association (shire of Wimmera, Arapiles, Dimboola, Lowan and Lawloit). Although most of the Fence was now in private hands, control of its vermin-proof status remained with the vermin boards. It crossed at least 80 public roads and an unknown number of private entrances to properties. Thus gates were always an inherent weakness. Inspectors reported in 1915 and 1917 that leaving gates open was an on-going problem, and many sections of netting were rusted off and ineffective. Government interest in the Fence in the twentieth century was minimal; a miserly £200 was provided for maintenance in 1926. At ruling prices, this would have been enough for about three miles of netting and wire, plus a few weeks labour. On 4 August 1949 the Wimmera Shires Association was disbanded, and the government took control of the Fence. In 1952 it spent a further, equally miserly, £270 on repairs before stopping all support in 1959.

**The Mallee Fence Today**

Today, most of the Fence survives in greater or lesser dereliction (Figure 3) and remnants can be found along most of its line. Virtually all surviving sections adjacent to cultivated land are partially buried with aeolian sediment. Ironically, this is favoured by rabbits for warrens. Along most of the original fence line, a range of newer fences have been erected parallel and close to the original vermin-proof barrier. In other
sections, the original fence has been bulldozed and replaced. The new fences are standard farm fences of the region, either post-and-wire or prefabricated fencing.

**Confusion over the Mallee Fence and its History**

One of the most striking features of the Mallee Fence is confusion about almost every aspect of its history: name, original function, route, length and cost. This confusion is reflected in the lack of accurate detail and uniform information in many local histories and other documents, and in monuments erected by local communities.28

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*Figure 3: Variations in the Mallee Fence* (Photographs John Pickard)

(a) – (c) Flat steel posts were used on the western end of the Fence along Netting Fence Track. (a) Reasonably intact section showing flat steel posts and marsupial netting above rabbit netting. (b) Large holes in the marsupial netting provide no barrier to animals. (c) Bulldozed section of fence that was beyond repair. Bent-over iron posts are arrowed. A standard stock fence has replaced this section. (d) Typical part-buried section with wood posts south of Swan Hill with added steel posts supporting a higher barbed wire. (e) Relatively intact section with original pine posts and components. Dog Netting Road, south of Culgoa.
Confusion over the Name of the Fence

There is no widely accepted common or formal name for the Fence; instead different names are used by different writers and local groups (Tables 1 and 2). This suggests relatively little interaction between the communities along its line. The reason is probably related to the history of settlement and northerly expansion of the railways at about the same time. The south–north railways (Figure 4) linked regional centres and Melbourne, but there were few east–west lines. As each town was self-contained, the only reasons for visiting villages or towns on other railway lines would have been social or community events. Even with modern transport and communications, residents and landholders are strongly attached to their local town. Inter-town rivalries in the area extended beyond sport and other contests to bitter fights to secure railways to a town or to have a particular town declared the shire administrative centre.29

With one notable exception, each of the many subsequent names used is logical, but the sheer number is more than a little daunting. As the Fence was both rabbit- and dingo-proof, the name ‘Wimmera Wild Dog Fence’ is both geographically and functionally inaccurate.30 The
The Victorian Mallee Fence: A Forgotten and Misunderstood Relic of Settling the Mallee Region of Victoria

The Victorian Mallee Fence was entirely within the Mallee region and had negligible impact on the history and development of the Wimmera to the south. The grandiose ‘national vermin-proof fence’ appears hyperbolic to modern eyes, but before Federation important issues affecting a colony were frequently called ‘national’.

Adopting a single name for the Fence would better reflect its original status as a single item of state-level importance. This would not affect continued local ‘ownership’ of segments of the Fence nor use of local names, but it would be a good start to unified thinking about the Fence and its meaning to Victoria.

The most appropriate name for the fence is the ‘Victorian Mallee Fence’, shortened to ‘Mallee Fence’ or ‘Fence’, depending on the context. The Fence was erected along the cadastral boundary between the blocks and allotments, and its function was to fence out vermin in the Mallee region. Thus the name is cadastrally and functionally accurate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legislation/government notices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the vermin proof wire net fence</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the State Vermin-Proof Fence</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary newspapers (see also Table 1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Victorian Government mallee fence</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the vermin-proof fence on the 36th parallel</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the parallel fence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the national vermin-proof fence</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Government fence</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsequent local histories etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a netting fence between the pastoral blocks and the Mallee allotments</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Vermin Proof Fence</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fence</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The dog netting</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria’s Rabbit Fence</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netting Fence</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The dogproof fence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The dog fence</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Wimmera Wild Dog Fence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Dog Netting Fence</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Names applied to the Victorian Mallee Fence
Confusion about the Function of the Fence

The specifications, structure, and cost of the Fence all indicate unambiguously that it was intended to block both rabbits and dingoes. However, wide differences of opinion about the specific function of the Fence persisted (Table 3, Figure 5). These involve almost every possible combination of rabbits, dingoes and their respective directions of movement. These discrepancies are not mere pedantry; understanding the reasons for its erection is fundamental to assessing its success and impact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FUNCTION</th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
<th>MONUMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Stop rabbits moving south</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Stop dingoes moving south</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Stop dingoes moving north</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Stop rabbits moving south and dingoes moving north</strong></td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Stop rabbits moving north and dingoes moving south</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Kinnabulla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Stop rabbits and dingoes moving south</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Culgoa; Galaquil; Lalbert Lake Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘enable the lessees to combat the rabbits and wild dogs’</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3: Interpretations of the function of the Mallee Fence.**
Numbers refer to Figure 5. **Bold** text highlights the correct function.

In 1885 Edward Lascelles clearly described the vermin problem in the Mallee: ‘the rabbits went from the blocks to the allotments [i.e. moved south], but the wild dogs invaded the blocks from the allotments [i.e. moved north], where they were not destroyed’. Lascelles’ original proposal at the January 1885 Conference of Vermin Boards was for the fence to be ‘rabbit-proof … The fence should be 16 gauge, 1⅝ in. mesh, and 3 ft. 6 in. high’. He was well aware of the differences between rabbit- and dingo-proof fences, and knew that dingoes required fences 5 feet high. But for unknown reasons, he supported a low netting fence with 1⅝ inch mesh, suitable only against adult rabbits and arthritic dingoes. Again led by Lascelles, the June 1885 Conference of Vermin Boards also wanted a ‘rabbit-proof fence’.

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*Victorian Historical Journal*, Volume 90, Number 1, June 2019
The first press report (27 June 1885) describes the fence as ‘wire rabbit-proof fencing’ between the pastoral blocks and the smaller allotments in the mallee.\(^5\)\(^5\) Soon after erection commenced, the Fence’s purpose was clearly described: ‘The allotment holders, or selectors, complain of the influx of rabbits from the blocks, and the block holders complain of the dogs that come from the allotments. Hence the proposed fence. It will be both dog and rabbit proof’.\(^5\)\(^6\)

Later interpretations mix the direction of movement of rabbits and dingoes, either separately or together. The select committee settled for the neutral but incomplete ‘enable the lessees to combat the rabbits and wild dogs’. Three much later explanations suggest that the Fence protected the adjacent Wimmera Region to the south.
• The fence would protect the fertile farmlands of the Wimmera from the depredations of noxious vermin such as rabbits and wild dogs.\textsuperscript{57}

• The structure was expected to stop rabbits invading the Mallee from the south, and dingoes from invading the Wimmera from the north.\textsuperscript{58}

• The Vermin Proof Fence should be built to prevent rabbits moving down from the ravaged north into the Wimmera.\textsuperscript{59}

Supporting its interpretation (‘to control wild dogs (dingoes) and foxes from the north and rabbits from the south’), the Back to Beulah Committee’s history cited a letter from J.R. Ashworth (secretary for lands) dated 8 March 1983.\textsuperscript{60} Apparently even the government department originally responsible for erecting the Fence had forgotten its function.

Resolutions from the several conferences in early 1885 called for a rabbit-proof fence, but the specification and cost and the structure of surviving sections show that the Fence was both rabbit- and dingo-proof. There is no information on who made this change and why, but with the advantage of hindsight we can see that it was a logical decision to cope with both pests. This still leaves the question of who was being protected from which pest? Contemporaneous descriptions of the vermin problem are unambiguous; rabbits were moving south from blocks, and dingoes were moving north from allotments. Thus the function of the Fence was to prevent, or at least slow down, these two movements.

\textit{Confusion about the Route of the Fence}

The Fence was erected on the boundary between the blocks in the Mallee Country and the allotments in the Mallee Fringe. This boundary was explicitly specified in Schedule 1 \textit{The Mallee Pastoral Leases Act 1883} and shown on many plans prepared by the Department of Crown Lands and Survey. It was generally described as running along latitude 36° S from the South Australian border, then up to near Swan Hill. Many descriptions include the phrase ‘36th parallel’ or similar, referring to the long west–east section. Typical is Hopetoun historian Agnes Hilton’s description: ‘a netting fence from the border of South Australia along the 36th Parallel, nearly to Birchip where it turned in a northerly direction to the River Murray.’\textsuperscript{61} This is a barely adequate summary, as it conceals
the dog-leg at the western end, and the step-wise easterly and northerly sections at the eastern end (Figure 2). The dog-leg was an amendment inserted in the Act by William Madden, but his reasons are unknown.

While it is logical to fix the boundary along cadastral boundaries, there was no public discussion and no public record of the reasons for its chosen location. It is likely that it was done in the Survey Branch with the objective of having as many allotments as possible to settle farmers. Had the boundary been fixed further into the Mallee region, the government ran the risk of farmers settling on poorer land, with the distinct possibility of many throwing up their leases. If it had been closer to the edge of the mallee lands, the government would have lost revenue. History shows that the location was conservative over much of its length (Figure 4).

Nyah historian Grace Willoughby’s description is mistaken as to the date, location and extent of the Fence, conflating the Mallee Fence with the Border Fence erected from 1887 to 1889 but never completed: ‘This wonderful fence built in 1887 extended from near the Tyntynder Homestead south through Woorinen and beyond, then south west towards the Yarriambiac [sic] Creek at Warracknabeal. Then to the Victorian/South Australian boarder [sic], right down to the sea along the border’.

A notable exception to this confusion and inaccuracy about the route is the Back to Beulah Committee’s local history, which includes an accurate small-scale map of the route.

Confusion over the Length and Cost of the Fence

Two other sources of confusion concern the length and original cost of the fence (Table 4), and the need to allow for inflation when converting earlier costs in pounds to current dollar values.

When first announced, the estimated length of the Fence was either 150 or 175 miles, at a cost of £14,000 – £15,000. The government placed £14,000 on the estimates for its erection in the 1885/86 financial year. On 11 June 1889, the secretary of lands (Arthur Morrah) was asked in parliament for the cost of the Mallee Fence and the Border Fence. His response, tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 19 June, gave the cost of the 197-mile-long Mallee Fence as £13,790, or £70 per mile.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>LENGTH (MILES)</th>
<th>COST (£)</th>
<th>COST (£ PER MILE)</th>
<th>REFERENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27 Jun 1885</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>14,000–15,000</td>
<td>(80–86)</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>150</td>
<td>(93–100)</td>
<td></td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Aug 1885</td>
<td>(172)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Feb 1886</td>
<td>184</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Apr 1886</td>
<td>180</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Nov 1886</td>
<td>176</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Apr 1887</td>
<td>204</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Jun 1887</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Jun 1889</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>13,790</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Aug 1891</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>206</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>(18,000)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>(14,280)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>(18,360)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>204.9 (as erected with western dog-leg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>193.8 (direct along latitude 36° S)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4: Length and cost of the Mallee Fence**

Figures in parentheses were not given in the source, but are calculated.

There is a major discrepancy between Morrah’s 197 miles and the 205 miles estimated by scaling off current 1:25,000 digital topographic maps. This cannot be explained by inaccurate maps or problems with projections. Rather it suggests that the length stated by Morris is actually incorrect, which is surprising as cadastral surveys at the time closed within a few inches.

There are also discrepancies between various estimates of the lengths erected by two vermin boards. The North-Eastern Vermin Board
called for tenders for 114 miles of fencing when the actual length was 122 miles, and the North-Western Vermin Board called for tenders for 70 miles, which was along latitude 36°S instead of the longer dog-leg route. While there were delays in completing surveys in the Mallee region, the original plan prepared by the Department of Crown Lands and Survey allowed accurate estimates little different from those scaled off modern topographic maps. Apparently using Morrah’s (1889) information that the Fence cost £70 per mile, the Back to Beulah Committee claimed the fence cost ‘£70 ($140) per mile’, using a direct conversion of £1 = $2.\textsuperscript{80} But, with no allowance for inflation, the dollar value is meaningless. An interpretation sign at the Kinnabulla reconstruction repeats the same error. Neither Sheila Wessels (biographer of Lascelles) nor Phil Taylor (historian of Karkaroc), give any source for their cost of £90 per mile.\textsuperscript{81}

Regardless of confusion about the cost, the Fence is noteworthy for being erected under budget and with no suggestions of corruption in awarding tenders. This is in marked contrast to many other government infrastructure projects both at the time and up to the present day. The delays were all force majeure, caused by delayed surveys and late delivery of wire.

**Monuments to the Fence**

The Fence is commemorated today by several monuments and reconstructions (Gepperts Gate south of Rainbow, Galaquil, Kinnabulla, Culgoa and Lalbert Lake Road), as well as road names. The different reasons given on plaques and signs (Table 5) suggest that the various memorials and reconstructions are the result of local groups independently lobbying local councils to provide funds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONUMENT OR INTERPRETATION SIGN</th>
<th>INTERPRETATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gepperts Gate</td>
<td>No sign. The painting only shows rabbits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galaquil monument</td>
<td>Dingo &amp; Rabbit Prevention Fence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinnabulla interpretation sign</td>
<td>Wild Dog Netting Fence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culgoa monument, Lalbert Lake Road reconstruction</td>
<td>Dog Netting Fence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birchip Museum reconstruction</td>
<td>Wild Dog Fence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Descriptions of the Mallee Fence on interpretation signs and monuments
Unlike the uniform interpretation signs along self-guiding heritage trails highlighting dry stone walls in the Corangamite area of the Western District further south, there is no coordinated and uniform information about the Fence. The reasons are beyond the scope of this paper but are likely to be found in: the lack of interested individuals championing the Fence as a unified object; the absence of a heritage study of the Fence; the fact that the Mallee shires are less wealthy than those with walls and that walls are treated as iconic and thus more highly valued by local communities and visitors alike. Walls are typically located in rolling green landscapes regarded by many visitors as more attractive than the rather unvarying flat mallee and wheat landscapes. Fundamentally, today the Mallee Fence is seen as just another derelict fence, albeit higher than most. Four roads along the Fence are named after it: Netting Fence Track, Dog Netting Road, Wild Dog Fence Road, and Dog Netting Fence Road.

The preoccupation of both the monuments and road names with dingoes, almost to the exclusion of rabbits, is striking. Once again, this highlights the confusion and poor local knowledge about the history and function of the Fence.

**Conclusion: The Value and Long-term Impact of the Fence**

Barrier fences are more than vermin-proof fences writ large. They are a technical, social and political response to a serious problem affecting many landholders. Despite the widespread belief that barriers are impervious fences to stop invasion, their true function is to slow movement of pests. Of course, a barrier fence could never stop malicious or self-interested deliberate release of rabbits beyond barriers.

There are four distinct phases in the history of the Mallee Fence. The first, lasting less than six months, was agitation leading to the government’s decision to erect the Fence. The second was rapid action from July 1885 to mid-1886 as the Fence was erected. This involved specifications, tests of fences, tenders, contracts, and erection. The third phase, of rapid decline to irrelevancy, started as soon as the Fence was complete. The fourth and final phase has been the long slow decline of the fabric of the Fence from the 1890s as it was sold piece-meal and sections replaced with new fences.

A fifth phase has yet to begin: consideration of the Mallee Fence as historic heritage. At the very least, it is an important historic relic as the first barrier fence erected in Australia, and its structure was a template
for later dingo fences. It has also left a rich social heritage: local names for the Fence, road names and monuments. These social components in turn are now part of the historic heritage of the Fence, which extends well beyond the structure itself. It is also worth pondering why this major civil work that was considered necessary to allow settlement in the Mallee region is now almost forgotten. The Mallee Fence is crying out for a state government-funded heritage study (which would almost certainly lead to a Heritage Council nomination at state-level significance) and a conservation management plan developed in cooperation with adjoining landholders.

Was the Mallee Fence any use? Was it worth the investment of £13,790 of government money? Did it allow faster settlement that was more securely protected against rabbits and dingoes? In 1887 R.J. Murchison, who advocated ferrets and polecats to control rabbits, was unequivocal in his criticism of the ‘extraordinary craze’ for rabbit fences in general and the Mallee Fence specifically: ‘I venture to say that in a few years to come these fences will be lying rotting on the ground as mementos of the folly of those who erected them.’

Reflecting on the utility of the Fence many decades on, Taylor was equivocal, but Wessels considered it useless, writing:

One desperate and, as revealed by subsequent land acts, futile gesture against the rabbit invasion was the erection in 1885 of the famous “Fence” … The fence was in fact an admission of defeat as current methods of vermin control had proved ineffectual. It was also an indication of government apathy.

This is a very harsh judgment, but the fact that it was barely mentioned in the 1891 report of the Select Committee upon the Settlement of the Mallee Country supports her conclusion that it was ineffectual. However, the government was not apathetic. It passed The Mallee Pastoral Lands Act 1883 to ease some conditions for lessees and continued to see settlement in the Mallee region as the answer to the vermin problem. Lascelles and others had shown that netting fences, clearing mallee, cultivating, and poisoning would reduce both rabbits and dingoes. In this context, the Mallee Fence should not be seen as ‘an admission of defeat’; it used the best-available technology to deal with the root causes of a very real social problem: rabbits and dingoes inhibiting the success of mallee settlement. Everyone agreed
that as settlement progressed more farmers would take up land and the
government’s revenue from rent would increase. Thus the £13,790 cost
of the Mallee Fence is better seen as a government investment, based on
optimism about the farming potential of the Mallee region. The initial
settlers needed added protection for a few years, and they gradually
paid for the Fence through fencing rates levied by the vermin boards.

It is difficult to assess the success of the Fence as a barrier. Rolling
and burning mallee (mullenising), followed by cultivating with stump-
jump ploughs, allowed settlers to grow wheat to its north and west. By
1896, 1,326,500 acres from the blocks had been transferred to allotments
(Figure 4). As farming spread north and west into the mallee, more
vermin control was possible, and more settlers erected their own
rabbit-proof fences. Dingoes were eliminated with strychnine. As a
consequence, the Mallee Fence had no long-lasting impact on land
use (Figure 4). Rather, as subdivision of the mallee blocks continued
and farmers cleared mallee for wheat, the Fence became just another
vermin fence in the Victorian Mallee. The speed of this transformation
meant that it was never really tested as a barrier. This did not diminish
subsequent faith in rabbit and dingo barriers in Australia, with the
Border Fence being erected within twelve months of the Mallee Fence.
In early 1887, the two barriers formed ‘the biggest paddock in the world’,
bounded in the north by the Murray River, in the east and south by
the Mallee Fence, and in the west by the Border Fence. The structure
chosen in 1885 was successful in slowing the movement of both rabbits
and dingoes, and became the de facto standard for all subsequent private
and government dingo fences until about the 1940s. Some pastoralists
argued for many decades in favour of lower, and thus cheaper, dingo
fences, but experience showed that high fences, like the Mallee Fence,
were what was required.

Although it had no lasting effect in the Mallee itself, the Victorian
Mallee Fence was significant as the first Australian barrier fence, as
establishing a structure that was subsequently used all over Australia,
and, for a few years at least, as the longest netting fence in the world.

Acknowledgements
This paper is expanded from my PhD research supervised by Associate
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Information from local historians Dawn Petschel (Rainbow Historical Society) and Gwyn Wiseman (Hopetoun Historical Society), and artist Peter Ralph (President, Rainbow Art Group) greatly assisted my understanding of the Mallee Fence. However, interpretations remain my own.

Notes


5 By 1885 the committees were known as vermin boards.

6 Powell, p. 216.


13 As with many other aspects of the Mallee Fence, there is confusion about its length. This is considered below.

14 ‘Staple’ was a generic term for any form of wire tie attaching line wires or netting to posts, not just U-shaped staples hammered into wooden posts.

15 ‘The Vermin-proof Fence’, *Kerang Times and Swan Hill Gazette*, 11 August 1885, p. 3.

16 ‘Our Special Correspondent’, ‘Rabbit Destruction in Victoria V’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 November 1885, p. 11.

19 ‘Extirpation of Vermin,’ *Hamilton Spectator*, 23 February 1886, p. 2.
21 VMSC, p. iii.
22 Powell, pp. xx–xxiii, 214.
23 VMSC, p. 140.
24 Victoria Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways, *Report from the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways on the Question of Further Extension of Railways in the Mallee Districts; together with Minutes of Evidence and Appendices*, Melbourne, Government Printer, 1895.
30 Back to Beulah Committee, p. 2.
31 Back to Beulah Committee, p. 2.
33 ‘Our Special Correspondent,’ ‘Rabbit Destruction in Victoria V,’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 November 1885, p. 11.
34 ‘Our Own Correspondent,’ ‘Vermin Destruction in Victoria. Evidence before the South Australian Vermin Commission,’ *South Australian Register*, 29 April 1893, p. 25.
36 ‘Meeting of Mallee Lessees at Warracknabeal,’ *Horsham Times*, 6 August 1886, p. 2.
37 Kenyon, p. 84.
41 Howcroft, *This Side*, p. 72.
43 Back to Beulah Committee, pp. 1, 2.
44 Dunn, p. 55.
Blake, p. 41.
Dunn, p. 55.
Edward H. Lascelles, in VMSC, Q. 3868, p. 140.
Back to Beulah Committee, p. 1; Taylor, p. 47.
VMSC, p. v.
Netting was frequently referred to as “wire” in the 1880s. The context is usually clear.
Hilton, p. 21.
Taylor, p. 47.
Blake, p. 41.
Back to Beulah Committee, p. 1.
Hilton, p. 21.
Willoughby, p. 9.
Back to Beulah Committee, facing p. 1.
Arthur Morrah, ‘Rabbit-proof Fencing. A Return Showing the Mileage of Rabbit-proof Fencing Erected by the Government, the Cost per Mile, the Cost of Maintenance and how Paid, and the Rate Struck; also the Distance from Tintynder, Yarriambiac Creek, Following the Boundary between the Mallee Leases and Farmers’ Holdings’, Victorian Parliamentary Paper No. C1, 1889.
‘Editorial [Decision to fund erection of the Mallee Fence]’. Argus, 27 June 1885, p. 9.
‘The Vermin-proof Fence’, Kerang Times and Swan Hill Gazette, 11 August 1885, p. 3.
‘Progress on Mallee Fence’, Argus, 9 February 1886, p. 5.
Morrah, ‘Rabbit-proof Fencing’.
Albert L. Tucker, in VMSC, Q. 748, p. 29.
Scaled off Victoria, Department of Crown Lands and Survey, 1892.
Wessels, p. 76.
Back to Beulah Committee, p. 1.
78 Taylor, p. 47.
79 Scaled off Victoria, 1:25,000 topographic maps, 2008 digital edition.
80 Back to Beulah Committee, p. 1.
81 Wessels, p. 76; Taylor, p. 47.
83 Taylor, p. 47; Wessels, pp. 75–6.
Imagining School at Benalla’s Migrant Camp

Bruce Pennay

Abstract

Two problems arise from the uncovering of a hitherto inaccessible but relatively unaltered schoolroom at the former Benalla Migrant Camp. The first is in making the room visitable. The second is in helping visitors to make sense of schooling at a post-war migrant accommodation centre. Both are heritage management problems that depend on the local council finding space for Benalla Migrant Camp stories at the site of the camp. Both prompt reflection on public and personal memory making at places related to the arrival and settlement of post-war migrants in Australia.

For people with personal memories of Victorian state primary schools in the 1950s there is nothing remarkable about the look of the school room recently uncovered in a heritage survey of buildings at the former Benalla Migrant Centre. The chalkboard, coat pegs, even the light fittings may provide sufficient memory prompts for former state school pupils to recall interactions with teachers and fellow pupils. Perhaps they will remember reading, writing or arithmetic lessons. Perhaps they will remember encouragement to save with the school branch of the State Savings Bank of Victoria or to join the Gould League of Bird Lovers. Perhaps they will remember special school functions—concerts, fetes or celebrations of Empire/Commonwealth Day. Other school rooms elsewhere prompt such recollections and serve as ‘warm parlours of the past’. What is remarkable about this particular school, however, is the way it prompts not only personal memory but also wider public reflection about the kind of schooling that occurred in this particular locale.
Benalla Migrant Camp entrance in the 1950s (Courtesy Benalla Migrant Camp Inc.)

The former school room at the camp, 2017 (Courtesy Heritage Concepts)
The Benalla Aerodrome School, State School 4651, was opened with the Commonwealth Immigration Holding Centre in November 1949. It was based in what had been instruction huts of a former RAAF training camp at an aerodrome on the edge of the small town of Benalla in north-eastern Victoria. School inspectors reported that the buildings were adequate for instructional purposes. However, the surrounds initially were worrying. There were, at first, no defined school grounds—no fence, no playground. The school was adjacent to an open drainage trench. There was no school flagpole for ‘loyal observances’. There seemed to be no opportunities to establish a garden. The needs of RAAF trainees had plainly been different from the needs of primary school pupils. Physical improvements were to be made, but the steady stream of newly arrived non-English speaking pupils continued to present what inspectors liked to encourage teachers to think of as ‘a challenge’. This was an ordinary school in an out-of-the-ordinary locale.

In 2016 the Heritage Council of Victoria decided that the former Benalla Migrant Camp was significant to the state as one of only two comparatively substantial remnants of a network of places used to accommodate assisted non-British new arrivals in the post-war years. This particular camp ‘played a distinctive role in settling vulnerable groups’. The camp was of social significance ‘for its connection with former residents and their families and for its ability to interpret the experience of [post-war] non-British migrants to the broader Victorian community’. As a state heritage-listed property, the buildings rather than the pupils have become a challenge—this time to place managers.

The heritage-registered area of what remains of the camp includes a row of nine P1 huts. They are lightweight, timber framed and clad in corrugated metal. Four of them remain approximately where they were originally located. Today two of the huts are occupied by the Gliding Club of Victoria; one by Ballooning Victoria; one by Broken River Potters; one is privately leased by a person conducting yoga classes; two are used by Benalla Theatre Company; one by Benalla Historical Society; half a hut by Benalla Broken River Painters Inc., and the other half by the Benalla Migrant Camp Exhibition. Just beyond the registered area is a large Bellman Hangar, one of the four used by the RAAF, a clearly visible reminder of the wartime uses of the place. A heritage building survey found that one of the two huts occupied by the theatre company and used as a rehearsal and storage space has been
extended and markedly changed, losing what the consultant refers to as its ‘architectural significance’. To the rear of the other is the relatively unaltered school room. A second hut, which served as a chapel and presbytery, has also ‘largely retained its integrity’.

In accordance with the statement of significance, a newly adopted Conservation Management Plan (CMP) recommends that more space than the half-hut currently used for a photographic exhibition needs to be ‘allocated to a better representation of the residential life of the migrant community’. It suggests that the place as a whole ‘can provide a better understanding of migrant life through targeted exhibition spaces’. It recommends fabric interpretation that could ‘recreate the life in the Camp from a child’s perspective’. It nominates the school room and the former chapel as key relatively unaltered sites with which to begin migrant camp story-telling.

This key recommendation of the CMP poses challenges for place managers, however. First, there is a physical challenge. There is no ready agreement as to where more space might be found for migrant camp stories in the cluster of huts. For instance, Benalla Theatre Company claims ownership of the school room. It is a strongly asserted claim based on the rights of a long-term leaseholder, dating back to arrangements made by the company’s predecessor organisation with Benalla Council in 1979. Some councillors, who wanted to support a local organisation that made a vigorous contribution to the cultural life of the community, gave oral undertakings to the group that the building was its. Even though there was no clear legal transfer documentation, the Benalla Theatre Company, acting on the belief that it now owned the buildings, raised and spent its own money on maintenance as basic as restumping and rewiring as well as on internal redevelopment to meet its storage and rehearsal space needs. Further, the group’s claim is backed simply and powerfully by possession.

Other groups occupying the huts have similar disputed ownership or long lease claims. To reclaim space for the migrant camp story, Benalla Rural Council is revisiting the issue and may be considering withdrawing its long-term support from these worthy community cultural groups. Council now has to make decisions about acting upon the CMP—that is, about how far it wants to be involved in what Jay Winter calls the ‘business of remembering’. 
This article frames discussion of this problem as a heritage place management case study. It points to the importance of local government decision-making on public memory places, related in this instance to how Australia represents migrant and refugee history in such places. As part of this approach, I raise a second and wider problem of making sense of schooling at the migrant camp. As John Tunbridge would urge, I look beyond the relic and ask what the school means to the state, the local community and former residents.  

I see this article as making a contribution to the growing body of work on heritage-making generally and on Australia's migrant and refugee history in particular. I follow G.J. Ashworth, Brian Graham and Tunbridge on public memory place-making at different scales of significance—nation/state, local, family/personal. I acknowledge the leadership of, first, Jean Martin and, later, John Petersen in exploring the importance of immigration at a local community level. I also draw on the work on community support for the newly arrived migrants by Ann-Mari Jordens, Kristy Kokegei and Jennifer Jones whose work supports the less abrasive interpretations of what was called assimilation. In this I take a different direction from Andrew Markus and Margaret Taft, who ignore local community involvement in assimilation. By looking at the schooling of children, I extend the work on migrant hostels and the care extended to the vulnerable undertaken by Catherine Kevin and Karen Agutter, drawing particularly on their notion of 'constrained compassion'. I admire the way Alexandra Dellios has examined some children's memories of the Benalla Migrant Camp. She captures something of the character of the place and uses their memory pieces as windows into the lives of their parents. Here I extend her notion of grass-roots heritage-making to include local community engagement with or indifference to site husbandry.

In unravelling meanings of the camp and the school within it, I revisit arguments I advanced in two earlier publications about Benalla and two about Bonegilla. Those publications draw on sources similar to those used here. In addition, I have for this article revisited school records and held more real time and email discussions with some former school children and their partners. I attempt to ascertain contemporary observations and elicit present-day recall to establish something of the nature of schooling in this particular place. But, first, I explain why
hitherto there have been difficulties in assessing and proclaiming the heritage value of Benalla Migrant Camp.

**Benalla Migrant Camp as Difficult Heritage**

I have argued that Benalla received little public attention at the national level while it operated because it played only a humble part in Australia’s post-war immigration scheme. Australia-wide, there were in 1949–50 three large reception centres where non-British new arrivals were received, processed and dispatched to workplaces, generally within three or four weeks. There were also twenty much smaller holding centres scattered, almost invariably, throughout inland Australia in disused defence establishments. They opened successively in New South Wales and Victoria at Cowra, Uranquinty, Greta, Rushworth, Parkes, Somers, Benalla, West Sale, Scheyville and Mildura. The holding centres, which locals and residents called migrant camps, were in effect short-term camps for women and children until a migrant worker was able to make alternative accommodation arrangements for his family. Dependants might expect to be housed there for between four and six months. Holding centres were for the most part short-lived; most closed when the flow of rapid intakes eased. Because they were for dependants not workers, they seemed to make little direct contribution to the overall purpose of the immigration program. While they operated they attracted little attention at the national level. What is more, Benalla’s was a peculiar and perhaps subsidiary holding centre.

In 1949, the Australian government faced problems in coping with the arrival of a large number of supporting mothers with children among its post-war immigrants. At the time the women were most commonly dubbed ‘widows’ or ‘unsupported mothers’; they were ‘dependant’, ‘encumbered with children’ and had ‘no breadwinner’. The supporting mothers had been admitted at the request of the International Refugee Organisation to help it empty the displaced person refugee camps in Europe.\(^{18}\) Harold Holt, the minister for immigration in the newly elected Menzies government, explained: ‘It was fully realised that their employment and accommodation would present a problem, but rather than let them become a hard core of unwanteds in whatever country of Europe they managed to drift to, Australia agreed to accept them on humanitarian grounds.’\(^{19}\) While they were accepted as a humanitarian gesture they were also seen as part of the large-scale immigration scheme intended to increase Australia’s population and workforce. Accordingly
each of the women admitted was assessed as fit to work although they were either of childbearing age or had children.

Many of the unpartnered supporting mothers were directed to the Benalla Holding Centre; the former air force training camp was literally across the road from two newly built factories and a hospital that offered the women employment. Initially those arrangements, which R.E. Armstrong, head of the Assimilation Division, dubbed the ‘Benalla experiment’, seemed to work ‘reasonably well’.20 At any one time supporting mothers and their children comprised about a third of the usual 400 residents at Benalla. Along with the more numerous transient families, the mothers and their children were housed and fed simply but satisfactorily. The women were directed to paid employment across the road or within the camp itself. The jobs helped them contribute to the costs of their accommodation and that of their children, for all residents were required to pay for their upkeep. Indeed, careful track was kept of their tariff payments.

The Benalla Holding Centre survived national reviews of migrant accommodation needs in 1953 and a more focused review in 1956, principally because of its role in ‘providing accommodation for compassionate cases where there is no male breadwinner’.21 Such support for fractured families was not available elsewhere, so Benalla went on to become Australia’s longest-lasting holding centre. It ‘provided accommodation for migrants working in Benalla or who have had special problems in integration’.22 That meant, in effect, that those who remained long term had been unable to become economically self-reliant beyond the camp. The story of this camp does not fit easily alongside any of the uncritical ‘three-cheers’ versions of the success of post-war immigration.

Ironically, even though Benalla was Australia’s longest-lasting holding centre not closing until 1967 and receiving altogether about 60,000 people, it has, until recently, been one of the least remembered of the migrant accommodation centres. Former residents had rarely spoken publicly about their experiences of the place. Local citizens, librarians, museum curators and historians had, before 2013, not tried to collect, let alone interpret, town or resident memories or memorabilia. State heritage authorities had given the battered hut remnants only cursory attention. There was no plaque or memorial. The former Benalla Migrant Accommodation Centre had been publicly ignored. This
contrasted with the promotion of public remembering at other similar holding centres where two prime interest groups—local townspeople and former camp residents—had been active.\textsuperscript{23}

Perhaps the most striking contrast is with Bonegilla, Australia’s best-remembered post-war reception centre, about 100 kilometres to the north. Former resident and local community advocacy for remembering Bonegilla has been much stronger than at Benalla. Bonegilla was bigger and had greater observable impacts on its immediate host community, Albury–Wodonga. The prosperous times that accompanied and followed the presence of Bonegilla favoured local memory making. Benalla’s economic fortunes, on the other hand, faltered with the closing of the camp. The factories that employed migrants at Benalla shut not long after the camp closed when government reduced the protectionist subsidies that had helped country town manufacturers. The migrant workers became no more than erstwhile contributors to industries that were all too quickly forgotten. This lack of local advocacy, I argue, was foremost in delaying and almost smothering public recognition of Benalla Migrant Camp.\textsuperscript{24}

This long-established forgetting was broken in 2013 when local resident Sabine Smyth installed a photographic exhibition in half a hut at the Benalla Migrant Camp. That memorialisation gathered momentum when she nominated the place to the state heritage list. Former camp children joined her in objecting to Heritage Victoria’s decision not to list the place. Their petition and carefully prepared and powerfully presented written and oral submissions convinced the panel reviewing the rejected nomination in 2016 of the place’s social significance and heritage value. The remembering of the camp was thus given statutory effect at the insistence of former residents, many of whom had been pupils at Benalla Aerodrome School.\textsuperscript{25}

**Benalla Aerodrome School**

It helps in trying to ascertain the nature of schooling at Benalla Migrant Camp to look at how it was observed by contemporaries as well as how it is recalled now by former pupils. There can sometimes be tensions between the recorded observations of contemporaries and present-day personal recall. A well-informed imagination will draw on both.
Contemporary Observations of Schooling and Camp Life

One of the keenest outside observers was Mabel (Bunty) King, an experienced and senior social worker stationed at Bonegilla, who was instructed to prepare a ‘social survey’ of the Benalla centre in 1951. King’s report, based on a two-week visit, was comprehensive and positive. Overall, she found that ‘a successful attempt has been made to rehabilitate migrant widows’. The camp ‘offers decent and humane living conditions and a possibility of attaining economic independence’. Morale was high. Although King acknowledged life at the camp would be hard ‘as is that of the Australian widow’, she recommended that more supporting mothers should be dispatched to Benalla.26

King was pleased with the school. Classes were comparatively small, averaging 23 and thus allowing for ‘plenty of individual attention’. The teachers she interviewed were satisfied with the progress of the children. The infants’ teacher reported it took about three months for a non-English speaking pupil to speak and to understand English. But King found there were troubles with truancy, and some parents had to be told forcefully about compulsory education. Further, she observed disapprovingly that the children spoke German to each other. They continued to wear European-style clothing and played mainly European games on the playground.
King looked beyond the Benalla Holding Centre school and also visited the Catholic school, St Josephs, and Benalla High School. She was impressed with St Josephs, which had enrolled 28 of the camp’s 181 primary-school-aged children. It provided the social mix of new arrivals with those longer resident that she valued. The camp children who attended St Josephs, she declared, were the ‘most assimilated.’ Indeed, the camp children and the town children were ‘almost the same in dress, manners and speech’. The English they spoke was ‘less idiomatic and slangy’ than that spoken by those attending the camp school. The classes at St Josephs were large, but the discipline was good and the staff efficient and understanding. Her visit to Benalla High School was more cursory, but she noted that the centre provided free buses for the children attending schools outside the centre and brought them home to camp for lunch.

In a second report a month or so later, King expressed concern about the opportunities the town provided for assimilation. In Benalla she observed what she called ‘small town insularity and insecurity’. The newcomers would receive little encouragement or support from a struggling branch of the Good Neighbour Council, the local churches, the Country Women’s Association or the Police Boys Club. Townspeople in charge of youth groups were not welcoming. They worried that the presence of children from the camp might deter those from the town, for camp kids were so much better at whatever they did, be it athletics or scripture class lessons. King worried that without frequent town connections the camp kids would retain their language, dress and customs.

School inspectors, too, were outside observers. Their reports outlined the principal physical and instructional challenges of the school. However, like King, they were almost invariably positive. Teachers, even those in their first year, seemed to the inspectors to be intent on ‘meeting the needs of migrant children’. The work done on speaking English was excellent. Teachers were ‘eliminating foreign accents’. The geography taught focused appropriately on Australia. The social service activities undertaken were community engagement exercises, which ‘introduced children to their new life in Australia’. Their work in raising money for the hospital was even noted in the local newspaper. Overall the standards ‘did do credit to a school of normal Australian children’. Camp school children went on to achieve
at Benalla High School, where some became prefects. They excelled at district sports day meetings. The singing was ‘sweet and tuneful’. ‘The school was happy’.28

The director of the camp also issued positive reports on the school. He, too, was pleased with the way children were learning English. He praised the way the school made connections with the local community and reported that he had arranged for the camp children to make contributions to the town’s celebration of the coronation in 1953 and, then, the all-important royal visit to Benalla in 1954. Beyond such festive occasions, important to introducing the non-British to a British Australia, he was pleased to report that the camp children took part regularly in the town’s softball, table tennis and soccer competitions.29

Department of Immigration publicists gave a glowing photographic report not of the school but of the pre-school at the camp. This was one of several reports showing the Australian public the uncommon measures taken to help newly arrived women enter the workforce and to prepare the very young for life in Australia. The photographs were published under the headline: ‘They are assimilated while they play’.30

Resident language instructors, appointed to teach English to the adults in the camp, were not directly concerned with the schooling of children, but the memories of one instructor touch on the school huts and depict more broadly the nature of the camp itself. Lois Carrington has clear memories of the physical setting. The school huts were her workplace too, for until 1951 language classes were held in the school building. She also remembers that church services were conducted in rotation, until the Catholic Church supplied a resident chaplain and a hut became the designated chapel and presbytery. The school was also the place of the camp library, composed Carrington remembers regretfully of the town’s ‘ancient discards’.31

Carrington’s observations reach beyond the multifunctional school huts. For her, Benalla was ‘one of the most difficult’ centres at which she taught: a bleak place in which the buildings ‘did not inspire by their beauty’ and the view ‘down the lines’ between them was ‘not very attractive’. She found imaginative escape in the radio, in reading and in lesson preparation. With Indian ink and broad-nibbed pens, she carefully prepared posters and charts on cartridge paper to have ‘brightly and usefully decorated’ classrooms. As a creative language instructor, she made hand puppets and, within a curtained Punch and Judy stand,
presented a variety of puppet actors in conversations that included common sentence patterns and a continually growing vocabulary.

Carrington remembered constantly rubbing shoulders with her students. She was sympathetic to the women she encountered who apologised for not attending language classes: ‘we come home, we wash ourselves, we wash the rooms, we wash the clothes, we wash the kids—we are too tired to come to your classes’. She found living at the camp uninspiring, but she acknowledged it was far worse for the resident women ‘who couldn’t turn to a radio, who couldn’t read the town’s castoffs anyway and who were weighed down by pregnancy in many cases’.

Similar observations relating to the nature of the camp can be found in the reports prepared by a succession of social workers telling of their management of individual residents with problems. In their case studies, these social workers frequently reported their women clients’ concern about their children’s schooling for it shaped the children’s current well-being as well as their future. The women rejected suggestions that they might move from the camp because they feared such a move would disrupt schooling and break the children’s connections with friends. They frequently expressed the hope that their children would take up a trade on leaving school.

The concerns and aspirations of the mothers were well rehearsed through special sets of interviews conducted in response to Department of Immigration directives to encourage long-stayers to leave the camp. In 1956 the Immigration Advisory Council undertook an investigation of why some migrants had taken up long-term residence in what were intended to be temporary Commonwealth-funded hostels and centres. It found that Australia-wide there were cases of ‘hard core impecunious migrants who [were] likely to be with us indefinitely unless some positive action [was] taken to assist them to become part of the community’. Tasman Heyes, secretary of the department, explained further: ‘The problem affects the rehabilitation of the women … [and] more particularly affects the upbringing and welfare of the children of these women who are being reared in an atmosphere which is neither healthy to themselves nor likely to assist towards their ultimate assimilation into the community’. A small committee was appointed to report on ‘hard core problem cases’, and the most obvious place to start was Benalla.
Five years after Bunty King’s report, another social worker, Viva Murphy, was sent to Benalla to conduct special interviews with the long-stayers. King had found 115 widows with 181 children; Murphy found 62 widows with 125 children. By 1956 many of the women had been at Benalla for ‘more than three years’; nine families even reached back to the big intakes of 1949–51. Most of these long-stayers, Murphy determined, had ‘lost initiative’ and were ‘fearful of leaving the protection of the camp’. The social workers tried to push for putative fathers to take up responsibility for the care of the women remaining in the centre. They also looked to the local community and wider church community for help with outside accommodation. They further recommended the women apply for naturalisation as that could now make them eligible for widows’ pensions and public housing. They provided support for women considering adoption. Nevertheless, by the end 1956, 37 of the 62 identified problem family cases were left unresolved.  

Auditors worried about the economic drain of the long-stayers on department resources, but another observer, Hazel Dobson (Bunty King’s superior officer), insisted that the first consideration was the interests of the child. Separation of mother and child was rarely in a child’s best interest. She stoutly insisted that social workers across all the centres found supporting mothers were almost invariably affectionate. She respected them for that. As evidence to support her case against institutionalisation she cited an instance from Benalla. There, when one woman changed her mind and decided to keep rather than relinquish her newborn to adoption, the other mothers rallied to support and encourage her. They ‘showered her with little gifts from their own few belongings’.  

When the Benalla camp closed in 1967, R.E. Armstrong was still there, now as assistant secretary of planning and operations in the Department of Immigration. He could no longer resist the financial pressures to close Benalla but explained that the department was ‘doing all that it could to enable the [remaining 25 families] to take a normal role in the Australian community’. The department arranged for some to be re-housed in Melbourne, and it had made contact with support agencies there to gather assistance for them. About six families were moved to public housing in Benalla and district. The migrant centre helped them by providing basic furnishings. Even more encouragingly,
the department was prepared for six months to bear rental costs over and above the usual tariff.\textsuperscript{37}

Within most of these contemporary reports there are implicit or explicit expressions of expectations about children. First, childhood ended abruptly at sixteen years of age. By then children were expected to be in employment though they could still be at school or in training if they had parental support. The tariff for residents who turned sixteen jumped ten shillings (or a third again). Second, the eldest son or daughter was expected to contribute financially to the family and help it to move from the camp. Third, there was an expectation that the eldest daughter would share the burdens of single-parent childcare. Eldest daughters cared for younger siblings after school until their mothers returned from work.

There emerge from these contemporary reports and the administrative arrangements applying to the camp three distinctive features of Benalla Aerodrome School. This was a special school with a special clientele; in some ways it resembled a boarding school; and it was strangely privileged.

The school register shows the common address of the parents of those enrolled, suggesting their similar social and economic circumstances. Indeed, the first 120 entries in the school register show the employment of all parents as ‘domestic duties’—before the women got jobs. Then a few months later come the first of many subsequent entries of listed jobs as ‘machinist’ or ‘kitchen hand’. The enrolment register also shows sudden influxes of residents being transferred to Benalla from other holding centres as far afield as Western Australia or Queensland as they closed.\textsuperscript{38} Perhaps the only child to attend who was not a migrant was the daughter of a resident Department of Civil Aviation officer.\textsuperscript{39}

The Benalla Aerodrome School had the personal intimacy of a boarding school. Teachers lived at the camp. The head teacher had a cottage and his wife taught sewing at the school. There were frequent pupil/teacher and parent/teacher out-of-class encounters. Moreover, while there was a constant flow of transients, some children were long resident. They attended, first, the pre-school, then the primary school together. As sociologist Nando Sigona noted of a similar establishment in Italy, this enforced long-term proximity for families ‘living in a
protracted condition of ... economic marginality’ provided a stable, close village atmosphere that offered protection from the outside world.\textsuperscript{40}

The Benalla Aerodrome School was privileged in that, like the school at Bonegilla, it received support from the camp amenities fund, which drew on canteen and cinema profits. The amenities fund supplied the school with a piano and with audio-visual equipment. It bought books for the school library, materials for handicrafts, and decorative pot plants. The centre administration supplied a free bus for school activities as well as for those attending town schools. Even more support came after 1960 when, with Department of Immigration encouragement, the Children’s Library and Craft Movement opened Creative Learning Centres at Benalla and Bonegilla. These centres were used to expand the after-school leisure activities of children grouped as 7 to 10 year-olds, 10 to 13 year-olds, and 13 to 16 year-olds. Within school hours, camp school classes could also access the Benalla Creative Learning Centre’s facilities for cooking, pottery-making, visual art, handicrafts and woodwork.\textsuperscript{41}

By way of contrast, other schools nation-wide found it hard to cope with the sudden influx of post-war migrants. Bonegilla was a reception centre where newcomers were expected to remain only three or four weeks. As a result the state initially decided not to establish a school there, as it had at holding centres. That decision was changed in 1952. As a result, between 1948 and 1952, parents who had secured two-year contract work at the Bonegilla Reception Centre had to try to enrol their children at nearby schools. Enrolments at Wodonga’s primary schools doubled. There were insufficient classrooms, and classes had to be held in church halls. Wodonga parents were alarmed at class sizes of 70.\textsuperscript{42}

The smaller Mitta Junction school, less that two kilometres from the Bonegilla Reception Centre, could not cope with the rapid increase in numbers and had to suspend enrolments. The alarmed inspector kept careful record of the overwhelming proportion of migrant children. In 1951, 39 of the 50 children were ‘New Australians’. He reported the difficulty teachers had in grading newcomers who arrived with no record of previous schooling or their attainments. The teachers found themselves unprepared to deal with the huge influx of non-English speakers, especially those who only attended for a short time. Many were there one week, gone the next. The only way to cope was to have
the transient child ‘sit next to Nelly’. Mitta Junction became ‘a most difficult school’.43

Wodonga and Mitta Junction were not the only schools unprepared for the growing presence of migrant children. In 1978, immigration scholar Jean Martin showed that state departments of education Australia-wide were slow to respond to the needs of new arrivals. Teachers were unskilled in teaching English as a second language and had no special learning materials as they tried to help their pupils ‘to fit into our school life and later into our community’.44 Martin notes that teachers were one of the first professional groups to agitate for more resources to help with migrant settlement, but their pleas went unheeded until the late 1960s.

Other subsequent reports found positive features related to the schooling of migrant children. Economic historians provided an analysis of the 1981 Census showing that first- and second-generation children from non–English speaking backgrounds benefited considerably from access to the Australian education system. They did as well as the Australian born with respect to occupational achievement and admission to post-secondary education. 45 As the inspectors insisted, the standards set and reached in this school at Benalla Migrant Camp were not very different from any other. Many pupils may not have had the family support to complete a full secondary education, but they did find places in a range of callings. The school improved life chances.

Memories of Camp Life and Schooling
Memories of migration and early settlement are prized as eyewitness accounts that help to humanise the history of immigration. Personal memories fire feelings that feed imagination and guide understanding of the experience of migration. However, those who deal with migration memories warn that personal recollections are malleable, often shaped by subsequent family or individual fortunes, sometimes prompted by present-day community concerns about social justice and migrant and refugee reception processes. Further, memories are particular and often messy. To free them from personal nostalgia, readers impose or discern patterns. I have suggested that in general the stories built on memories of migrant camp living drift in similar directions: some dwell on the trials of migration and the inequities the newcomers faced; others make much of acts of kindness. The overall theme is usually of triumph over adversity: migration was a bitter–sweet experience; settlement was a
challenge and achievement. Memories of migrant camp life are usually
told in graphic sensory terms and almost invariably include descriptions
of the spare fabric and the challenges of communal living. They also, I
suggest, convey the importance of family, friends and fellow workers.46

There seem to be three common features in the memories of
children who arrived at Bonegilla. First, children know the world
more sensuously than adults; they have eyes for the immediate detail.
So their memories quicken our appreciation of the physicality of
migration experiences. Second, for many the memory of the adventure
of migrating merges into the even bigger adventure of growing up. For
these children the migration accommodation centres were holiday
camps, where new friendships were easily made. Such memories fit
within a discernible pattern of there being three s’s in assimilation for
the young—sun, sport and school. Third, and more soberly, children
are skilled eavesdroppers, and they give first-hand observations of the
experiences of their parents. Their accounts include remembrance
of a variety of feelings swirling within the family, such as wariness,
uncertainty and guarded optimism. While they marvel at their parents’
endurance, children also remember the life lessons they picked up about
trust from parents for whom survival often depended on not trusting.47
Because of early language difficulties, some pupils were a year older than
their Australian-born class peers and remember being more worldly
wise. For instance, Michael Herbst recalls the experience of communal
living at Bonegilla and the accounts he heard there of war and post-war
Europe that meant he had ‘different thoughts and skills’ from his fellow
students at Wodonga High School.48

Stories built on memories of Benalla Migrant Camp can be
expected to follow similar lines. The chief difference lies in the relative
absence of local records of their presence. Indeed, as far as the local
press was concerned, the widows of Benalla were always faceless and
voiceless. Nevertheless, at the closing of the camp, the Melbourne Sun
elicited responses from three of the ‘special resettlement problem cases’
who were being moved reluctantly from the camp. Each in turn—Mrs
J. Omieczuk, Mrs A. Slusarczyk and Mrs J. Koslowska—told the
journalist: ‘This has been my only home and I do not think I can turn
around and start a new home all over again’; ‘We have had a good time
here and this makes it very hard to leave’; ‘I feel awful at having to break
up a place that has been our only home for more than fifteen years’. Their
children, they said, were born there and ‘knew no other home’; they had made many friends at the camp and in the school, and ‘they are going to find it very hard to leave’. Given voice, the mothers were, as the social workers observed, ‘fearful of leaving the protection of the camp’.

Adult residents at Benalla may have left few verbal records, but their family photograph albums show something of their lives before migration, the life-changing journey to Australia and their lives at Benalla. The photographs externalise their personal memories. Photographers, however, like smiles, so there are plenty of images of workplace camaraderie and happy occasions such as Christmas. Some act as visual reminders of time-marking church and school events in their children’s lives—christenings, first communions, class photographs and school concerts. Together the photographs seem, as Tamara West observed of a similar place in Germany, to be showing family life constituted ‘as it should be’. They prompt recall of the experience of close living in a safe Benalla Migrant Camp. This place was a home, a protected village.

The panel assessing the heritage value of the Benalla Migrant Camp observed that at the inquiry the children had made ‘particular note of the experiences and hardships of their parents, often in distinction to their own sense of safety and community that they felt, as children, during their time at the camp’. Children gleaned understandings of their family’s economic circumstances. The young observed endurance rather than resilience: ‘my mother was ‘persuadable’ or ‘too trusting’; or had ‘hard deeply ingrained suspicions’ of the rest of the world. Life was tough. They lived in relative poverty, made most obvious by comparing their few possessions with those of town children. Memory of schooling awakens recall of the expense of blazers and shoes or the bike to get to a town school. And there remains the still defiant disclaimer, ‘I never wanted to go to Joey’s, anyway’.

School still exists in the mind’s eye. The former pupils recall the heater, the teacher’s table, the blackboard with displays of copperplate writing. The installation of a portrait of the Queen, one says, would prompt memory of dancing around the maypole in a performance for the royal visit, and that awakens further sensory memory of having to hold hands with a girl who had warts, which turns to memory of the magical ways of getting rid of warts. The former pupils still hear the songs that introduced them to music and recall the books that
introduced them to reading. There are memories of kind teachers and, beyond the school, supportive adults like ‘Cackles’, who had charge of a Girl Guides group.

Benalla camp kids have drawn memory maps of the camp and told stories of its surrounds. This is where we kicked a football. This is the swimming spot with leeches. This was the more dangerous waterfall swimming hole. They vividly recall the games they devised with few resources. One, Helen Topor, has written a book on the games that helped establish their togetherness—so much so that some wanted to demonstrate how they played Klimpi to the panel assessing the heritage value of the place. That, better than anything else, showed what the camp meant to them.

The children who share memories of Benalla were not all new arrivals; many were born and bred in Benalla. They were not adapting to a new land. They were not learning to be Australian. They were learning to be. It seems to me that their memories emphasise togetherness and belonging, posed frequently as differences between town and camp children. They played sport with town children, though always with a keen sense of being other. ‘We could run faster, jump higher, cartwheel longer and spit further than any townie.’ ‘Our vigoro team was invincible.’ ‘We could roll barrels faster than anyone.’ ‘We stuck together. Nobody messed with us.’

Beyond the primary school was the secondary school. For camp school kids, this was what Les Murray, the poet, calls ‘the deep end of the school yard’. For him, Bonegilla and Nelson Bay Holding Centre were ‘the dry-land barbed wire ships from which some would never land’, places at which ‘children had one last ambiguous summer holiday’. Ahead of them, beyond their migrant camp, was the fierce conformity of the secondary school and the epithets, ‘wog, reffo, Commo, Nazi, things which can be forgotten but must first be told’.

Sharing school with children who were not migrants sharpened senses of difference. There are memories of teenage taunts about dress, jibes about speech and unhappy recall of being labelled a ‘Balt’, or more commonly in the Benalla vernacular a ‘Bolt’. One girl remembers town girls greeting camp kids at Benalla High School with fisticuffs because they did not want them in their school. Benalla Aerodrome School sheltered the children as much as the camp sheltered their parents.
Miss Cracknell with her class (Courtesy Benalla Migrant Camp Inc.)

Coming of age at the camp (Courtesy Benalla Migrant Camp Inc.)
Finding Room for the Migrant Camp Story

Since 2013 former residents have been sharing their memories of the camp more vigorously. Memories of growing up at Benalla are mixed but for the most part fond. The place had been kind. It was sad that, although ‘the place had experienced so much love and peace’, it was now being neglected. The camp had, in their recollections, emanated an overwhelming feeling of safety. Nobody remembers having keys to their huts. ‘We had lots of aunts to tie shoelaces and ribbons; we had lots of playmates.’ As children we ‘did not see the shabby huts and sad faces’; for us Benalla was ‘the biggest playground in the world.’ In memory at least, they were happy; it was nearly always summer and school holidays.54

In 2016 the state was ready to admit stories of the hitherto publicly ignored Benalla Migrant Camp experiment into its heritage-based narratives of post-war immigration. On the national and state scale, stories about how the community received vulnerable strangers from overseas would seem pertinent to ‘where we are now and where we are headed as a society’.55 The fact that 49 per cent of the Australian population was either born overseas or had at least one parent born overseas signifies widespread personal or family experiences of migration and argues that, as a nation, we need places to encourage thinking about such experiences, particularly for the vulnerable.

In 2019 the question remains how far Benalla Rural Council is ready to own stories of Benalla’s Migrant Camp. It can fulfil the statutory requirements to care for the fabric without providing support for the production and consumption of place-based heritage. Greater involvement and commitment would require the preparation of a business case to explore such things as possible outcomes, potential markets and funding prospects. It seems reasonable to suggest that managers might look to other similar heritage places, even if just cursorily to nearby Bonegilla, to determine the goals, costs and gains of developing a similar but complementary commemorative place and cultural tourism venue.

As gatekeeper to Benalla’s Migrant Camp, Benalla Rural Council would need to undertake a long-term analysis of what the camp means to the local community and the benefits of memorialising it. Within heritage traditions that prize fabric, standard P1 huts are not architecturally grand, inspiring or even interesting. Those at Benalla do not seem to contribute directly to contemporary or latter day narratives
of the economic success of post-war migration. Instead they illustrate discrimination against the non-British. They evoke stories of social exclusion rather than inclusion at the local as well as the national levels, for immigration happened within Australian towns, within neighbourhoods ‘where migrants came into daily contact with the wider Australian community’. Council might well ask if visitors would be enticed to stay another night in Benalla so that they could be challenged into thinking about how the national and the local community went about—and still goes about—taking in vulnerable stranger families.

It seemed when I published a commissioned history of the camp in 2015 that Benalla Migrant Camp was an example of difficult heritage: difficult to hear with equanimity; difficult to tell, given the complexities of locating and using resident and local testimony; and difficult to locate firmly in the local townscape. I subsequently expressed confidence that the stories the Benalla Camp children tell would break the silence that had descended on the ‘sad and tragic camp’ and complicate representations of the place with hope and love. They certainly add exuberant slabs of colour to the otherwise drab and grim picture of the camp. If the Benalla Migrant Camp complicates congratulatory narratives of post-war immigration, then the Benalla Aerodrome School complicates them still further. It was a school at which the children of the displaced and unsettled found belonging. It was where they found supportive togetherness. It was where the resilient began shaping their subsequent life chances. The school hut prompts visitors to view the camp as a place illustrative of how some of the socially handicapped and vulnerable were gently, if imperfectly, introduced to post-war Australia. I think that visitors will be able to make sense of a difficult heritage place having positive features.

The rediscovered and now representative school room is a personal/family memory prompt. The former pupils will push curators to re-dress it for public presentation with, for example, a portrait of the young Queen and a teacher’s desk. They might reach back further to show: a multifunctional space with, in one corner, a battered town discard in the camp library; in another, one of Carrington’s hand puppets or her pictures of ‘a pair of gloves’; in a third corner, a Lutheran catechism. They might want to pipe in the sounds of children chanting a times table, reciting the loyal oath, reading aloud, singing tunefully or laughing. Should access remain difficult, then external interpretative
signage and public art pieces might explain something of how the place was experienced.

The school room is also a wider community memory prompt. Not all of us can re-imagine childhood as well as fiction writers like David Malouf or Sophia Laguna—or indeed like Trent Dalton, a child of parents from another holding centre. But we can all ask, just outside or within the ambience of Australia’s only surviving migrant accommodation centre school, what it meant to be a migrant child, then going on to engage with not just Australia but the universe.

**Postscript**
In July 2019 the Council of the Rural City of Benalla decided to gift 5 of the 9 migrant camp huts listed on the State Heritage List to the Gliding and Hot Air Ballooning groups and the Benalla Theatre Company, which currently occupy them. Two groups could produce letters from Council officers in 2002 offering them rent free possession in return for providing maintenance. All three believed they owned the huts. There was no official Council record endorsing the officers’ actions. Former migrant residents rallied to protest against the decision while it was being considered in committee. They argued multiple ownership would make it difficult to find more space for the migrant story. Visitors would find it difficult to make sense of the place as a former migrant camp with five of the nine huts shut to them. They argued the groups had a dubious tenancy. Council’s decision underlines the important role local government plays in looking after heritage listed places. This was after all Benalla’s Migrant Camp. The only surviving migrant camp school room in Australia will continue to be used as a storeroom for theatre props.

**Notes**
2  I thank Benalla Migrant Camp Inc. for the photographs used here. I also thank the Benalla Camp children who volunteered memories and particularly Helen Topor for her help and comments.
3  Inspectors Reports, 1949–1950, Benalla Aerodrome School, VPRS, 4217/P0001, Public Record Office Victoria (PROV).
18 Marshall, ‘Report on Visit to Australia by IRO Representative’, 15 April 1949, CP815/1, 021, 134, National Archives of Australia (NAA).
20 Manuscript note, 1 November 1951, A437, 1950/6/173, NAA.
21 T.T. McElroy to Secretary, 2 April 1959, ‘Closing Centres’, A446, 1967/71173, NAA.
22 Good Neighbour, 1 December 1967.
23 Pennay, Benalla Migrant Camp, 2015, p. 1
24 Pennay, ‘Wodonga’s Bonegilla.’
25 Pennay, Benalla Migrant Camp, revised 2017, p. 49.
26 Mabel King, 'Report on Widows and Unmarried Mothers at Benalla', October – November 1951, A445, 276/2/10, NAA.
27 Mabel King, 'Report from Benalla Holding Centre', 3 December 1951, A437, 1950/6/173, NAA.
28 Inspectors Reports, 1949–1962, Benalla Aerodrome School, VPRS, 4217/P0001, PROV.
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Opening Doors: The Effects of Teaching Studentships and Teaching on Women’s Lives in Victoria, 1950–2000

Marilyn Bowler and Miranda Francis

Abstract
This article is based on research undertaken by the authors as part of postgraduate studies at La Trobe University. For her master’s degree, Marilyn Bowler studied the effects of teaching studentships on recipients’ lives, surveying and interviewing former student teachers. Miranda Francis is currently examining women’s experiences of mothering in the 1970s as part of a larger oral history project on women’s memories of mothering in post–World War II suburban Melbourne.

Introduction
Interviewed about their teaching studentships and teaching careers during the second half of the twentieth century in Victoria, many women used the metaphor of an open door. Teaching studentships opened educational and career opportunities to both men and women, but their effect on women’s lives was particularly strong. Until now, however, this area has been largely neglected by researchers. Though women had worked as teachers and received studentships before 1950, they either had to remain unmarried or work in a temporary capacity with fewer career rights and opportunities than their male counterparts. Teaching in post-war Victoria allowed much larger numbers of women than heretofore, particularly working-class and lower middle-class women, to gain a tertiary education. For example, more than 12,000 women gained studentships to attend university or secondary teachers college and nearly 5,000 more gained training as librarians, arts and crafts, physical education and home economics teachers. In addition, many women gained technical and primary teaching studentships. These opportunities were often hard-won. Later, teaching enabled these women to combine parenting and a fulfilling career.
I think my working life was one of a vocation. It’s been a very, very positive factor in my life—in every way … education really is the key that opens the door to a fulfilling life. Without education, it’s very difficult to move, from where you’re at, whereas education literally gives you options.  

In this article, we draw on interviews from our postgraduate projects to explore the effects that teaching and teaching studentships had on many women’s lives.

**Teaching Studentships in Victoria: Historical Background**

From the 1950s onwards, as a result of the post-war baby boom, immigration, increased secondary school retention rates and the economic need for more highly educated and trained workers, Victoria’s school population soared, with overcrowded classrooms frequently containing more than 40 students. The government struggled to build new schools and train new teachers, often employing unqualified staff. Alan Ramsay was appointed director of education in late 1948. Before taking up his post he embarked on a fact-finding mission to the United Kingdom to study the administration of the 1944 Education Act. On his return, Ramsay presented the minister for public instruction, Brigadier Lovell, with a fifteen-page report (not to be confused with the *Report of the Commission on State Education in Victoria 1960*, also known as the Ramsay Report). As a result of this initial report, increased numbers of primary studentships were offered, and secondary studentships, discontinued in the 1930s, were reintroduced in 1950.

Studentships provided trainees with both paid tuition and a weekly living allowance, in return for which they were ‘bonded’ to teach for the Education Department for three years after training. Women who married only had to teach for one year. If studentship recipients failed to complete their training or did not complete the three years teaching, the bond had to be repaid either by the recipients or their guarantors, usually their parents.

Between 1950 and 1978, over 5,600 technical, more than 22,000 secondary, and nearly 42,000 primary teaching studentships were provided to enable trainee teachers to study at universities and teachers colleges throughout Victoria. Trainee secondary teachers could attend university to obtain a degree (BA, BSc, BCom) and a year’s teacher training (Diploma of Education), undertake a combination of...
teachers college and university subjects if they failed at university, or enrol directly for a Trained Secondary Teachers Certificate (TSTC). Other recipients were training to be librarians, arts and crafts teachers, physical education, or domestic science/home economics teachers. Later, Bachelor of Education courses combined teacher training with subject studies. Studentships were also offered for teacher training at primary teachers colleges in Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Frankston, Coburg, Toorak and Burwood. (These Education Department colleges qualified the recipients solely for work in schools, unlike a university degree.) They gained a Trained Primary Teachers Certificate (TPTC). Studentships were no longer offered after 1978, when declining school populations and the availability of free university education reduced the need for teachers and teacher studentships.

**Teaching Studentship Recipients: Gender**

Teaching studentships provided greater opportunities for women to gain a tertiary education, since they were under-represented as students at universities but more highly represented amongst studentship holders (see Tables 1 & 2).

There were gendered differences in the types of university degrees that studentship holders were undertaking (during the years for which statistics are available). Evidence from the Education Department’s annual reports reveals that nearly three-quarters of women secondary studentship holders undertook Arts degrees, compared to just over a third of male studentship holders. And, while nearly a quarter of all male university studentship holders undertook Commerce/Economics degrees and over a third Science degrees, by comparison, less than a tenth of women studentship holders qualified in Commerce/Economics and slightly less than a fifth in Science.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>MELBOURNE</th>
<th>MONASH</th>
<th>LA TROBE</th>
<th>TOTAL VIC. UNDERGRADUATES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td></td>
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<td>27.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>37.9</td>
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<td>1978</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>unavailable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Female Undergraduates as a Percentage of the Total Victorian University Undergraduate Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>UNIVERSITY</th>
<th>STUDENTSHIP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>54.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>53.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>68.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>59.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Women as a Percentage of Victorian University Undergraduates and Secondary Studentship Holders
**Socioeconomic Backgrounds**

The majority of those who received studentships were from lower middle-class and working-class backgrounds. Most were the first members of their families to attend a tertiary institute. Dale Vagg commented:

> we were aware that if we failed more than one subject we would be shunted off to do TSTC—at the Secondary Teachers College, where we would be qualified to teach, but would not receive a full degree … So for the first year at least I put my head down and worked bloody hard … as the first member of my family to attend University, I had no idea what was expected of me.\(^9\)

Social and educational researchers wishing to determine whether Ramsay’s initiative was successful in adequately staffing schools undertook research into studentships and their holders, including examining the socioeconomic backgrounds of trainee teachers and university students. N.G. Rowlands and E.J. Fary in 1967 and D.S. Anderson and colleagues in the 1970s and 1980s concluded that teaching studentships gave lower middle-class and working-class students the opportunity to undertake tertiary studies.\(^10\) Anderson and A.E. Vervoorn determined that, as with university students generally, female university students were more likely than average to come from higher socioeconomic groups, have a private school education and come from a city rather than the country.\(^11\) Kwong Lee Dow, Lorraine Jones and Leisl Osman’s 1972 study of the social composition of University of Melbourne students in 1969 and 1970 confirmed Anderson’s earlier conclusions, stating that: ‘male students outnumbered females by two to one’; students from independent schools were substantially over-represented; rural students were ‘about one-sixth as likely to come to the university as a metropolitan student’; and the university drew ‘disproportionately from the upper socio-economic sectors’.\(^12\)

An analysis of surveys completed for Marilyn Bowler by former studentship holders supports the conclusions of contemporary researchers that the majority of both teachers college and university studentship holders were from the lower socioeconomic categories. Fary and Rowlands’ six-point scale was used as a guide to rank fathers’ occupations in the 168 surveys completed by former studentship holders. In addition, extra categories were included for those whose fathers were
deceased, unemployed, retired or on a pension—on the assumption that this would limit family income (see Table 3). Over half of the survey group, both men and women, had fathers who were either in the lower middle-class or working-class categories (4, 5 and 6). Nearly half were in category 4 (small business, trades, agricultural and pastoral). Less than a third had fathers who were in a professional or higher administrative role, in business, educational or ecclesiastical positions or in the higher levels of bureaucracy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>OCCUPATIONS</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Professional and higher administration</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Business, higher educational, ecclesiastical</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teachers and higher clerical</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Small business, trades, agricultural and pastoral</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Semi-skilled, manual, minor clerical, minor commercial</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Unskilled labour</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>162</td>
<td>100.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Fathers’ Occupations of Those Surveyed*

*NB. Some respondents left this question unanswered. Percentages were rounded to the nearest number.

Further analysis of data for specific groups revealed some differences within the studentship survey population. A higher percentage, over a third, of teachers college students came from the three upper social levels, with only two-thirds of the fathers in lower middle-class and working-class occupations. This contrasted with results for the university student teachers where three-quarters of the students were from lower middle-class or working-class backgrounds. Those undertaking tertiary studies at university were less likely to have fathers in upper socioeconomic
occupations than those at teachers colleges. Part of the reason for this figure being skewed was the number of women primary studentship holders whose fathers fell into the three upper occupational levels. This finding contradicts the conclusion that Anderson and Vervoorn reached in their 1983 review, which found that, while education students at universities had a lower socioeconomic background than those in other faculties, they had a slightly higher one than teachers college students.\textsuperscript{13} However, Bowler’s survey data does fit with Fary’s 1969 results, which showed a rise in the percentage of teachers college students whose fathers’ occupations were in higher socioeconomic categories.\textsuperscript{14} Whether this reversal of the expected pattern was an anomaly pertaining only to this specific survey group or whether it indicated that primary teaching was seen by the middle classes as a suitable job for women is beyond the scope of this article. However, interviewee Judy Wheeler, when speaking about the lack of interaction between Melbourne Teachers’ College students and those at the adjacent University of Melbourne, did refer ironically to the teachers college administration’s view of their students as ‘ladies’ compared with the university students.\textsuperscript{15}

The view that studentships enabled those women from lower social classes to attain tertiary education was supported by the majority of former teacher trainees surveyed. In response to the question: ‘Would you have been able to attend university/undertake tertiary studies if you were not offered a teaching studentship?’, 41 per cent of all respondents unequivocally answered ‘No’, and another 13 per cent thought that it was unlikely. When figures are included for those who thought that they might have been able to undertake tertiary education, though it would have been financially difficult for their families, nearly two-thirds saw the studentship as important to their ability to go beyond secondary schooling. Those who trained at university and at primary and secondary teachers colleges concurred. Deborah Hennessey completed a Diploma of Teaching at Melbourne College of Education and taught in government primary schools for over 27 years from 1976, with time out for family leave. Deborah said that education was not valued in her family. Offered a social work placement at La Trobe University in the 1970s, she was told by her parents that ‘they would not be able to fully financially support me in becoming a social worker. When my studentship arrived in the mail it was truly a blessing to assist me with my endeavours in receiving a tertiary education’.\textsuperscript{16} Teaching studentships enabled those who would otherwise have been unable to afford a tertiary education to gain one.
This was particularly important for women from families where higher education for girls was not seen as necessary or valuable. Several of the women participating in the project commented that a studentship was the only way that they could gain an education as their parents did not believe in education for girls. Helen McMillan, one of four sisters who all qualified at teachers colleges, remarked: ‘Our father did not believe in educating girls i.e. he was a chauvanist [sic]. This was not only our means of further education but gave us financial independence.’

She added in a letter attached to her survey that her father’s attitude was: ‘after all, we would only get married & have children.’ Helen qualified at Larnook Teachers College (for domestic science teachers), taught for five years in Victorian government high schools, studied at the Le Cordon Bleu cookery school in London and worked as a freelance chef ‘in country estates and castles’ in the United Kingdom, before returning to teach in New South Wales private schools for 21 years. She then established her own graphic and website design business. Janine Rizzetti, who gained an Arts degree and Diploma of Education at La Trobe University, commented in both her survey and her interview: ‘My parents put little emphasis on education for girls.’ Rizzetti worked in government secondary schools for six years before gaining positions in Institutes of Technical and Further Education (TAFEs) where she moved from classroom teaching to education and curriculum development.

**Migrant and Rural Studentships**

Studentships also enabled migrant and rural students to undertake tertiary studies, more especially the latter. Anderson, Western and Horne noted in 1970 that 13 per cent of university students were born overseas. The comparable figure in Bowler’s 2009 survey of former university studentship holders was only 5 per cent, most of whom were women. The difference between the two studies in terms of the proportion of migrant students may in part be explained by the limited numbers surveyed and interviewed in the latter sample, but, given it also showed a markedly larger proportion of female than male studentship holders born overseas, we may also hypothesise that teaching had limited appeal to migrant families as a career for men. Of the overseas-born studentship holders surveyed or interviewed by Bowler and Francis, countries of family origin included England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Holland, Croatia and Italy. Irena Kostov was a displaced person who arrived in Australia after World War II and, following training at Melbourne...
Teachers’ College in the 1960s, taught art in Victorian high schools for 43 years. Irena remarked:

You did teaching or nursing, because it usually came with some support. And, as we were refugees, we had no other, you know, and we had limited income, my parents couldn’t afford to send me to university, so teaching was a permanent job … so a lot of women, as I said, did teaching, or nursing.22

Country students gained access to tertiary education through studentships too. Obtaining a teaching studentship enabled country students to attend university in larger numbers than would otherwise have been possible because it paid university fees and a weekly salary and provided relatively cheap accommodation. Rowlands and Fary’s research showed that one-third of studentship holders at Monash University and Monash Teachers’ College came from rural Victoria.23 Anderson, Western and Horne’s 1970 study of Melbourne University students concluded that two-fifths of the teacher students were from country schools, about double the proportion of country students in each of the three faculties studied that did not train teachers (Engineering, Medicine and Law).24 Prior studies suggested that between 33 and 40 per cent of studentship recipients came from the country, and, in Bowler’s surveys, 35 per cent of female university-trained teachers were from rural areas.

Teachers Hostels
For country students, accommodation costs were an additional barrier to tertiary education, but to mitigate this problem the Victorian Education Department established a network of student teacher hostels throughout Victoria. These provided a shared room, meals, laundry facilities, and cleaning staff. Accommodation charges, deducted from student teacher salaries, were cheaper than private board or the costs of sharing an apartment. The living-away-from-home allowance also enabled students to choose accommodation other than hostels, and many did so.

Studentships and subsidised hostel accommodation enabled country students to study in Melbourne, the sole location of universities and secondary teachers colleges until Deakin opened in 1977, a year before studentships ceased. They also enabled country students to move to regional centres such as Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong to attend primary teachers colleges. Country students surveyed were asked: ‘Was
the provision of hostel accommodation important in enabling you to undertake tertiary education?’ Two-thirds of female students who lived in hostels considered it important. Availability of hostel accommodation was clearly significant for most country students whether they were attending university or teachers colleges in Melbourne or teachers colleges in rural towns.

In this earlier era, hostels were particularly important for female student teachers because they assuaged rural families’ fears about life in the city and helped parents to accept their daughters moving away from home to gain an education. In the 1950s and 1960s, country life was more isolated than it is now. Studentship recipients may have had little experience or understanding of city life. Both the Education Department and the students’ parents viewed seventeen-year-olds as children in need of protection. Val Gaskell commented: ‘Most 3rd years went out into flats in groups, but my father would not allow me to do so. I lived three years in hostel accommodation’. Sheenagh Roberts thought that it was important for her parents that ‘I was living in a safe affordable environment’, though this environment was not always as safe or secure, or the girls as well behaved, as parents imagined. In Roberts’ recollection: ‘I would sneak out and sign somebody as being in, and leave my bedroom window up, so they could get in whenever they liked … We were never caught’.

Hostels also provided social networks for students from similar backgrounds who were also training for the same future careers. Because hostel residents could be from any year level at university or college, recent arrivals mixed with and learned from older students who had completed subjects or had learned to cope with Melbourne life. Looking back, many of those surveyed saw themselves as too young to cope with life away from home without this support. Valrie Finch was in the first intake of studentship holders at Melbourne University in 1950. Coming from a very small farming community 40 kilometres outside Nhill, Finch lived at Frank Tate House, a female hostel. Shy and somewhat daunted by the university environment, she found that the hostel provided her with a support group of friends:

there was a whole group of us would do things together … it was much easier, going into a lecture … I found tutorials were quite daunting, because I was an 18-year-old country kid, and the class was full of ex-servicemen, who … knew a bit about what they were talking about (laugh).
Denise Waterson, who attended Camperdown High School, made a similar comment in her survey: ‘It was vital as I had no contacts in Melbourne and it offered security.’ Anna Nowak was the daughter of displaced Polish parents and had spent her childhood in working-class St Albans. She felt lost studying education at the University of Melbourne and remembers how the offer of a place in a hostel provided the support she needed:

And so I went into the Education Department … and I can still see the kind eyes, and the man listened to my story, I said: “Look, I’m sorry, I won’t be able to continue with the studentship”, and, he said: “If you haven’t got anywhere to live”, which I didn’t at that stage, I had to move out of home, he said: “We do have Education Department hostels in Melbourne … of course the hostels were for country students, not for city students”, he said: “But we do have a hostel in Brighton … And there are a couple of spaces there … You can change courses, and you can go to Brighton, how would that suit you?” And all of a sudden, once again, I had direction, and, I had somewhere to live, and, I think that (clap) was probably the best thing that ever happened to me.

Indeed most of our evidence shows that teachers hostels enabled young women to gain a tertiary education and teacher training by providing cheap accommodation, convincing parents of their safety and by providing the girls with a social and emotional support network.

Female Studentship Holders’ Teaching Careers
Teaching provided many women studentship holders with lifelong careers. For example, Tanya Trengrove has had an international teaching career. After completing a Bachelor of Science and a Diploma of Education at Monash University in 1977, she became a member of the Victorian Education Department and has taught in schools ever since; in 2009 she was principal of an outer eastern suburbs secondary college in Melbourne. During her career, she taught in a ‘tough’ high school in Melbourne’s western suburbs, in rural towns, and in more middle-class areas, as well as being employed as a consultant within the Western and Northern Metropolitan Regional Offices of the Education Department. In the 1980s, she spent two years teaching in Zimbabwe and, in the late 1990s, two years as the head of an international school in the Philippines. But Tanya Trengrove’s long and varied career was not predicted by previous researchers.
Researchers at the time studentships were offered were concerned about the disproportionate number of women receiving this assistance, expecting that they would leave teaching upon marriage. In 1972, D.S. Anderson regretted that teaching was increasingly becoming a female occupation because, in his opinion, it required more continuity than other professions. Examining teacher attrition rates, Anderson cited Education Department of Victoria retention figures for the 1965 studentship intake; these showed that 35.4 per cent of secondary men and 54.9 per cent of secondary women were no longer teaching in 1972, that is, three years into their teaching careers. But these were only short-term results, and they failed to consider that women who left on marriage and maternity leave were likely to return to the profession after having a family. Indeed female teachers’ recorded responses to Anderson’s survey questions revealed that, contrary to received opinion, women were more likely to see teaching as a lifetime occupation.

Many researchers’ expectations about the longevity of women teachers’ careers tended to assume unchanging employment conditions. Prior to the introduction of secondary studentships in 1950, for example, married women were only permitted to continue in the profession as temporary teachers, and their right to superannuation was seriously constrained by comparison with their male counterparts. But the reality of women’s teaching careers is now quite different. From 1950, as Glenda Strachan has argued, the barriers to certain careers for women gradually weakened; in particular, legislation and equal pay ‘removed overt discrimination’. Anderson’s 1972 findings failed to take into account that conditions for women teachers were changing to make working more attractive and that social attitudes to working mothers were also undergoing transformation. The survey results for former studentship graduates discussed here indicate that in fact fewer women than men left teaching within ten years of completing their qualifications: only 36 per cent of women compared to 42 per cent of men. While only 21 per cent had served more than 30 years in government schools at the time they were surveyed, many had moved to non-government schools. Just 14 per cent had left teaching altogether. Though, by the end of their careers, women studentship recipients in this survey had generally worked for fewer years overall than their male counterparts, they were more likely to have continued in teaching despite taking breaks to have children.
Many women interviewees mentioned the advantages of teaching as a career for women: the holidays that enabled them to handle family and career responsibilities, the ability to work part-time, and the improved family leave provisions. Of the 96 women who completed surveys for this study, nearly half had time out from teaching, most of them specifying that this was when they had their families. Maternity leave provisions changed during the years that these women taught. In 1957, confinement leave without pay for a period of eight to eighteen months was introduced; in 1975, paid maternity leave of twelve weeks was added; and, in 1984, the Family Leave Agreement allowed women to take up to seven years unpaid leave and then return to their original positions. Timetabling in secondary teaching where a specific number of hours was devoted to separate subjects made it easier for women to work part-time, as did relief teaching, which also enabled women to work at times that suited them. As many parents predicted when their daughters took up studentships, teaching enabled a woman to combine a career and a family. Anne Williams commented: ‘I got the benefit of paid maternity leave, of family leave … school hours, they’re not a perfect fit for a family, but you’re always on holiday when the children are on holiday, generally’.

The survey participants had lengthy teaching careers and saw themselves as pursuing vocations, not just taking jobs to make ends meet. Sixty per cent of female graduate teachers remained in teaching till they were either 55 or till the end of their working lives, a quarter of the female TSTC trainees remained teaching for more than 30 years, and 54 per cent of female primary teachers had teaching careers of more than 30 years. What they liked about teaching was making a difference to the ‘kids’. Joan Adams commented:

It was always different (laugh) … you never had the same experience twice … even if you might be teaching the same subject … to two different classes … and you were always learning, all the time … it was always a challenge, that’s what I liked most about it, yes.

Was there a difference between male and female career achievements? From 123 studentship holders surveyed whose career levels could be identified, sixteen became school principals and eleven assistant principals. Twenty-nine became senior or leading teachers and a further fifteen held positions of responsibility. Forty-seven remained as classroom teachers. How many of these were women? Of 42 women
who attended university on studentships, two (less than 5 per cent) became principals and three became assistant principals (7 per cent). There were no women principals and four assistant principals (11 per cent) out of 37 female primary trainees. No women with TSTC training reached the principal class. Of the male trainees surveyed, five out of 62 university trainees became principals (10 per cent) and seven assistant principals (11 per cent). Three attained administrative positions within the Education Department. Of the male TSTC trainees, three out of five (60 per cent) became principals. Of eight male primary trainees, half became principals, and one an assistant principal. Women were still disadvantaged by their interrupted careers when it came to promotion, particularly in the primary sector.

**Careers outside Teaching**

Of the female university-trained teachers, more than one-third eventually went on to have careers outside the secondary teaching service, excluding those who took up other occupations late in their careers or in their ‘retirement’. Alice Cleary was a project manager within local government. Catriona Betts ran her own training business, before retraining as a psychologist. Shelley Lavender and Kerry Lewis were union officials, Lewis eventually becoming a senior adviser in three state government departments and Lavender the CEO of Youth Hostels Australia. Pam Monahan joined the Australian Army Education Unit before setting up her own business as a cross-cultural consultant. Rachel Gray became a social worker within the Education Department, and six others remained in education but moved into the TAFE or university sectors. Pamela Bell managed her husband's medical practice.

Teachers who had completed a university degree had more career options outside teaching than those with either a Trained Primary Teachers Certificate (TPTC) or Trained Secondary Teachers Certificate (TSTC). Joan Adams was one of those who took up a studentship without a commitment to teaching as a career. ‘I thought it would be a means to an end, and because I enjoyed school I didn’t expect to not enjoy teaching.’ Despite her original lack of commitment, Adams stayed well beyond the time stipulated by her bond, teaching for eight years in government high schools before taking family leave. While her children were young, she did relief teaching and taught evening classes, eventually taking up part-time project work with the Federation of State Schools Parents Clubs before becoming a full-time project and administrative officer in the road safety
section of VicRoads, where she worked for nearly 20 years. Primary-trained Judy Wheeler’s career path was very different. After matriculating, Wheeler undertook the two-year TPTC at Melbourne Teachers College from 1958 to 1959. She too did not want to be a teacher: ‘I wasn’t interested in teaching at all. I’d planned to be an occupational therapist’. But lack of career advice from her high school meant that she did not have the mathematics or language prerequisites for either her first career choice or for an Arts degree. After teachers college, she spent three and a half years as a high school teacher before travelling overseas. Returning to Melbourne, she worked in the public service until she married: ‘they would not accept married women at that stage, so I had to resign from the Public Service, and what else could I do but go back to teaching, so that’s when I went back to Footscray Girls’. University degrees gave women greater career options than teachers college qualifications.

Restrictions for Women Teachers

Though teaching provided women with many advantages, it also had disadvantages. Throughout most of the twentieth century dominant social norms ascribed breadwinner status to the husband while the wife was typically defined as a homemaker, views that were espoused by trade unions and favoured men in workplaces, including schools. Rosemary Francis argued that ‘the teaching service was structured to give men professional advantage over women’. Deborah Towns maintained that, from the introduction of the 1883 Public Service Act, ‘a career structure was developed for government school teachers that established and sustained career paths for men and restricted women’s career possibilities in state schooling for most of the twentieth century’. As a result of the Public Service Act and further 1889 legislation, women teachers could be appointed infant mistresses in primary schools but could not become principals. In the secondary system, women could be principals only in girls high schools. Because women teachers were considered less capable of controlling older male students and male staff members, their prospects of senior appointment were limited. All women teachers had to resign upon marriage; they could then be re-employed as temporary teachers but at lower rates of pay and without promotion possibilities or superannuation. Donna Dwyer has argued that the reinstatement of married women temporary teachers on to the permanent teachers roll in 1956 was only obtained at the expense of their superannuation entitlements. Liberal and Labor politicians alike, as well as education
administrators, opposed married women teachers gaining permanency, largely because this could create households where both spouses received state-funded pensions—hence the anomaly of married women’s exemption from superannuation entitlements.49 Equal superannuation rights for all teachers were only instituted in 1975.50

Not only was the Education Department career structure designed to disadvantage women, teacher unions initially failed to support their female members. The Victorian Teachers’ Union was cool in support of the women temporary teachers’ campaign for permanency for married women. Later, the Victorian Secondary Teachers Association (VSTA) obstructed attempts to raise or resolve women’s issues within the Education Department.51 As Tom Sheridan and Pat Stretton have shown, this discriminatory attitude was also true of the public service as a whole.52

How much did the women interviewees’ comments reflect these struggles for equality in the unions and in the teaching service? Pat Monahan remarked on the power imbalance in schools: ‘more … middle-aged women … were getting into senior teacher positions and things like that, but the real power group, at the head of the school [was] still tightly, you know men in their 40s and 50s.’53 Others mentioned an attitude dominant in secondary schools that men were entitled to senior positions in order to advance their careers. Ruth Christian observed that male mathematics teachers were given preference over her in coordination roles regardless of their qualifications: ‘this was part of their portfolio, part of their CV’.54 Lana Malakunas also remembered some of this social disquiet surrounding women teachers, and especially mothers, in the 1970s. When a group of teachers set up a crèche at Footscray High School in 1976, some of the senior male teaching group objected as they wanted to use the space for a senior teachers common room.55 Several older women mentioned that they did not receive equal pay at the start of their careers, and others were aware that superannuation provisions had been inequitable.56 ‘And one of the big issues was superannuation for women, because there was still that thing about … “Married women don’t need it”, but if you died, it reverted to the government rather than going to your husband, on the basis that you weren’t the breadwinner.’57 On discriminatory behaviour generally, secondary principal Anne Williams remarked: ‘I don’t see my gender as an issue when I’m at work … it often isn’t an issue for me, it might be for others, but it’s not been something I’ve been aware of’.58
Sexism in schools was mentioned by other interviewees. Joan Adams remembered ‘male staff felt totally entitled to comment upon a female staff’s appearance, and clothing, and did utter a lot of sexist comments, and jokes’. But Veronica Smith commented on a comparative lack of discrimination in teaching as opposed to her earlier experience in the tramway service where she was sexually assaulted by a doctor during a medical examination.

What were the characteristic male attitudes to women’s changing status in teaching? Until 1970, men and women teachers were classified on separate rolls. When these were amalgamated, several male interviewees felt that women had achieved accelerated promotion because of their positions as senior mistresses. None of them mentioned the discrimination that women had experienced prior to this. Another male interviewee considered that because ‘the majority of teachers were women, a lot of the rules, were actually geared, towards women. When we had our first child I had to take maternity leave, for three days, because paternity leave did not exist’. Ron Leslie, however, noted that affirmative action was strong at Brunswick High School:

> it was an awareness raising thing, particularly about the politics of conversation and stuff like that, and gender issues, and breaking the glass ceiling, and teaching was one of the earlier ones doing it. You know I’d no concern, working under women deputies or principals, provided they were competent, and they were.

**Effects on Women’s Lives**

Former trainee teachers, whether they were university or teachers college graduates, certainly saw studentships as improving their social position. Through this means they gained a qualification, a career in teaching and financial independence. Later in life, they had the security of superannuation.

Invited to compare their lives with those of their parents, most of the interviewees commented on their greater affluence. Some described a Spartan childhood where budgets had to be carefully balanced and sacrifices made. Diane Stirton remarked:

> I think we’re better off, and we always have food on the table, we don’t have to count up where we’re going to get the next meal from and all that and I know Mum … would have a little, little lists of whose turn
it was to have a pair of shoes or whatever, well when our kids needed something we've been able to go and, you know, get them when they need it, so we're better off than them.  

Carolyn Woolman concurred: ‘I've never really had to worry about money’. She described the financial burden imposed on her parents by her studies and the higher earning power that her education gave her:

it didn't really occur to me while I was at university … or if it did just in passing, that my parents would have been sacrificing for me. … I gave them some board, out of the money, from the studentship, but … if I'd gone straight to work, they would have had more money, but I did, I do remember that my first pay cheque, this sticks in my mind, because I did keep it, oh, was actually … at the age of 22, the same wage as my father's … he was a skilled tradesman.

Interestingly, though most interviewees considered they were financially better off than their parents, they more frequently described their lives in terms of the opportunities that teaching gave rather than in terms of wealth, though they were certainly aware of how many more material possessions they had. Pam Monahan encapsulated this attitude when she said:

I just look at what my life's been, the choices I've had, the opportunities I've had … Mum especially would have liked the opportunity to travel, and see more things, and I mean in part that's a generational thing, just because that's the, we're all more affluent than our parents' generation were, but to have had that opportunity for education and to have taken it, and it's led me down, and opened up so many doors to me to a fascinating life, of doing so many interesting things and, that wasn't an option for them because of the times in which they happened to be born.

While the second half of the twentieth century saw an increase in affluence and material possessions for most Australians, in the eyes of interviewees for this project it was the studentships they received that enabled them to participate in that increased prosperity.

Their lengthy careers and sense of vocation contrasted with what interviewees reported about their mothers’ working lives. A stereotype of the pre-war and post-war generation workforce is of women as homemakers and men as breadwinners. Supporting this, the statistics
from the surveys indicated that most student teachers' mothers (59 per cent) were homemakers at the time the trainees took up their studentships. However, 41 per cent held part-time or full-time jobs, sometimes from economic necessity and sometimes from interest. Interviewees contrasted their working lives with the experiences of their mothers. Pam Monahan stated: 'Mum worked not for desire but for economic necessity.' Carolyn Woolman remarked that her mother worked in a city shop, even though she may have preferred other work, and even though her husband did not want her to work:

as I said she was ambitious and this … was not necessarily what she wanted to do with her life, but she liked getting out of the house, and meeting different people, and so on, and I think she quite enjoyed working. Now my father, put up a lot of resistance to that, even although it could have … well it was, helping the household finances, so they were traditional in their roles.

Another difference between interviewees’ working lives and those of their mothers was that the interviewees worked while they raised children. May James remarked: ‘But I just sort of think she was bound to that house, all the time, her whole life was housework … washing, ironing, cooking … so I had a very different life than Mum.’ Gwen Arthur also noted this difference, though she saw it as having its difficulties too:

Mum was home, all the time I was at school, but … I was working part-time and then I was working full-time and they [her family] all had their jobs to do, I wouldn't have managed to do it all (laugh), and then teach, and study, at one stage when I first went back full-time teaching I was studying as well, so it was hard work, juggling all of that.

**Conclusion**

Teaching studentships enabled large numbers of women from the working and lower middle classes to gain a tertiary education that would otherwise have been impossible for most of them, and also provided them with lengthy and satisfying careers that many saw as a vocation. Women were more highly represented amongst studentship holders than they were in university undergraduate populations generally, and their degree choice was gendered. Contemporary researchers concluded that
lower middle- and working-class students, and those from migrant and country backgrounds, especially benefitted from studentships. These earlier conclusions were supported by Bowler’s research with former studentship holders, who also often reported that they were the first members of their families to undertake tertiary education. Teachers college students surveyed by Bowler were more frequently from higher social backgrounds than their university compatriots, contrary to the findings of earlier research, the result perhaps of the greater number of primary school participants included in Bowler’s cohort. The majority of all interviewees nevertheless agreed that they would have been unable to gain their tertiary qualifications without their studentships, particularly those from families where education for girls was not valued.

The concern of contemporary researchers that women teachers would marry and leave teaching was not borne out by the longevity of woman studentship holders’ careers. Permanent employment for married women teachers, the merging of male and female teaching rolls, and better family leave and superannuation provisions all encouraged women to continue teaching. More women studentship holders stayed in teaching than their male counterparts. Female interviewees saw teaching as having many advantages as a career for a working mother: school holidays, part-time work and family leave. However, women were less likely to gain senior positions owing to their interrupted service. The Education Department favoured men’s careers, as demonstrated by women’s temporary employment after marriage, their lower pay and their reduced superannuation rights. Interviewees for this project were aware of the power imbalance in schools, their lower pay and poorer superannuation before this situation gradually changed as the inequities were redressed.

Comparing their parents’ lives with their own, these women considered that teaching opened the door to social mobility, greater affluence and more opportunities in life. They contrasted their lives to those of their mothers, not just in terms of their economic security and independence but in light of their identity as working, not stay-at-home, mothers. They saw themselves as having a vocation; work was not just an economic necessity as had been the case when their mothers took jobs to supplement the main wage.
Notes

1 The metaphor of education as opening a door is also repeated in the literature. However, in the early 1980s, Grimshaw and Strahan pointed out that tertiary education only half-opened the professional door for many Australian women. Patricia Grimshaw and Lynne Strahan, The Half-open Door: Sixteen Modern Australian Women Look at Professional Life and Achievement, Sydney, Hale & Iremonger, 1982.


3 The annual reports of the Education Department of Victoria reported the number of students gaining studentships each year and where they undertook their studies. However, the method of reporting varied, so the exact breakdown into faculties, gender, institutions etc. is difficult to ascertain.

4 Interview with Anna Nowak, Mount Macedon, 4 February 2016. A number of Francis's and Bowler's interviewees preferred to remain anonymous and have been given pseudonyms in this article.


6 Education Department annual reports.


9 Dale Vagg, email to Marilyn Bowler, 28 October 2011, paras. 4 & 5.

11 Anderson & Vervoorn, p. 59.
13 Anderson & Vervoorn, p. 141.
16 Deborah Hennessey, Preliminary Survey for Primary Teaching Studentship Holders, 19 November 2009, p. 3.
20 Janine Rizzetti, Preliminary Survey for Teaching Studentship Holders who Attended University, 27 September 2009, p. 3.
21 Anderson, Western & Horne, p. 22; Bowler, p. 81.
22 Interview with Irena Kostov, Coburg, 12 January 2015.
24 Anderson, Western & Horne, p. 25.
26 Valma Gaskell, Preliminary Survey for Secondary Teachers College Studentship Holders, p. 3.
27 Sheenagh Roberts, Preliminary Survey for Secondary Teachers College Studentship Holders, p. 3.
28 Interview with Valrie Finch, Carlton, 21 October 2009, pp. 4–5.
29 Denise Waterson, Preliminary Survey for Teaching Studentship Holders who Attended University, p. 3.
30 Nowak interview.
31 Tanya Trengrove, Preliminary Survey for Teaching Studentship Holders who Attended University, 5 November 2009, p. 4.
32 Interview with Tanya Trengrove, Eltham, 28 May 2010, pp. 14–16.
34 Anderson, p. 17.
In secondary schools, relief teachers are hired on a daily basis and cover classes for teachers who are ill, on leave or absent from the school for excursions or professional development.

Interview with Anne Williams, Mansfield, 24 June 2010, p. 19.

Interview with Joan Adams, Footscray, p. 13.

Adams interview, p. 2.

Wheeler interview, p. 2.

Wheeler interview, p. 6.


Towns, p. xiii.

Francis, p. 60.


Dwyer, p. 163.


Interview with Pam Monahan, Camberwell, 18 November 2010, p. 21.


Equal pay was phased in nearly 20 years after secondary studentships were re-introduced.

Monahan interview, p. 20.

Williams interview, p. 20.

Adams interview, p. 13.

Interview with Veronica Smith, Pascoe Vale South, 5 April 2010, pp. 16–17.

Interview with J. Arthur, Yarram, 3 November 2010, p. 13.


Interview with Diane Stirton, Wonthaggi, 4 November 2010, p. 16.

Interview with Carolyn Woolman, Bundoora, 22 April 2010, p. 13.

Woolman interview, p. 13.

Monahan interview, p. 27.

Monahan interview, p. 29.


Interview with May James, Bundoora, 14 October 2010, p. 29.

Interview with G. Arthur, Yarram, 3 November 2010, p. 20.
Charles Bonney and the Fertile Kilmore Plains

Martin Williams

Abstract
Charles Bonney was a pioneer of overland routes from New South Wales to Port Phillip and South Australia from 1837 but was also a leading figure in politics and public administration in Adelaide for the rest of his life. From 1871 he wrote that his most important achievements included the discovery for European use of the fertile district of Kilmore and the route of the Sydney Road, both seemingly obscure to modern eyes. This article will present the lost evidence for Bonney’s primacy in Kilmore’s foundation and reveal exactly when Bonney’s importance was erroneously erased by later historians.

I pushed through rough timbered country in bitter cold all day. I made one last effort up a stiff pinch, up one more ridge line towards the setting sun. There before me as far as the eye could see lay the golden rich rolling fields of … my childhood home, Sandon, Sussex.

(An imaginary journal entry by Charles Bonney on 21 March 1837, on seeing the Kilmore Plains for the first time from the ridge at Green’s Pinch on the Sydney road.)

Charles Bonney’s Overlanding
From July 1836 Port Phillip settlers in early Melbourne were urging pastoralists of New South Wales to overland stock to their newly opened lands. Charles Bonney was the first individual to attempt the journey from Albury in that same month but was turned back by floodwaters on the Ovens River at Wangaratta. Within months, John Gardiner, Joseph Hawdon and Captain John Hepburn had succeeded in driving cattle from Howe’s station at Jugiong on the Murrumbidgee to the Yarra, arriving there for Christmas Day 1836. Bonney made a second attempt with Charles Hotson Ebden from Ebden’s station, Mungabareena, at Albury on 25 December 1836. They reached the Yarra two weeks after the Gardiner party on 7 January 1837. Bonney returned to Albury to
drive 10,000 sheep for Ebden to the Port Phillip District, departing on 1 March 1837.\footnote{6}

Bonney later recorded key elements of this journey in a letter of 1871\footnote{7} and autobiographical notes of 1882.\footnote{8}

\begin{quote}
I … proceeded again to Mr. Ebden’s station, and, in the month of March, started with ten thousand sheep for the Port Phillip district, these were the first sheep taken across to the New Settlement. Having crossed the Goulburn, the sheep were halted on some open country where Mr. Ebden first intended to place them.
\end{quote}

Captain John Hepburn provided the location of this halting place: ‘Mr. Ebden took up the Sugarloaf Creek, but abandoned that part of the country and took up Carlsruhe … Mr. William Hamilton took up the Sugarloaf Creek, left by Mr. Ebden’.\footnote{9} Thomas Henry Nutt surveyed Sugarloaf Creek in 1842 and identified ‘Hamilton’s sheep station’ on land adjacent to what is now the intersection of Seymour Pyalong Road with Tallarook Pyalong Road.\footnote{10} Nutt surveyed with sufficient precision to identify this location readily as 37°05’04” S; 145°02’41” E.

The distance between Ebden’s Mungabareena station at Albury and Sugarloaf Creek station along the original Thomas Mitchell journey line was approximately 141 miles. To estimate Bonney’s date of arrival
at Sugarloaf Creek, Thomas Walker recorded that 9,000 of this same flock of sheep owned by Ebden were driven from Mitchell’s Town on the Goulburn on 21 May 1837 to Redesdale on the Campaspe. Walker’s records indicated that this journey was 39 miles and took three full days, or eleven miles per day. Using this real rate of travel of Ebden’s flock of sheep as a guide, I have calculated that Bonney would have taken approximately thirteen days to drive the sheep the 141 miles to the Sugarloaf Creek station, arriving about 14 March 1837.

This estimate is corroborated by the journey of George Hamilton. After his arrival at Sugarloaf Creek Bonney was made aware of the proximity of another overland party behind him. He later recollected that on the eve of taking two drays to Melbourne for supplies: ‘I received intelligence that there was a party with cattle about a day’s journey behind me, under the leadership of the late George Hamilton’. Hamilton was droving stock overland to Gisborne for Henry Howey. For a brief period, it was considered that the party and the livestock had been lost. But a letter dated 1 April 1837, written from Campbelltown to the *Sydney Monitor*, advised that ‘Mr Hamilton … is perfectly safe … My informant is Mr. Waddy of the Mounted Police, who sent a party in quest of Mr H’. Further traceable details were provided on 6 April 1837 when a Mr Hallen, part owner of the stock, wrote that ‘he had just received a communication from Mr. Hamilton … his party had arrived safe at their place of destination’.

It is not clear exactly when and where the police search found the party to be safe, but their destination was Gisborne. It would have taken at least seven days for a message to get from there to Yass by horseback and another two days by coach mail to Sydney. These estimates are based on later mail runs, which were journeys made under pressure with changes of horses and riders, a facility also available to the mounted police. Thus Hamilton could have reached his destination at Gisborne as early as 24 March 1837, depending on the place where Lieutenant Waddy’s detachment actually found him to be safe.

Assuming that Hamilton had communicated from Gisborne, and that it would have taken him about six days to drive stock the 68 miles there from his position near Bonney, we can conclude that the pair were in close proximity on about 18 March 1837. When Bonney was at Sugarloaf Creek station around that time, he was advised that two bushrangers were in the vicinity. He paused to search for them.
before leaving for the settlement on the Yarra. On this trip he made two important discoveries:

In company with one of Mr. Hamilton’s overseers I spent an afternoon in searching the country round about in the endeavour to find the bushrangers, but, not succeeding, I had to start the next morning with the drays for the settlement. On this journey I made the track which afterwards became known as the Sydney Road, and I also discovered at the same time the fertile district, named afterwards Kilmore, where I formed a sheep station.17

Assuming that Bonney began his trip by dray on the next day, 19 March, he would have covered the fifteen miles to Kilmore in about two days, marking 21 March 1837 as the approximate date of the European discovery of that district by Charles Bonney.

Bonney had returned to Sugarloaf Creek station in May 1837 by the time Ebden commenced driving 9,000 of the flock of sheep to Carlsruhe. ‘The sheep I had brought over, with the exception of two flocks that I had taken charge of, were removed to Mount Macedon.’18 This journey was recorded by Thomas Walker, who wrote that Ebden settled on his Carlsruhe station on 26 May 1837.19 Bonney reported that he in turn left Sugarloaf Creek station after his camp had been robbed, ‘and with these two flocks, shortly after the robbery of my camp, I moved to Kilmore’.20 The bushranger George Commerford made a statement to police when he was captured on the Murrumbidgee on 24 June 1837. It revealed that ten days had elapsed between his robbing of Bonney’s station and his capture, making the date of the robbery 14 June 1837.21 Bonney drove his sheep to the Kilmore station and occupied it ‘shortly after’ 14 June 1837. Like all overlanders, he was under pressure to occupy the run he had selected because, if he failed to reach it in time, another party could take it over. This provided him with an incentive to move on and not to tarry at Sugarloaf Creek. The journey of fifteen miles would normally have taken about two days, but, allowing three days for ‘shortly’, we can conclude that Kilmore would have been under European occupation by about 17 June 1837, its first European settler being Charles Bonney.

Gisborne, Carlsruhe and Kilmore, occupied by these overlanders, became townsites. They would have had their first European buildings on them within days of their occupation. The squatters had to build a head station and separate outstations for every multiple of about a
thousand sheep.\textsuperscript{22} It would take two days to build each sheep station hut and so about four days to set up a small run.\textsuperscript{23} It was essential to have huts distributed around the run as ‘outstations’ at the boundaries of the squatted land so that it was physically occupied by sheep and could be defended from other squatters.\textsuperscript{24}

Bonney had squatted on the rich volcanic Kilmore Plains, a physiographical feature of about 20,000 acres centred now on Willowmavin and including Moranding, Bylands and the Kilmore township.\textsuperscript{25} Some of the best of the land had permanent water from the three streams across it: Kurkuruk Creek, Ryan’s Creek and Kilmore Creek. The water supply and rich arable nature of the plains were central to the future of the district. The track that Bonney had made to Melbourne in March 1837 became the principal road between Melbourne and Sydney. The permanent water and pasture at the Kilmore Creek led to it becoming the main rest stop between the Goulburn River and Melbourne on Bonney’s new Sydney Road. Bonney, however, squatted at Kilmore for only six months, late recalling:

There I remained with them till the end of year 1837. Being the fartherest out station from, the Port Phillip Settlement, and there being no other station within a distance of nearly twenty miles, I found the difficulty of managing the sheep so great in consequence of the trouble I had in getting men that I gave up the station and took the sheep to Mount Macedon.\textsuperscript{26}

Joseph Hawdon recorded that he met Bonney at his outstation at Kilmore immediately prior to the pair making the first overland stock drive to Adelaide. Bonney had left Kilmore for good by 17 January 1838.\textsuperscript{27}

**Bonney’s Successors**

Dr Richard Julian Hamlyn was a resident of Melbourne when he wrote to Captain William Lonsdale on 26 December 1837 requesting employment.\textsuperscript{28} Hamlyn was from Goulburn and was an associate of the overlanders Henry Howey\textsuperscript{29} and George and William Faithfull.\textsuperscript{30} At the end of February 1838, Hamlyn was identified as occupying a sheep station on the Sydney Road by a G.B.S., who wrote.
To Ebden’s old station since occupied by Mr. Hamilton … station off the road to the right, to the left a remarkable hill called Hepburner’s Sugar Loaf.

6 [miles] Cross a creek without water, half a mile water.

8 Mr. Hamlyn’s station, the road passes in front, and from hence is to be traced by the cuts on the trees, keeping on the top of the range, thick scrub.

14 Open on a plain, a remarkable bluff face of trees in front, to the left a group of three hills, under which Mr. Thomas’ station, beautiful spring of water.\(^{31}\)

This description, including the distance estimates, matched the track of the Sydney Road pioneered by Bonney, running from William Hamilton’s station at Sugarloaf Creek, leaving Hepburner’s Sugar Loaf (Mt Piper) to the left, passing in front of what had been Bonney’s outstation at Kilmore and then, remaining on the top of the range, moving south through Bylands to Pretty Sally Hill until the road opened up onto the plain leading to Thom’s station, now Beveridge, with three prominent hills in the foreground. Having reached Dr Hamlyn’s station, G.B.S. recorded the distance to Melbourne as 38 miles, a close approximation to the actual distance of 37 miles.

Hamlyn had clearly taken up Bonney’s outstation. The writer, G.B.S., was Lieutenant George Brunswick Smyth. He and Lieutenant Alfred Miller Mundy had just made the overland trip to Port Phillip, having arrived at the end of February 1838 as the *Melbourne Advertiser* reported: ‘Lieutenants Smith and Munday arrived last week overland from Sydney. Lieut. Smith relieves Lieut. Hawkins’.\(^{32}\) Hamlyn applied for a pastoral licence on 26 June 1838, Peter Snodgrass, the commissioner for crown lands, informing the colonial secretary that, ‘R.J. Hamlyn, gentleman, residing at Port Phillip, applies to His Excellency the Governor for a licence to depasture sheep, cattle and other stock upon vacant Crown Lands’.\(^{33}\) However, Smyth’s account had demonstrated that Richard Hamlyn was already occupying the Bonney Outstation when this licence application was made on his behalf by Snodgrass.

**The Obscuring of Bonney’s Primacy**

A century later a celebratory article on Kilmore’s centenary obscured the reality that Bonney was the first European settler. James Maher in 1938 wrote that:
About the end of the year 1837 Dr. Richard Hamlyn made a station on the Dry Creek, and grazed his flocks over the area where the town of Kilmore later sprang up. This run he held (without going through the formality of taking out a licence) for a few years.\textsuperscript{34}

Maher gave no reference for these assertions but merely wrote ‘compiled from notes supplied by the Historical Society’.\textsuperscript{35} There has never been a reference to either Richard Hamlyn or the Dry Creek near Kilmore in the \textit{Victorian Historical Journal} or its predecessors.\textsuperscript{36} Later writers C.E. Sayers\textsuperscript{37} and Myra Tucker\textsuperscript{38} reproduced the baseless assertions by Maher almost verbatim but provided no citation to him or any other traceable source. The absence of evidence that Hamlyn was at Dry Creek only added to the credibility of Smyth’s personal observation that Hamlyn was at the Bonney Outstation on the Sydney Road. Notwithstanding the occupation of his prized squatting run, Hamlyn had left it by April 1839.

Lady Jane Franklin’s journal provides evidence of Hamlyn’s successors on Bonney’s original run. Lady Jane, the wife of the governor of Van Diemen’s Land, commenced a journey overland from Melbourne to Sydney on Monday 8 April 1839, during which she visited Frederick Armand Powlett and John Green, the next occupants of Bonney’s station. She observed near present-day Beveridge:

It was 14 miles hence to Green’s outstation [on the Sydney Road] & 18 to the upper house where we were to sleep … Met Captain Smyth on horseback, gaily dressed in police costume [Captain G.B. Smyth, Commander of Mounted Police] … The house stands on the side of the bare hill whence can see over bare sloping foreground several ridges of hills, without being able to see into hollows [Powlett and Green’s Head Station at Moranding].\textsuperscript{39}

The exact locations of the outstation and the ‘upper house’ home station were identified by Nutt in 1841 in marking out the Kilmore Special Survey. Nutt recorded in his survey field notes an ‘old hut’ that he measured as ‘19,500 links’ (356 metres) due west of the Kilmore creek along his survey line. That meant that it was eleven metres east of the intersection of Church Street and Foote Street, Kilmore (37°17’45” S; 144°56’ 57” E).\textsuperscript{40} Tucker concluded logically that the ‘old hut’ was the Bonney outstation.\textsuperscript{41} Powlett and Green’s head station was marked by Nutt at what became Kennedys Lane, Willowmavin, diagonally opposite the Willowmavin Primary School (37°53’31 S; 144° 53’23” E).\textsuperscript{42}
Given the previous connections between Hamlyn, Mundy and Smyth, the next day’s entry in Franklin’s diary is apposite. After staying overnight at Powlett and Green’s head station, the Franklin party travelled to the neighbouring station held by Lieutenant Alfred Miller Mundy and Captain G.B. Smyth. ‘Tuesday 9th April To Mundy’s 9 miles, Hamilton’s 5 miles. Nothing interesting as we approach Mr Mundy’s—saw Mr Mundy in blue jacket & plaid … Mr Mundy, with whom Captain Smyth is joined, was sending near 700 head of cattle overland to South Australia.’

John Green himself confirmed that Mundy and Smyth’s station was nine miles from Powlett and Green’s station. ‘Melbourne Court Register, 23 October 1838. John Green … I directed the prisoner to take some bullocks to Mr Mundy’s station which is about nine miles distant but he refused to do so.’ The station that was nine miles from Powlett and Green’s station and, from there, five miles to William Hamilton’s (second) station, at Glenaroua, was the run later named Pyalong station on Percival Creek. These stations are all shown precisely by Nutt. Furthermore, the direct route from Powlett and Green’s station to Hamilton’s Glenaroua station along Kurkuruk Creek happened also to be a distance of nine miles, thus precluding it from the recorded journey of nine miles to Mundy and Smyth’s station followed by an additional five miles to Hamilton’s station. William Hamilton’s station became Glenaroua Homestead, adjacent to the bridge on the Glenaroua Broadford Road over Kurkuruk Creek (37°8’58” S; 144°58’11” E). Mundy and Smyth’s station became Mollison Park at the corner of the Northern Highway and Fullards Road, Pyalong (37°9’29” S; 144°52’10” E).

These observations by Franklin disprove William Thomas Mollison’s written statement of 1853 to Governor Charles LaTrobe that: ‘1838. Pyalong was occupied as a cattle station. W. Hamilton, Mundy & Smythe, and F.A. Powlett followed in this quarter.’ In reality, all four had preceded Mollison. Mollison’s claims, which have become an historic truism since 1853, stand corrected by the eyewitness Lady Jane Franklin. Indeed, when Captain George Leggett of the Historical Society, Victoria, unveiled a memorial to the Mollison family at Pyalong in 1937, he was equally vague about the location of Mundy and Smyth’s run; yet he was standing on their head station.

On 21 August 1838, Frederick Armand Powlett and John Green, describing themselves as ‘the undersigned graziers and stock
holders, residing on the River Goulburn and the adjacent country’, signed a petition to the colonial secretary requesting the presence of a resident police magistrate. Other signatories included Alfred Miller Mundy, William Hamilton, George B. Smyth JP, and Peter Snodgrass (commissioner of crown lands, Port Phillip). This petition further demonstrated that it was John Green who was in partnership with Frederick Armand Powlett. The W.P. Greene (William Pomerey), incorrectly linked to Powlett by Tucker, did not arrive in the colony until five years later.

**William Rutledge’s Special Survey**

In 1841 a radical change occurred to Bonney’s original run. William Rutledge purchased, by Special Survey, 5,120 acres of the rich arable soil occupied by ‘Messrs Powlett and Green’s station on the Sydney Road’ with the intention of subdividing and selling it. Rutledge had purchased the most fertile and best-watered land from beneath their feet. This survey breached Special Survey Regulations, which stipulated that a ‘block can never contain more than … one mile of … water frontage … for every four square miles of area’. Rutledge’s survey of eight square miles was entitled to two miles of water frontage, but it included one bank of Kurkuruk Creek and both banks of each of Kilmore Creek and Ryan’s Creek for a total of ten miles of water frontage, five times greater than was permissible. Rutledge was quite conscious of the subterfuge. His advertisements made open reference to the fact that ‘a constant supply of pure water from three different creeks passes through the grounds’.

This grant had its ironies in that it reflected ascending levels of illegal possession of the time. Bonney’s original holding was in defiance of Governor Richard Bourke’s explicit instruction that squatters in the Port Phillip District had no legal right to the land that they occupied, it being the crown’s, but the rights of the crown itself to possession of the land against the rights of the Indigenous population were based on prevailing notions that later proved flawed. William Blackstone best represented these views, writing, ‘lands are claimed by right of occupancy only, by finding them desert and uncultivated, and peopling them from the mother-country’. In recent times his views were deemed a legal fiction in the Mabo Decision.

Nutt, in his survey of the ‘Remainder of Kurkuruc Creek’ in 1842, revealed an immediate practical consequence of Rutledge’s purchase
for Powlett and Green. It showed Dry Creek with the label ‘Greens Sheep Stn’ on it two miles east of Kilmore and 400 metres SSE of today’s Kilmore East Railway Station (37°17’47” S; 144°59’04” E). The plan also showed Powlett and Green’s sheep station, still existing at Moranding, as a separate entity. It was apparent that John Green took up a run to the immediate east and south of his partnership station with Powlett after they were displaced by Rutledge in 1841. This has shed light on the use of Dry Creek near Kilmore as a sheep station. Dry Creek was occupied by Green, and not by Hamlyn.

**Kilmore Rising**

Rutledge’s survey was the making of Kilmore. Land sales commenced immediately, and there were two competing taverns at ‘Rutledge Town’ by the end of October 1841. The size of Kilmore’s population during the early 1840s remains elusive. It was not mentioned separately in the census returns of 1841 or 1846. However, newspaper sources provide some insight, showing that from 1847 the Kilmore Special Survey and township were being taken up, and rapidly. In May 1847, ‘there are about 400 people located on the survey within a distance of 2 square miles’. This was verified in an *Argus* report in July 1848: ‘A census of the population of Kilmore … shows … upwards of 400 persons residing on the special survey’. By July 1849 the population had increased markedly: ‘Kilmore … [was] a thriving township with three Inns and a population of 600’. It had nearly doubled in size again by 1851. The *Argus* gave accurate census figures for the population of Kilmore borough in 1851 as 1,137 and the Police District of Kilmore, a much larger area, as 2,064.

The growth at Kilmore was given another major fillip in 1850 when the government, clearly intending to cash in on the success of the Kilmore Special Survey, subdivided and sold more of the Kilmore Plains creating both a new town area and small farm lots in Bylands, immediately adjoining the south boundary of the survey. The township size and area of small farms were approximately doubled by this subdivision. The effect on growth at Kilmore was shown in the census of 1854 in which the combined ‘Bylands Parish’, ‘Kilmore Township’ and ‘Kilmore (Suburbs of)’ population amounted to 2,267, another near doubling in size in three years. Kilmore had become unique among overlander townsites in inland Victoria in terms of size. Of other early towns, Gisborne had a population of 279, Carlsruhe had no more than
152 (1861 data) whilst Kilmore’s Sydney Road neighbour, Seymour, which had the same advantage as Kilmore in being an important staging point on the Sydney Road, had a low population of 138, so it was not proximity to the Sydney Road that caused the growth at Kilmore. Two other townsites on the original Sydney Road had been surveyed and town lots sold to speculators in 1839—Mitchell’s Town and Violet Creek. Of these, Mitchell’s Town was abandoned in 1840 when the Sydney Road shifted to Seymour, along with the town’s only hotel proprietor, whilst Violet Creek (later Violet Town) was still uninhabited in 1841. The latter was not proclaimed a town until 1861, and its population was then only 204. This indicated that by 1851 Kilmore had become the first inland town in Victoria by the combination of age, physical occupation, and its having grown to become the largest by a factor of four. Its rapid rate of growth then continued for another decade. For those reasons alone it had come to deserve the regard in which it was held by Bonney.

Kilmore’s population growth gave the town significant political importance because many of the settlers were able to meet the franchise property qualification of owning freehold property valued at £100 or leasing property with an annual value exceeding £10 and thus qualify to vote in the newly formed Victorian parliament of 1851. In the election of 1851, the United Boroughs of Kilmore, Kyneton and Seymour were dominated by Kilmore township, while the United Counties of Talbot, Dallhousie and Anglesea were dominated by the Rutledge Kilmore Special Survey. As a further demonstration of the importance of the district, the first elected representative of the United Counties was John Pascoe Fawkner. In the election of 1856, this concentration of electoral power was reflected in a new Legislative Assembly seat of Kilmore, which comprised all of the Kilmore Special Survey, the new government town and the Bylands subdivision of small farms. This level of political importance was also unique in inland Victoria and was another confirmation of Bonney’s regard for the worth of Kilmore and his pride in playing a pioneering role.

In practice the growth at Kilmore had merely repeated that of the Belfast Special Survey on the coast at Port Fairy, which was purchased later—in 1843—but developed more rapidly. About 40 families were reported to have been brought immediately from Melbourne to settle on the property in 1843. It had grown to a population of 904 by the
Similarly, with its concentration of population, Belfast became an important electorate. In 1851 it shared the Legislative Council electorate of the United Towns of Belfast and Warrnambool, but in 1856 it had its own Legislative Assembly electorate of Belfast. In 1850 both Kilmore and Belfast featured concentrations of population that had been created by Special Surveys, Belfast on the coast and Kilmore inland. Kilmore was the only inland place in Victoria to have such a dense population.

There were further explanations for the uniqueness of Kilmore. The Kilmore Plains comprised rich volcanic land suitable for both close agriculture and pasturage and, critically for the times, was permanently watered. It was thus capable of supporting both the first and second waves of colonial land use, pastoral and agricultural. Before 1851 Victoria was overwhelmingly pastoral. The Argus reported that, in the total return from exports of £978,741 17s 10d in the financial year 1849–50, the vanishingly small amount of £610 0s 0d, or less than one-tenth of 1 per cent, arose from non-pastoral sources like whale and bark products. The inland areas were given over to low-population-density grazing, and the Kilmore Plains with its permanent water was among the best of the grazing lands. Nevertheless, incipient agriculture had emerged there by 1842.

It was more or less impossible to purchase town blocks and small farm holdings anywhere inland in Victoria except for Kilmore before 1851. Whilst some villages had been surveyed to service the mail run on the Sydney Road—Seymour in 1844, and Benalla and Wangaratta together in 1849—the large-scale survey and sale of Victorian townships and small farms around them did not begin until the newly separated colony of Victoria was created in 1851. Only from that year did an abundance of township allotments and suburban lands become available, thus enabling other towns to catch up.

When Charles Bonney died in 1897 eulogies written for him included those by the historians Ernest Favenc and George Barton. They were published in leading metropolitan newspapers in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney and still recorded Bonney’s discoveries of the fertile Kilmore district and the route of the Sydney road as amongst his major achievements. Their authors must have known that those facts of exploration would still have resonance for their readers in the cities.
For much of his lifetime Bonney’s own assessments of his achievements and of Kilmore prevailed. The Kilmore district, by population and political influence, was uniquely important in inland Victoria at least until the census of 1861 when the town of Kilmore was noted as having one of the fastest growing populations in the state and one, remarkably, that matched those of gold-mining towns like Ballarat, Sandhurst and Beechworth. Bonney’s Sydney Road route remained the principal highway between Melbourne and Sydney for 139 years, and it is still in use, almost exactly where Bonney placed it in 1837, as a part of the major Northern Highway to Bendigo and the Riverina.

Kilmore experienced a slow decline after 1861. So too did Bonney’s primacy as the European founder of the district. His legacy dimmed from the late nineteenth century until it was entirely lost to local historians by 1938. Bonney’s early presence at Kilmore was noted again in the 1980s, but his key role in pioneering the Kilmore Plains and their unique position as the earliest agricultural powerhouse of inland Victoria had also been lost to history.

Notes
1 The view was no doubt similar to this ‘Panorama from the Hume and Hovell Memorial, Kilmore, Vic’, Rose Series, Rose Stereograph Co., c. 1920–1954, but evidently 1925, SLV H32492/1401.
5 Bonney, p. 83.
7 George B. Barton, ‘Old Time Memories’, Australasian, 15 May 1897, p. 44.
8 Bonney, p. 84.
9 Bride (ed.), p. 53.
12 Bonney, p. 84.
14 Original Correspondence, Campbelltown, Sydney Monitor, 3 April 1837, p. 3.
16 ‘Melbourne Mail’, Australian, 29 October 1839, p. 2.
17 Bonney p. 84.
18 Bonney, p. 86.
19 Walker, p. 42.
20 Bonney, p. 86.
26 Bonney, p. 86.
28 Richard J. Hamlyn, Letter to William Lonsdale, 26 October 1837, Folder No. 84 1837/181, VPRS 4, P0003, PROV.
30 ‘Address to Major Breton’, *Sydney Herald*, 17 April 1834, p. 2.
32 *Melbourne Advertiser*, vol. 1, no. 10, 5 March 1838, p. 3, MS 13486, SLV.
35 Maher, p. 9.
40 T.H. Nutt, ‘Sydney Road, Plenty and Sandriffe, Moonee Ponds, Bendigo Spec Sur’, Thomas H. Nutt, Bundle 93, Book 1237, Series Number VPRS 16685, Consignment Number P0001, PROV.
41 Tucker, p. 38.
42 Thomas H. Nutt, ‘SS9 and SS9A; Selected by Mr. Wm. Rutledge; Nutt; Willowmavin, 1841’, Historic Plan Collection, VPRS 8168/P2 unit 6320 and 6321, PROV.
45 T.H. Nutt, ‘Plan of the Continuation of Mollisons Creek, Goulburn River; Nutt T.H.; Broadford Glenaroua, March 1842’, VPRS 8168/P0002/2360, PROV. Also, ‘Plan of the Remainder of Kurkuruc Creek, Goulburn River; Nutt T.H.; Broadford Glenaroua, March 1842’, VPRS 8168/P0002/2320, PROV.


49 Tucker, p. 40.


51 Special Survey, Geelong Advertiser, 24 April 1841, p. 2.

52 Special Surveys Port Phillip, New South Wales Government Gazette, 5 March 1841 (No. 18), p. 321.

53 Kilmore Special Survey, Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser, 27 September 1841, p. 4.


57 T.H. Nutt, ‘Plan of the Remainder of Kurkuruc Creek, Goulburn River; Nutt T.H.; Broadford Glenaroua, March 1842’, VPRS 8168/P0002/2320, PROV.


60 ‘Kilmore’, Argus, 18 July 1848, p. 2.

61 ‘Kilmore’, Port Phillip Gazette and Settler’s Journal, 10 January 1849, p. 3.

62 ‘Victoria Proposed Electoral Districts’, Argus, 1 May 1851, p. 2.

63 ‘Census of the Year 1851’, Argus, 8 August 1851, p. 2.

64 New South Wales Government Gazette, 30 July 1850, No. 91, p. 1107.


66 Population Tables, Census 1854, Melbourne, John Ferres, Government Printer, 1854, p. 28.

67 Numbers and Distribution of the People, Census of Victoria, 1861, Melbourne, John Ferres, Government Printer, 1861, p. 28.

68 ‘Mitchell’s Town’, Port Phillip Gazette, 6 April 1839, p. 2.


70 ‘John Clark’, Port Philip Gazette, 15 July 1840, p. 4.

71 ‘Violet Creek’, Geelong Advertiser, 1 May 1841, p. 4.

72 Numbers and Distribution of the People, Census of Victoria, 1861, Melbourne, John Ferres, Government Printer, 1861, p. 32.

73 Victoria Regina, No. XLVII. An Act to Provide for the Division of the Colony of Victoria into Electoral Districts, Parliament of Victoria, 1851.

74 ‘Kilmore, Forthcoming Election’, Argus, 2 September 1851, p. 2.
76 'Portland Bay Extracts, Port Fairy', Sydney Morning Herald, 23 March 1843, p. 4.
77 'Victoria proposed Electoral Districts', Argus, 1 May 1851, p. 2.
78 'Electoral District of Belfast', Argus, 23 March 1854, p. 4.
79 'Value of Exports', Argus, 4 July 1850, p. 2.
82 'Town of Benalla, Town of Wangaratta', New South Wales Government Gazette, 7 April 1849.
85 George B. Barton, 'Charles Bonney', Australasian 15 May 1897, p. 44.
87 Numbers and Distribution of the People, Census of Victoria, 1861, Melbourne, John Ferres, Government Printer, 1861, p. 13.
F.G.A. Barnard:  
Naturalist, Historian and Committed Kewite

Gary Presland

Abstract
Over a period of more than 50 years beginning in the late 1870s, Francis G.A. Barnard was an active, and for the most part voluntary, member of a wide range of groups and organisations. In an age when it was not uncommon for individuals to voluntarily contribute time and energy to public service, F.G.A. Barnard was without peer. In every organisation of which he was a member, he served as an office bearer. He was a foundation member of both the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria (1880–1932) and the Historical Society of Victoria (1909–32). He was also a local councillor (1915–27) and, contemporaneously, an active participant in many community organisations in Kew.

Introduction
At the funeral service for Francis Barnard, on 2 June 1932, the pallbearers comprised the serving presidents of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria and the Historical Society of Victoria, a former president from each of these societies, and the serving mayor and town clerk of the City of Kew. The composition of this group can be seen as an indication not only of the range of Barnard’s interests but also of the standing he held in his chosen spheres of activity. In a period of more than 50 years, from 1880 until his death, Francis George Allman Barnard made significant contributions in the fields of natural history, local government and local history (see photograph Figure 1). In addition he was an active member of a range of locally focused groups, particularly in the district of Kew.

Space here does not allow a complete account of Barnard’s numerous community roles. Instead this article will focus on his three main areas of activity in order to indicate the extent and degree of commitment he brought to voluntary service for his community.
Early Life

Francis George Allman (hereafter Frank or FGA) Barnard was born in Kew on Boxing Day 1857. He was the first of five children born to Francis and Elizabeth Barnard (née Allman). His birth was registered in Hawthorn because, at the time, there was no closer registrar. Frank’s father was a pharmaceutical chemist, about to begin operating a store at the corner of Bulleen Road and Cotham Road. In the year following his son’s birth, Francis Senior was appointed deputy registrar for the district. He was thereafter able to officially register each of Frank’s four siblings, born between 1859 and 1866.

Frank studied first at the local primary school, then enrolled at the recently opened Kew High School, which was operating ‘in a private
In December 1873 he became the first student sent from Kew High School to the University of Melbourne to sit the matriculation and civil service examinations, both of which he passed. He subsequently studied pharmacy at the university, graduating in 1879; he was registered by the Pharmacy Board on 12 February 1880.

Frank joined his father in the Kew pharmacy. Soon afterwards the business moved about 65 metres to the west, to new premises on the northern side of Bulleen Road. Francis Barnard had been unable to renew the lease he had held on the original site since 1858 because the land had been acquired for the new Kew post office, which also replaced the agency that Francis had operated from his pharmacy since 1873. The new Barnard pharmacy in Bulleen Road—subsequently renumbered as 49 High Street—became F.G.A. Barnard’s work location and, upstairs, his place of residence until he retired in 1926.

**Barnard and the FNCV**

Both Frank and his father had an abiding interest in the natural world and in June 1880 attended the inaugural meeting of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria (FNCV), held in the Melbourne Town Hall. They were among 56 men who joined the club at that meeting and who were afterwards referred to within the FNCV as ‘the originals’. At this first meeting, Frank availed himself of the opportunity to exhibit recent finds and took along a case containing insects he had collected in the Kew neighbourhood. Exhibiting natural specimens and curious items was a standard part of all field naturalists’ meetings and a practice that Frank maintained throughout his 52 years as a member of FNCV.

Francis senior was not particularly active in the club, although he did maintain his membership until his death in 1912. His primary interest was in the use of microscopes for the study of aspects of natural history. He was an early member of the Microscopical Society of Victoria and in September 1874 was elected to its committee, becoming vice president in 1885. When he did attend FNCV meetings he could be relied upon to assist in setting up microscopes and mounting specimens in preparation for microscopical examination.

Frank, on the other hand, devoted much of his spare time to the club. His obituary in *The Victorian Naturalist* quoted a letter to a friend referring to the FNCV as ‘his first love’. The FNCV may indeed have been FGA’s first love, but it is probable that it also held a special place in his heart because it was through the club that he met his wife, Mary
Rachel Watts. Mary was not a member at the time (although certainly there were female members), but her father Henry Watts was active in the club from its beginning. He was elected the FNCV’s first librarian, a position he occupied for two years. He then served for a year as a member of committee and a further year as one of the vice presidents. Like Frank’s father, Henry Watts was interested primarily in microscopy and was also an office bearer in the Postal Microscopical Society of Victoria.

Frank Barnard and Mary Watts were married in August 1889. To mark the occasion, as well as the sterling work that he had done for the club as secretary over the previous five years, FNCV members presented Frank with ‘a handsome marble clock, which was accompanied by a purse of forty sovereigns, and a very complimentary address’. The couple subsequently had two children—Muriel Elizabeth (b. January 1891) and Norman Francis Watts (b. September 1893).

Frank Barnard’s contribution to the FNCV is without parallel in the history of the club; it included serving in committee positions, editing the club’s journal as well as writing articles for it, exhibiting specimens, and leading field trips. It was also suggested that it was he who ‘originated the FNCV’s scheme of excursions’. This seems unlikely since field excursions had always been an essential feature of naturalist groups. But, given FGA’s dedication and zeal, it is probable that he had assumed organisation of the FNCV’s program and then taken charge of running excursions.

Frank belonged to the FNCV for almost 52 years; for 42 of them he was a member of the club’s committee, either by election or ex officio, and he seemed to be deeply involved in almost every facet of the FNCV’s operations. His service began in May 1883 when he was elected an ordinary committee member. In the following year he became the honorary secretary, a position he filled until 1890. He then became the club librarian for three years, until 1894. In 1903, after a ten-year break from the committee, he again became an office bearer, serving for two years as a vice-president. This was immediately followed by two years as president, and then a further stint as secretary from 1908 to 1910. As if that were not service enough, FGA simultaneously edited the club’s journal, The Victorian Naturalist, a role that proved to be the most protracted and enduring of his many functions with the FNCV. At the monthly meeting held in December 1892, members were informed
that A.H.S. Lucas had resigned from the position of editor to take up a teaching post in Sydney. The president, Professor Walter Baldwin Spencer, then announced ‘that Mr. F.G.A. Barnard had consented to act as editor for the present’. For Frank ‘the present’ obviously extended well into the future—his tenure began with the first issue of Volume 10 in May 1893 and ended 32 years later with the last issue of Volume 41 in April 1925.

While undertaking these arduous editorial and administrative roles, FGA nevertheless found time to pursue his own particular interests in natural history, nominated as ‘entomology’ and ‘ferns’ in the FNCV membership list of 1910 (see, for example, Figure 2). However, while these might have been his primary foci, Frank was clearly a man with wider interests. Some idea of how wide these were can be gained by looking at the naturalist subject matters about which he wrote for the club’s journal. From the beginning of *The Victorian Naturalist* in January 1884 until 1930, FGA contributed 77 papers. Of this number, more than half (43) were reports of club field excursions that Frank had led. And, curiously, although entomology had been one of Frank’s early interests (certainly from a time pre-dating the formation of the club), it was a subject about which he wrote very little. No doubt, as the editor of the journal, he was in a good position to fill the space as he saw fit. Yet he published only three papers of his own work on the subject. This was fewer than he wrote on either birds (four) or botany (eleven) and, interestingly, far fewer than the eight papers he contributed to the FNCV journal on historical subjects.

Frank was a naturalist first and foremost, but he also had more than a passing interest in history—so much so that he took upon himself the role of unofficial FNCV historian. He collected records and memorabilia relating to club events, and he wrote and spoke about the organisation’s history. His first published work in the field of history was in 1899 when *The Victorian Naturalist* carried a short piece he had written on ‘The Southern Science Record’, a journal that commenced publication in December 1880 and was issued sporadically until 1885. It was supported initially by the FNCV but otherwise received insufficient patronage and eventually folded in January 1886. Frank was moved to write the article in order to set the record straight as to how many issues of the short-lived publication had been produced, because he believed he was ‘one of the few possessors of … a complete set’.
Figure 2: F.G.A. Barnard demonstrating one way of capturing tree-dwelling invertebrates in the field (Courtesy The Victorian Naturalist)
Of the eight history-focused papers that Frank wrote and published in the journal, three dealt with the club’s past. Each marked what he saw as a milestone in the FNCV’s life: the silver and ruby anniversaries in 1905 and 1920 respectively, and the jubilee in 1930. In 1905 he chronicled the first 25 years of the club; he later wrote updates taking the account up to 1920 and then, in a further extension, surveying the period 1920 to 1930.21

Frank’s style of history writing was to lay out a straightforward chronology of events in both order and detail, keeping strictly to the recorded facts. These articles make no attempt to analyse or explain the circumstances in which the events occurred or reasons for particular actions. In this regard FGA differed little from most of his contemporaries within the world of historical research; most of the histories written in Victoria at the time aimed at creating a foundational narrative and a memorialisation of past heroic deeds.22 This is not to disparage either the work or the ethic of earlier historians of this colony/state. That their approach to history writing is now considered old-fashioned is to say no more than that their imperatives were different from ours. For F.G.A. Barnard, like all the early members of the Historical Society of Victoria (HSV), history was a hobby, not a profession.

The establishment of the HSV in May 1909 provided an avenue by which individuals like Frank Barnard could regularly meet with others who shared an interest in researching and writing about the past. F.G.A. Barnard was a foundation member (No. 104) of the HSV, joining only three months after the organisation was founded.23 His membership application form is extant, giving his home address and the class of membership for which he applied. The form in use at the time asked that applicants enrolling for ‘corresponding’ membership indicate the class of work that they might offer to undertake. Frank applied as an ordinary member so that line was left blank, but it is unlikely that he needed any prompting to offer his assistance. Frank belonged to many organisations and in none of them was he simply an ‘ordinary’ member.

In the year following the HSV’s foundation, Frank’s best-known, and perhaps most important, historical work was published. As Susan Priestley observed of *The Jubilee History of Kew*, Frank could draw on his own memories from having lived in the locale all his life—by then 53 years.24 He would certainly have witnessed many changes and developments in Kew since his childhood. Moreover, because his father
had served on the local council for 23 years and Frank himself had been actively involved in many local organisations over the previous 30 years, his connections to the community were undoubtedly long-standing and wide-ranging.

Within two years of joining the HSV, Frank was elected to its council, and continued in that capacity for most of the following 20 years. In 1925–26 he served as one of the vice presidents. Of course, Frank did not limit his presence in the HSV simply to council meetings; as with the FNCV, his contribution took a number of forms. On 28 April 1911, he visited both the Kew and East Kew state schools and briefly addressed the senior classes regarding the historical discovery of Australia. In this he was representing HSV on the occasion of the inaugural ‘Discovery Day’ in Victorian schools. This was the first of what became an annual occasion, when regular afternoon classes were suspended in favour of special lessons so that students could learn more about the discovery of Australia. This celebratory day was instituted in Victorian state schools following a suggestion made in May 1910 by Dr James Barrett, chairman of the National Parks Committee. The HSV was invited to assist on the day by providing members to address the senior students.

In accepting the invitation to visit his local schools, Frank also took the opportunity to provide an incentive for the students to study the subject further. At the end of his presentation he announced that in order to mark the institution of Discovery Day, he would give a copy of the recently issued “History of Kew” to each of the upper classes for the best essay describing the events leading up to the settlement of Victoria and the early history of Kew. He added that full treatment of the latter, with the recording of any important facts not mentioned in the published history, would receive special consideration in making the awards.

Frank was also a keen participant in the HSV’s efforts to place memorials at places of significance in the story of Victoria’s discovery and exploration. He represented the society on a number of committees that focused on commemorating the actions of exploring parties. In November 1924, the HSV’s Hume and Hovell Centenary Committee organised a motor outing to Mount Bland near Beveridge. After a picnic lunch on the summit, members were addressed by the president, A.W.
Greig, as well as council members Thomas O’Callaghan and Frank Barnard, who ‘gave some historical facts with regard to the Hume and Hovell expedition’. Early in the following month, Barnard and Isaac Selby were among a large crowd attending the unveiling of a monument to the explorers at East Wallan.

As he had been doing since 1880 with the FNCV, Frank talked and wrote about the subjects that interested him. In the case of the HSV these were not as wide-ranging as subjects in the natural world, but nonetheless they exhibited some variety. Each of the four articles published in the society’s magazine resulted from a talk that Frank had given to an HSV meeting. His interest was mostly in ‘firsts’, for instance the first electoral rolls and early Victorian maps, but one topic stands out as being in a different vein. In 1912 Frank read a paper to the June meeting of the society on the subject of ‘Early Richmond, 1859–1861’. For such a dedicated Kewite as Frank, this appears an unlikely subject of study, but all is explained in the introductory paragraph of the published article:

Some two years ago, when seeking information for a proposed History of Kew, which was published at the end of 1910, I was allowed access to a fairly complete file of the first three years of the Australian newspaper, published at Richmond, the subsequent years having been unfortunately destroyed by a fire.

His stated purpose was to draw comparisons between Richmond in the period 1859–61 and his own time, though this contrasting is done more by implication than specific argument or example. However, the article does provide insights into activities and events in the Richmond of an earlier period.

Frank Barnard may have been unique as a foundation member of both the FNCV and the HSV, but he was not alone in being an active member of both groups. In the first three or four decades of last century there was a coterie of involved and committed individuals in Melbourne who were simultaneously active in both societies. Among prominent early members of HSV who contributed regularly to the first ten volumes of the Victorian Historical Magazine (1911–24), Charles Daley, Alfred Kenyon, Albert Mattingley, Edward Petherick and Henry Turner were all, at various times, members of the FNCV. Daley and Kenyon were undoubtedly more active in the FNCV than the other dual members mentioned here. Daley was a long-serving secretary
of the HSV (1926–36) and a president (1937–38). In the FNCV he served as a committee member for two periods, 1917–20 and 1925–37, and was president from 1922 to 1924. In addition, he contributed 45 papers to the FNCV’s journal *The Victorian Naturalist* over a 30-year period beginning in September 1916. Kenyon, as well as being on the committee of the FNCV on two separate occasions in the 1930s, was president for the 1934–35 year. During the same period he was also a prominent member of the HSV, where he served on council from 1911 to 1941 and as president from 1932 to 1936. He also contributed to the FNCV journal, with eighteen papers published between 1906 and 1942.

All of these men, and many others, were more than mere contemporaries. Their common interests meant that they joined the same societies, attended the same meetings and, in the case of H.G. Turner and F.G.A. Barnard, worshipped in the same church. However, where FGA went a step further than most of his acquaintances in his willingness to contribute and be of public service was in his connection to local community. This was the third part of what can be seen as the trio of issues dominating Frank Barnard’s commitment to public service.

**Barnard’s Involvement in Kew Community**

Not surprisingly, Frank’s community involvements in Kew were many and varied. No doubt the environment offered many opportunities for willing volunteers to participate in cultural, social and sporting organisations. Frank was certainly of a mind to take advantage of those opportunities.

Frank was one of a group of men who formed the Kew Cricket Club in September 1875, and he took on the role of secretary. Over the following decade, he performed this duty for a total of four years, and was also an ordinary committee member for two years. He regularly played until the 1885 season, when the club was forced to disband for want of a home ground. Kew Recreation Reserve had been its playing field for the previous four seasons, but late in 1885 the area was requisitioned by railway authorities as the site for a station. However, Frank’s interest in playing cricket continued for at least another 35 years. In the early 1920s, when he was in his mid-60s, he played in the Kew Council team.

FGA’s connection to local government in Kew was, however, of much greater substance than his contribution to local cricket. Like his father before him, Frank was voted onto the Kew town council. Elected
in 1915, he went on to serve for twelve years and was elected mayor by his fellow councillors for the 1920/21 year. On 10 March 1921, during his mayoral year that Frank had the distinction of welcoming to his bailiwick the Earl of Stradbrooke, Governor of Victoria, whose duty it was to proclaim Kew a City.

Lord Stradbrooke returned to Kew in August 1925, this time to unveil the recently constructed war memorial. Kew Council had decided in 1919 to honour those local men and women who had served during World War I, a project that doubtless would have been close to Frank’s heart, since both his children had seen action in Europe. On completion, the memorial displayed the names of all local veterans, including Muriel Elizabeth Barnard, who had served with the Australian Army Nursing Service in England and France, and her brother Norman Francis Watts Barnard, who was killed at Zellebekein, Belgium, in August 1917.

As a resident, ever keen to be involved in local matters, Frank joined and gave time to a number of other community organisations in Kew. Among the positions he held at various times over a 35-year period were: secretary, Kew Volunteer Fire Brigade; honorary treasurer, Kew Oddfellows; chairman of the local board of advice for Kew State School; and honorary treasurer, Kew Literary and Scientific Institute.

**Conclusion**

Dedication to public causes and wide-ranging involvements were not uncommon in Frank Barnard’s day. There are many examples of contemporary individuals whose contributions to society crossed a number of areas of activity; however, few people could equal the range or extent of service of F.G.A. Barnard.

To a significant extent, particularly regarding his interest in natural history and Kew, Frank was following an example set by his father. He grew up in a household where freely giving of one’s time to be of service was expected. Frank’s mother and each of Frank’s four siblings also contributed significant amounts of time and effort to charitable and community work. To some extent this may have been a function of the family’s connection to the Unitarian church, which has a strong current of social activism.\(^{36}\) Whatever the cause, it was a notable characteristic of the Barnard family, and nowhere more so than in the person of Francis George Allman Barnard.
Notes

1. Age, 3 June 1932, p. 8.
3. Argus, 20 November 1858, p. 5.
5. Age, 14 February 1880, p. 3.
6. Box Hill Reporter, 4 October 1912.
16. Pescott, p. 70.
23. HSV Archives.

Box Hill Reporter, 5 May 1911, p. 2.

Age, 24 November 1924, p. 8; Age, 8 December 1924, p. 9.


Herald, 9 March 1889, p. 2.

The Forgotten ‘Girls’ of World War I

Judy Maddigan

Abstract
This article arose from an exhibition—‘The Forgotten Girls of World War One’—mounted by Melbourne’s Living Museum of the West in 2018 to recognise the ‘girls’ who worked in the Colonial Ammunition Company factory in Footscray beside the Maribyrnong River from 1888 through two world wars. We have heard much about the British ‘munitionettes’, who numbered somewhere between 700,000 and a million during World War I, but little has previously written about the 700 or so wartime women munitions workers based at the Colonial Ammunition Company. These ‘girls’ made all the .303 bullets for the Australian Army in the Great War but they have until recently remained hidden from history. This piece aims to provide a starting point for further research into their experiences and those of the many other women explosives and munitions workers in the Maribyrnong region.

The Emergence of Melbourne’s Munition Girls
From the early 1880s, the Victorian government was seeking a private company to make ammunition in the state. It did so because it was concerned that supplies that came from England could be in jeopardy if a war broke out. In February 1888, after considerable correspondence and offers of financial assistance from the government, Captain John Whitney (Figure 1) founder of the Colonial Ammunition Company Ltd in Auckland, New Zealand, visited Victoria to select a site for the proposed factory. His Colonial Ammunition Company was registered in Victoria soon after, and negotiations began with the government on an appropriate site. The Colonial Ammunition Company insisted on the Footscray location, even though other locations were suggested, because it wanted ‘close proximity to a dense population to supply junior hands for the manufacture’.1 Historian J.K. Lyons quotes a contemporary source in support of this view: ‘The business will employ about 200 people mostly boys and girls, under the supervision of several skilled workmen from England. About 150 girls will be employed, and a room 34 feet by 18 feet, will be set apart for their exclusive use’.2 Footscray was also
Figure 1: Captain John Whitney (Source: Kevin Daly (text), Ammunition Factory Footscray Centenary Album 1888–1988)
preferred, as the Saltwater River (later the Maribyrnong) would provide cheap and convenient transport for the bullets.

By 1889 a contract identifying Footscray as the best site had been signed with the Victorian government following plans submitted to it by the company. Five acres of land were made available for a peppercorn rent. Conditions of supply for 25 years were agreed to; deliveries were to commence in twelve months; and a subsidy of £5,000 was given.

The company built the factory in two sections. The first, comprising the case and bullet shop, loading and assembly sections, proof ranges and packing room (later called the No. 1. Small Arms Ammunition Factory), was located on the river flat. The ‘upper’ factory located next to Gordon Street comprised the boiler house, electric generating plant and cap factory, and a rolling mill was added later. See Figure 2 below (1914).

![Figure 2: The Ammunition Factory c. 1914 (Courtesy Living Museum of the West)](image-url)
Women and girls were employed at the factory from early days (see Figures 3 and 4). However, there were considerable problems. As John Lack has written in his history of Footscray:

In 1890 the news that hundreds of female operatives would be required for cartridge-making had sent a glow through the ranks of servant-girlhood, while it depressed Mrs Schild of the servants’ registry and panicked the local matrons. Girls who found places at the works often became in the 1890s their families’ sole breadwinners.

While they preferred factory work to domestic service, the girls’ experiences were variable. On one occasion, in September 1892, the whole factory closed down and all the staff were discharged for a period as a result of a disagreement between Captain Whitney and the government over his contract. Lack describes a deputation of workers that ‘urged the Minister of Defence to find a solution to the 1892 dispute’, and quotes an article from the Age, in which girls dissolved into tears as members in turn put their plight. One girl was supporting her aged grandparents, another a widowed mother and
Figure 4: The Colonial Ammunition Company (Source: Illustrated Australian News, 8 November 1890)
two children, and another, an orphan, whose 7 year old sister had been sent to the home for destitute children. The girl's tears of distress became tears of indignation when the Minister counselled them to take domestic service, observing that “it struck him as unfortunate that girls preferred the meretricious attractions of Melbourne and the enervating influences of factory life to the healthy surroundings of the country”.

The minister’s view was one shared by many members of the establishment, including middle-class women’s organisations whose members had a vested interest in maintaining a steady supply of young working-class women as servants for their households, both in the city and the country. Their criticisms of factory work were couched in terms of an alleged lack of control over girls’ moral welfare in factories, the dangers for girls in the streets before and after work, and the lack of preparation factory work provided for the duties of married life and motherhood. The rapid expansion of factory work for young women in Melbourne in the years before World War I, and the preference girls showed for the comparative freedom it gave them compared with domestic service, was thus a major cause of concern. The girls were nevertheless subject to exploitation as factory workers and some began to contest their treatment.

The factory opened again in late 1892. But conditions for the young female workforce remained poor. In June 1895 the following letter appeared in the Independent (Footscray) written by ‘A Most Disgusted Employee’.

I wish to bring under your notice How the girls at The Colonial Ammunition Coys works are treated they begin their work at 7.25 am and get 5 mins at 10 o'clock and an Hour for dinner all but 5 mins which is Given to them at 3 o'clock and stop at 5.15 and you are not allowed to leave the work Without Permission and when you ask to leave to go out it ought to be seen that the Girls get out when they want too and also that the drainage ought to be looked to, all hands are afraid to speak in case they loose their work But I don't care if I loose [sic] mine I feel it is Some one’s duty to Expose him Excuse the latter as the writer in only a Cartridge maker.

A further complaint regarding the conditions in which the girls worked was referred to the local health officer in 1895:
Complaints have been made to the local Health Officer on behalf of girls employed at Captain Whitney’s Ammunition factory. It is stated that they are unduly restricted and unrealistically confined to the factory, with the result that some of the girls have suffered in health. Dr McCarthy has referred the matter to the Town Clerk, in order that it may be brought under notice of the Central Board of Health, so that an inspection and inquiry may be caused by the female inspector under the Factories Act.

The girls were not afraid to seek support from the trade union movement, and in December the next year the Footscray *Independent* reported:

A deputation was introduced by Mr R Thorne to the Trades Hall Council on last night week, comprising seven young women formerly employed at the works of the Colonial Ammunition Factory, Footscray. Miss Charlotte Crew, after some persuasion said the factory was of glass and iron and was consequently very hot in the summer. When Captain Whitney was showing any visitors through the works, he would not allow them to question the employees, but would himself exaggerate the prices paid. If a girl earned 18s a week it was only by working 4 or 5 hours late. This was not described as overtime but allowance. No woman earns 1 pound 10s week unless she received commission on the work of others. The girls mostly earned 7s, 8s or 9s a week. Very few got 12s. The last four months she had earned 9s 9d per week. A girl once got 1 pound on piece work, but Captain Whitney said that was too much and reduced it by 5s. Alice White then stated that Captain Whitney requested her to sign a paper which was too badly printed for her to read and she refused to sign it. She had been working a machine all day on the occasion, riveted 20,000 cartridges which was the most that could be treated on a day, and only earned 1s 8d. She could never make 10s in a week.

Susan Gallagher and one of the other two workers also spoke. One stated that she worked one day for a while and the work made her ill. She went home and for doing this was fined 1s. Another, in answer to a question said that if one of them stopped at home on account of illness, she either had to send an excuse, or was fined a day’s wages. Another of the girls said Captain Whitney had his favourite girls, whom he put on week work.

The paper then reported that: ‘The Council referred the matter to the executive with power to act adding a request that they were to act as soon as possible’.
Captain Whitney wrote to the *Independent* to refute the allegations:

My attention has been called to a paragraph in your paper reporting a deputation to the Trades Hall Council. The Colonial Ammunition Factory does not intend replying to the statements, some of which had a semblance of truth, but the following information may be of interest. The girl, Charlotte Crew, who [was] interviewed [by] the Trades Hall Council, and Susan Gallagher were dismissed from the work a short time ago. Charlotte Crew, who generally fed a very simple rotating machine received piece work, and was paid at the rate of exactly one half as much again as is paid for similar work on similar machines in England. The English wage in this operation for a good worker varies between 2s and 3s per day: of course a poor worker may not make 1s. You can judge the accuracy of the statements when you learn that the girl Alice White has never been at work on a riveting machine in our factory.\(^\text{10}\)

The privations of these young women workers were not restricted to exploitative wages and hours. The work was physically dangerous too, and standards of safety were inadequate. On 23 September 1897, an explosion at the company killed three female employees. The girls were Alice McLeod (age 19), Elizabeth Greenham (age 17), and Ettie Fitzpatrick (age 17).\(^\text{11}\) A newspaper report provided graphic detail:

The girl, McLeod, who appears to have received the full force of the explosion was dead. Elizabeth Greenham was frightfully injured, and succumbed to her injuries this afternoon. Ettie Fitzpatrick was dreadfully injured, though in a semi-conscious condition, and as she was placed on a stretcher, she sang “Rock of Ages” in feeble tones. Medical aid was soon forthcoming, but there appeared no hope of saving any of the sufferers. Fitzpatrick died this evening.\(^\text{12}\)

A photograph of the destruction appeared in the *Weekly Times* on 2 October (Figure 5) and the chief inspector of explosives described the event in his annual report for 1897:

A serious explosion occurred in the factory of the Colonial Ammunition factory at Footscray, on 23\(^\text{rd}\) September, and although the factory was at the time of the accident in no way connected with the Department or under my supervision, it would be of interest to mention a few facts connected with the incident. The actual cause of the accident was never discovered, as all the occupants of the room (three girls) were killed. It transpired, however, at the inquiry which was held, that a high standard of precautions such as are recognised as essential under the Explosives Act was not observed. The factory has, since the accident, been brought under the Explosives Act special legislation.\(^\text{13}\)
The subsequent inquest found that the cause of the disaster was defective machinery, but the company considered the resulting new explosives legislation unreasonable. The factory was forced to close for a while. It re-opened in 1900 with approximately 100 workers, mainly girls, who took steps to improve their conditions by forming a union, after which there was a slight improvement in conditions and wages. By 1912 the rates for female workers ranged from 23 shillings to 42 shillings per week, the average being 28 shillings, but this was still low compared to the 51–63 shillings per week paid to the male labourers in the same area.\textsuperscript{14}

**Pre-war and Wartime Expansion**

On reopening in 1900 the company ceased the production of earlier munitions and commenced manufacture of the .303 Ball Cartridge bullets, including the .303 Ball Cartridge Mark II. Success saw expansion. On 23 April 1901 the area of land leased by the company was increased to 40 acres to enable the factory to extend its buildings. An article in the *Argus* in 1908 provides a broad understanding of the ammunition factory’s activities. Headed ‘CARTRIDGES, HOW THEY ARE MADE, BY A BATTALION OF GIRLS, THE FOOTSCRAY FACTORY,’ the article reported that about 80,000 cartridges a day were made at the factory and even included a picture of the component parts of a service cartridge as well as instructions on how to make one (Figure 6)\textsuperscript{15}
In 1910 further expansion took place when the company undertook to erect a rolling mill on land at Footscray, together with a brass foundry, both of which were operational by 1912 and included the provision of machinery for the manufacture of caps and paper wads. This ensured that .303 small arms ammunition was being made almost wholly in Australia before the commencement of World War I. Production of suitable cordite was also provided for in 1912 on completion of the Government Cordite Factory, Maribyrnong. Early in 1910 Field Marshall Lord Kitchener visited the Colonial Ammunition Factory as well as the site nearby in Maribyrnong on which the Cordite Factory was to be established. Kitchener had come to Australia to inspect the existing state of defence preparedness of the Commonwealth, and to advise the government on the best means of reorganisation and unification of the armed forces. The Cordite Factory was one of a number of factories established by the Department of Defence and operated by the
government to make the Australian Armed Forces independent in terms of supplies. They included the Clothing Factory (South Melbourne), the Harness Factory (Clifton Hill), and the Small Arms Factory (Lithgow).

The outbreak of war in August 1914 and Australia’s immediate commitment of troops stimulated production of ammunition. A request by the Ammunition Company to Footscray Council for more lighting in Nicholson Street in October 1914 indicates the increasing number of girls employed in the factory and its growing importance.

Cr Johnson said there would be 400 or 500 men and women coming up the road at eleven o’clock at night, lighting was very necessary. A great majority of the cordite workers were local residents so the extension would be for our own residents.

Cr Fielding agreed that lighting was necessary. A great many of the employees were girls and there were always vagabonds about at night. The thought of those 500 girls being attacked and carried off by some prowling vagabond clinched the matter and it was decided to accede to the company’s request.16

Soon after the commencement of World War I the factory was producing 2,000,000 rounds per week. By 1915 its capacity for manufacturing brass caps to be drawn onto .303 cartridge cases was so great that, in addition to meeting the greatly increased demands from the Australian armed services, it was possible to export some munitions to cartridge manufacturers in England. (See Figure 7 for photograph of .303 production line.)

The demands of war did not prevent ongoing disputation between the government and the Colonial Ammunition Company, over financial matters. For example, as historian of the company J.K. Lyons has written: ‘Early in 1915, the Company encountered difficulty with its bankers regarding the financing of supplies of raw materials to be imported to enable it to ensure war-time deliveries of 2,000,000 rounds of ammunition weekly for the two years ahead’.17 Although on this occasion funding was found, there were continual calls in the following years for the government to take over the factory. The female munitions workers contributed greatly to the increase in production, which was 62 per cent greater in 1915 than 1914, 140 per cent greater in 1916, and 209 per cent greater in 1917.18 Production of the .303 cartridge, Mark VI, reached a peak of 2,000,000 rounds per week. In 1915 caps for these cartridges were also produced at the factory. The
Footscray Factory made all the .303 bullets for the Australian Army. The munition girls also contributed to the welfare of their local community during the war; it was reported in July 1915, for example, that they had raised £1,000 for local projects, improving parks etc. Their working conditions remained poor, however, and life at the factory was still unsafe, as newspaper reports demonstrated. In May 1915, the Herald recounted the case of Ivy McDonald, 25, a machinist employed at the Footscray Ammunition Works who had suffered head injuries, possibly a fractured skull, when an iron bar fell on her from above. And, in September 1916, floods closed the factory for a short while, and the senior staff who had remained on the site had to be rescued by boat!

But the company and patriotic publicists were anxious to give an impression of a model workplace and battalions of happy workers. Contemporary propaganda emphasised employer paternalism and the benefits of the latest scientific principles of American welfare capitalism, also evident in the reorganisation of the Victorian Railways workforce in this period. An article from the Herald, syndicated to other newspapers
in early 1916, paints a glowing picture of working conditions for the 750 or so munitions girls and women in the Ammunition Factory during the war. This and similar articles appeared in the Bendigo Independent, the Guyra Argus (NSW), the Mirror of Australia (Sydney), the Gundagai Times (NSW) and the Barrier Miner (NSW). The Herald piece began with a description of the surroundings:

Their workshop rests in a hollow behind the Flemington Racecourse. A happy contrast to the barren landscape in this locality is introduced by the workshop recreation grounds. Cottages with wide verandahs set in paddocks fringed with sentinel gum trees, emerald lawns, and gardens gay with summer flowers, give the place the semblance of a peaceful hamlet.

From time to time one hears of schemes introduced by magnates in the industrial world of America and elsewhere to convert workshops and surroundings into something akin to Utopia. This appears to be the governing principle at the Footscray ammunition works.

The management has established a well-equipped diningroom, where the women can enjoy the contents of the luncheon basket in comfort and cleanliness. A charming Norwegian woman is the head of affairs, and with her staff serves tea there free each meal hour. This daily consumption sends the expenditure up, for each day 6lb of tea and 25 quarts of milk are provided. A bag of sugar (70lb) at the establishment lasts about one day and a half …

Although uniform is only worn by the cordite workers, one is impressed by the neatness of the workers throughout the factory. Hair bows are prohibited, but the girls have not succumbed to the temptation of trimming their heads with tawdry combs and brilliant ornaments. As they bent over their machines one could not help noting how well-groomed all the heads were.

The economic conditions for ammunition workers are good. A limited number of young girls earns 28s a week, but 33s to 35s a week is secured by the average, and dozens of workers are earning as much as £2 10s per week. They work 46 hours but are paid for 48 hours.

An intelligent woman, with deft fingers, could become an expert worker in about three weeks. In recent years numbers of girls have given up millinery, dressmaking, and various forms of shop service, to take up cartridge making.
The article went on to describe a day’s work in the same idealised terms.

UP WITH THE LARK

Although the whistle blows at 7.30am meaning an early start, even for girls living in the neighbourhood, some of the employees come from suburbs as far distant as Brunswick.

From the time the metal is treated at the mills, and fashioned into small thick cups, the cartridge making is practically entirely entrusted to the women. They sit, rows upon rows of them, feeding machines fitted with revolving circular discs punched with small cavities.

Some workers have shelter of galvanised iron jutting from the machines which they face so that when they get into a sitting position the sheet comes well over the knees and protects their clothes. This precaution is taken for the women whose work consists of removing brass from troughs of soapy water and placing them in the revolving discs, so that they can be drawn out to cylinder shape.

Although their hands are wet for hours at a time, the skin does not show any cut breaks of chafing, because a special soap is provided. (See Figure 8)

Nevertheless it is not hard to read between the lines to detect ongoing dangers and health risks to which young women munitions workers were exposed.

The noise is deafening, but this does not seem to disturb the girls in the least, and occasionally above the din one hears them trying to carry on a friendly conversation.

One young girl rolling cylinders as if they were so many cigarettes, uses her left hand as deftly as her right. This small person looks very important manipulating huge revolving rollers, a piece of mechanism to be left in charge of which would cause terror to the average woman. A certain amount of nerve is necessary for women in charge of machines, for by presence of mind in an emergency they can often avert serious financial loss …

The cordite girls wear special boots and black overalls (Figure 9). Each girl stands in a small cubicle, a cutting machine facing her with a delicate pair of scales on the wall above. From a hole in the wall at her left hand a long coil of cordite of sixty strands thickness feeds her cutting machine. The cordite has a particular odor [sic], not unlike an anaesthetic, but in the fire-proof cell from whence the coil enters the cubicle, it is most pronounced.
A final statement of intent was designed to demonstrate the humanitarianism of the employers and their dedication to fostering worker wellbeing.

The management is considering a scheme by which it hopes to develop social and recreative co-operation among the women workers by engaging an extension secretary. Miss Jean Stevenson, YWCA extension secretary, has been getting into touch with the women ammunition workers for some time. Her efforts have met with such
an enthusiastic response that the management feels that the time is ripe for the women to have an extension secretary who will be free to devote all her time to their leisure and development.\textsuperscript{24}

Such widespread positive pictures of life in the Ammunition Factory was evidence of the expansion of welfarist ideology, now couched in patriotic terms and designed to co-opt more workers into dangerous industries. It was reported that 750 ‘girls’ were employed in the factory by February 1916.\textsuperscript{25} (Figure 10 shows the women workers at the Ammunition Factory.)
Despite the propaganda in the newspapers about employer concern for their welfare and the girls’ appreciation, the Ammunition Factory’s female workers remained highly unionised, indicating they were not as happy with their conditions as represented. A report from the Argus demonstrates their involvement in the Eight Hours Day celebrations in 1917, a year of massive industrial conflict and growing war weariness in Melbourne as elsewhere.

The Ammunition Cordite and Explosives Employees’ Organisation will make a special effort this year to secure a big representation of the girl munitions workers in the Eight Hour Procession … at least a contingent of 500 is hoped for. The girls in their white and black costumes made a conspicuous feature in the procession …

The need for union activism and the corresponding distrust of employers was increasingly evident among Melbourne’s industrial workforce in the trouble-filled year of 1917. It was reported in mid-year that 700 women had been dismissed from the ammunition factory, due apparently to lack of raw materials to make the munitions, and ‘[m]ost of the girls thrown out have been having a bad time during the

Figure 10: Women who worked in the ammunition factory circa 1915 (Source: ‘The Biggest Family Album in Australia’. Courtesy Museums Victoria)
week hunting for other work and finding none. In July, the members of the Ammunition, Cordite, and Explosives Employees’ Industrial Organisation of Australia held a mass meeting to consider their position after the dismissal of a total of 1,250 employees, just about half of the workforce. The following motions were agreed to at the meeting:

That the president and secretary, in conjunction with the executive be empowered to leave no stone unturned to urge the Government to obtain the material required for the production of munitions, so that employment may be given to many who have recently been discharged from the Colonial Ammunition Company’s works.

That a deputation wait upon the management of the Colonial Ammunition Company to bring under notice the manner under which employees have been dismissed.

A further meeting in August, over high prices and unemployment, especially focusing on the loss of jobs from the Colonial Ammunition Factory, was attended by a number of politicians including Maurice Blackburn, MLA. As Footscray’s Independent newspaper reported:

The intensity of feeling roused by the alarming spread of unemployment found vent, as expected in the largest meeting on Wednesday night ever held in Footscray. At 20 minutes to 8 not an inch of standing room was left in the Federal Hall, while the overflow would have more than filled it again. Ammunition workers were prominent, amongst them hundreds of the girls who had been thrown harshly and summarily on a glutted labor market.

Some claimed the factory had been closed because England could make the munitions more cheaply, whilst others believed there was a shortage of aluminium. The mayor of Footscray even offered £100 towards the purchase of aluminium to assist in getting the employees back to work. But the protesters’ efforts were of no avail as the rest of the article makes clear:

The deputation which waited next morning on the Prime Minister met a churlish reception. The deputation was, first of all, limited to 20 minutes to present the case of the unemployed, which was not calculated to provoke good feeling, and throughout met an utter lack of sympathy from Mr. Hughes.

With other speakers from Trades Hall and Parliamentarians, Mr Bell, more particularly put the case of the ammunition workers. He said
700 girls had been discharged by the Colonial Ammunition Works, thrown on an overcrowded labour market; and did not know where to look for the means to live. Munitions were needed as much now as they were, and it was the duty of the Government to push on with their manufacture. The production of aluminium should be nationalised.

Mr Hughes left the deputation standing before the speakers had finished their submission, and blamed the workers for bringing this on themselves: ‘he was sorry that people had been dismissed, but they could not have it both ways. If they would not send sufficient numbers out of the country to fight, they would not make the ammunition.’

In other words, opponents of conscription, as he assumed they were, were reaping what they had sown in voting ‘No’ at the referendum the previous October. A few weeks later the Independent concluded:

political effort seems to have signally failed to ameliorate the lot of the munition workers thrown idle through the recent “industrial upheaval” at the local Ammunition Works. Parliamentarians appear to have accepted the position as inevitable that the policy of making in England what should be made in Australia is one that is to stand. The men and women who are mere pawns in the political game apparently are expected to summon philosophy to their aid and grin and bear the idleness thrust upon them.

The inaction of the government further alienated the munitions workers and turned them against patriotic appeals to support conscription when the second referendum was announced on 7 November. On Thursday 29 November the remaining women (and men) employees were visited by anti-war activist and leader of the cost of living protests of the previous months, Adela Pankhurst Walsh. She was there to speak against the conscription referendum and was ‘received with three cheers’. Two days later she lost her appeal against imprisonment over the cost of living demonstrations and was back in gaol.

An account of the eight-hour day celebrations of 1918 indicates that the company was still buying munitions from England rather than making them in Footscray:

Footscray Unionists were conspicuous in the long line of processionists on Eight Hours’ Day. The Ammunition and Cordite workers were a notable link in the chain, their smart bearing calling forth much
admiring comment. The girls fully sustained the prestige they have already won. Dressed in blue skirts, white blouses and white hats, relieved with blue ties and blue bands on their hats, they moved in compact formation. But the number of those on the march was less than heretofore, thanks to the failure of the Win-The-War Government to keep munition-making contracts for local workers at home.\(^{33}\)

It was reported in May that the order for small arms ammunition had decreased from 1,000,000 to 40,000 with the loss of 1,250 jobs.\(^{34}\) The Ammunition Workers Union met with Footscray Council seeking support to lobby the Defence Department for more contracts for the factory.\(^{35}\) But, in light of a further report of 150 staff being sacked due to slackness of work at the factory in July 1918, it is clear that the lobbying was unsuccessful.\(^{36}\) An article appearing in the Footscray Independent on 24 August 1918 showed that many young women were in dire straits due to the cessation of work at the munitions factory. Part of the article, titled ‘The Factory Girl’, reads\(^{37}\)

I know of one instance where three girls support an invalid father and mother, yet these same girls are neat, bright and happy nature denying themselves ungrudgingly many things others demand as a right … These girls are now out of work through the ammunition strikers. For the girls who marry their soldier boys and live on their allotments I have a hearty contempt.\(^{38}\)

Those depicted in the photograph over page (Figure 11) were the only employees left at the factory by 1919.\(^{39}\)

**After the War was Over**

By the end of the war the owners of the Colonial Ammunition Factory were keen to sell or lease the site to the Commonwealth government. Agreement was finally reached, and the federal government took over the company’s work for a period of seven years from 1 January 1921, at an annual rental of £20,000 plus rates insurance and other costs, out of which the company was to make provision for depreciation of buildings, plant and machinery, and equipment, etc. The factory became known as the Small Arms Ammunition Factory and was administered by the Munitions Supply Board. The federal government finally took permanent possession of the factory and control of the works on 31 December 1926.
After World War I conditions seemed still to be hard for women employees at the factory. A Tasmanian newspaper, the *Advocate*, reported in 1926 that they were still working for 48 hours a week without breaks during the day. The paper’s report of the hearing into their hours in March perhaps illustrates the fact that working conditions for women were not high on the priority list of either the government or the unions.

Melbourne (Friday) the Public Service Arbitrator (Mr Atlee Hunt) said today that he was surprised to learn that girls were employed at the Maribyrnong and Footscray munition factories for 48 hours a week without a rest period during the day.

An allegation to that effect was made by Mr. Cunnington who presented a claim to the arbitrator for reduction in the working hours of the girls from 48 to 44.

Mr B.J. Murphy, for the Public Service Department, said he was unaware of the position, and was surprised that the union had not made representation before.

**Figure 11: Employees of the Colonial Ammunition Company 1919** (Source: Rod Faulkner, *Ammunition Factory*, Melbourne, Living Museum of the West)
Mr. Murphy opposed the claim primarily on the ground that a 44-hour week was economically unsound. The unemployment problem had grown acute as a result.

Mr Cunnington said that he knew of no other industry in Australia where women had to work 48 hours a week. Girls working at the Government clothing factory had a 44-hour week.40

After the cessation of World War I a portion of the Small Arms Ammunition Factory was converted to manufacture lipstick containers on machines that only a few years earlier had produced bullets.41 The factory was demolished in 1933, and replaced by a modern structure, known as No.1 S.A.A. Factory. Shortly before World War II the No. 2 S.A.A. Factory was erected about half a mile from the No. 1 S.A.A. Factory. In 1934 it was reported that at the Ammunition Factory at Footscray was making rifle and pistol ammunition of various sizes and types, brass containers for cordite for 18-pdr guns, time pressure and percussion fuses, and bombs for the air force. It was also reported that, adding Maribyrnong and Lithgow together, there were 1,500 munitions employees, including 350 women.42

Production at the factory was wound down at the beginning of 1991, and it eventually closed in 1994. The following medal (Figure 12), called ‘Guns and Roses’, was presented to staff at the Footscray Ammunition Factory during its centenary celebrations in 1988. The medal was designed by Michael Meszaros.43

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**Figure 12: Guns and Roses, by Michael Meszaros** (Source: Kevin Daly (text), *Ammunition Factory Footscray Centenary Album 1888–1988*)
The people in the photograph below (Figure 13), taken in 1946, worked continuously at the ammunition factories during both world wars. The woman seated second from the right in the front row is Miss Nellie Wilson, who began work in January 1908 aged thirteen, and worked continuously for 51 years.44

Figure 13: Ammunition Factory Workers 1946 (Source: Kevin Daly (text), Ammunition Factory Footscray Centenary Album 1888–1988)

Front Row: Miss W. Sippo, Miss M. Cullinan, Miss A. Maclaren, F. Douglas, Miss A. Firth, Miss N. Wilson, R. McHenry

Conclusion
This account reveals a new chapter in the history of women’s role on the home front during World War I and could be extended to add to the literature on women’s work during World War II when explosives production at Maribyrnong and Footscray came into its own, employing about 20,000 men and women at its peak, with women making up 52 per cent of the workforce.45 The research for this article draws on resources available from the Living Museum of the West, Pipemakers Park, Van Ness Avenue, Maribyrnong, and was prepared for the exhibition ‘The Forgotten Girls of World War I’, whose ‘story has been largely untold’. The exhibition ran from 17 October to 10 November 2018.
Notes

1 Rod Faulkner (interviewer and compiler), *Ammunition Factory: A Booklet by Melbourne’s Living Museum of the West on Five Women who were Interviewed about their Days at the Ammunition Factory, Footscray*, Melbourne, Living Museum of the West, c. 1985, p. 121.


6 *Age*, 20 September 1892.

7 Lack, p. 138.

8 *Independent* (Footscray), 19 June 1895.

9 *Independent* (Footscray), 2 September 1895.

10 *Independent* (Footscray), 26 December 1896.

11 *Independent* (Footscray), 25 September 1897.

12 *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 24 September 1897.


15 *Argus*, 27 June 1908.

16 *Independent* (Footscray), 31 October 1914.

17 Lyons.

18 Lyons.

19 *Independent* (Footscray), 31 July 1915.

20 *Herald*, 12 May 1915.

21 *Argus*, 26 September 1916.


23 *Bendigo Independent*, 26 January 1916.

24 *Bendigo Independent*, 26 January 1916

25 *Barrier Miner* (Broken Hill), 5 February 1916.

26 *Independent* (Footscray), 3 February 1917.

27 *Argus*, 23 July 1917.

28 *Argus*, 23 July 1917.

29 *Independent* (Footscray), 4 August 1917.

30 *Independent* (Footscray), 4 August 1917.

31 *Independent* (Footscray), 25 August 1917.
32 Independent (Footscray), 1 December 1917.
33 Independent (Footscray), 27 April 1918.
34 Independent (Footscray), 25 May 1918.
35 Advertiser (Footscray), 25 May 1918.
36 Daily Telegraph (Sydney), 11 July 1918.
37 Independent (Footscray), 27 April 1918.
38 Independent (Footscray), 24 August 1918, by ‘Inez’.
39 Faulkner, Ammunition Factory.
40 Advocate (Burnie, Tas.), 6 March 1926.
41 Maribyrnong Leader, 23 April 2015.
42 Daily News (Perth), 4 April 1934.
45 Maribyrnong Leader, 23 April 2015.
REVIEWS

A Naga Odyssey: Visier’s Long Way Home

In the mid-1970s, as a cast member during the international tour of the Moral Rearmament musical ‘Song of Asia’, Visier Meyasetsu Sanyü was billeted with families across Britain and Europe. The first question from his hosts to this tall dark stranger was always the same: ‘Where are you from?’ Nagaland, he replied, which then elicited a host of follow-up interrogations: ‘Where is that, what is it like, what is its population, size, its economy, its history? What is your relationship with India and China? Will you get independence?’ A Naga Odyssey answers most of these questions. More than that, it translates particular individual, communal and ethnic struggles of a minority tribal people in modernising India into a universal parable about the after-effects of colonialism, the limits as well as the liberations of the past in the present, and the ultimate power of peace and reconciliation.

The book is framed chronologically around Visier’s life story: his birth some time around 1950 in Khonoma; his family’s successive experiences of the brutalities of the Indian state as well as the tragedies of internecine conflict; student days at the Angami Baptist school in Kohima where, in cutting off his pigtails and studying from the ‘Indian’ textbooks that had replaced British ones, he quickly learned the politics of difference as a tribal; his schooling, successful matriculation and completion in turn of MA and PhD degrees in History; his subsequent headship of the inaugural Department of History and Archaeology in the new Nagaland University; and finally, exhausted and embattled by the cycle of corruption, violence and trauma around him, his exodus with wife Pari and three young children in 1996. In Melbourne, a short visiting fellowship at La Trobe University turned into longer-term sanctuary as the family was granted protection visas and ultimately citizenship.

As a case study of the impact of British colonialism—and its corollary, the internal hegemony of the Indian state itself—the book’s
driving and at times seemingly overwhelming narrative of upheaval, tribulation, fear and translocation is ameliorated by the values through which downtrodden peoples can choose to live. For Visier, this meant a moral fortitude and forgiveness that drew on Christian, animist and universalist traditions and qualities. As a history lesson in the complex transmutations of Naga identity and politics, A Naga Odyssey has a sure hand, a result of the fact that Visier himself lived through these turbulent decades, but also a consequence of his academic training as a historian and his skill as a communicator. The book is not primarily concerned with getting stuck in the rhetorical whirlpool of ‘was the British Empire a Good Thing or a Bad Thing’ (Visier argues that through the mechanism of indirect rule, British colonialism was ‘not as destructive as it could have been’ for his people). Rather, it is more concerned to critique the post-1947 nationalist agenda where, despite the achievement of Nagaland statehood in 1963, the army can still shoot citizens on sight under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act 1958, originally used by the British to suppress the Quit India Movement. Visier notes the irony ‘that India, now free from colonialism, was practising it’, but any hard-wired antipathy is tempered by humanity: ‘Some of my best friends are Indian.’

For all this, Naga Odyssey is a deeply personal narrative about the effects of broader forces on an individual, his family and community. Early chapters describing traditional village life and culture make the trauma of what happens next more palpable. Following Indian Army attacks on Naga villages in 1956, Visier’s family fled to the jungle where they spent two years living in fear and privation. In many ways this is the heart and the pivot of the book. Through this experience Visier reads the personal and societal challenges to faith, ritual and culture, and grapples with the transition from traditional life to modernity. It is also a formative period to which he returns again and again throughout his life, these early experiences haunting his dreams and ultimately influencing his decision to return to Nagaland.

A Naga Odyssey is also a particularly Australian story—of the challenges of a refugee family encountering everyday racism but also local compassion, and of displacement from family and the cultural alienation that comes with exile. It is also universalist in its empathy with the plight of Indigenous peoples in terms of loss of land, culture, independence and sovereignty: ‘all indigenous people share a tremendous grief, sadness and anger, that something has been taken
away from them’. Visier finally admits that he ‘had never really left Nagaland emotionally’, and, after two decades, it ineluctably pulled him back. In looking to the future, Visier continues to be drawn to his past. As the maternal grandson of Lhulevo, the only Angami man to have celebrated the beneficent Feast of Merit five times, he cannot resist belief as conviction rather than mere label, and hands-on action rather than ‘high to do’ posturing. In returning to Nagaland to establish a Healing Garden at Medziphema, he is still navigating the space between two worlds and writing the next chapter in the story of this ‘indigenous non-Australian who became a non-Indigenous Australian’.

Andrew J. May


In the years before the Second World War, Britain opened her arms to exiles, refugees and Kindertransport—children sent by their parents to escape persecution by the Nazis in Europe. However, in the spring and summer of 1940, the British army suffered the worst defeat in British military history at Dunkirk. A Nazi invasion seemed imminent. Public sentiment switched from good will to suspicion. Prime Minister Winston Churchill ordered the 80,000 German, Austrian and Czech people living in Britain be subject to arrest and detainment. Of those arrested, 2,050 would sail to Australia on a ship called the HMT Dunera (and a further 266 on the Queen Mary via Singapore), to be interned in camps at Hay, Tatura and Orange.

Dunera Lives: A Visual History is the first of two volumes on this group that came to be known as the ‘Dunera Boys’. It follows the ‘boys’ from refugee, to internee, to citizen. The crisp writing of the late Ken Inglis, Jay Winter and Seamus Spark enriches the visual elements of this important socio-cultural history. The ‘Dunera Boys’ have featured in several books, documentaries and films, yet this book stands out. It tells the story through the ‘eyes and creative representations of those who lived through it’ and also relates ‘what happened to them afterwards’.

According to Bill Gammage and Seamus Spark, Ken Inglis’s interest in the story of the ‘Dunera Boys’ began during his undergraduate days at
the University of Melbourne. One of the men in the book, the ‘legendary teacher’ Franz Philip, prompted Inglis to become an academic. For years, Inglis tried to interest postgraduate students in the topic but no one took him up on it, despite his own legendary status. Ken decided to do it himself. When ill health meant he could not finish, Jay Winter came on board as co-author and Seumas Spark shifted from research assistant to co-author. Carol Bunyan’s role as a researcher and the creator of a database on all the internees sent to Australia on the Dunera must have been invaluable.

The result is a collaboration mighty in ambition and scope: a series of longitudinal biographies organised visually and combining the unsettling power of the photograph or a piece of art and limpid writing to capture not just a moment but times. Dunera Lives is a museum of a book that follows the rise of Nazism in Europe, exile in Britain, detention, deportation, then life at sea and internment in outback New South Wales and Victoria, all through the eyes, creations and memories of those who were there. The images and artefacts represented come from survivors, descendants, museums and archives—local and international.

The Kristallnacht, or night of the broken glass, 9–10 November 1938, looms large in many of the personal stories in this book as both a symbol of the Nazi crimes against the Jews and as a lived experience. However, the authors are adamant that the story of the ‘Dunera Boys’ is ‘not only a Jewish story’. While 80 per cent of these men were Jewish, many did not practise the faith or grow up in its traditions. They lived alongside detainees of other faiths, outlooks, and some Nazi sympathisers. One of the achievements of this volume is that it presents rich and complex narratives of their physical and emotional journeys from homeland, as enemy aliens, internees and finally as free men. It dispels myths. The reader soon learns that the appellation ‘boys’ is misleading. The group had an average age of 29; the youngest among them was sixteen, the oldest 66. Most came from the Bildungsbürgertum, or educated middle class. And the authors of this book always return to a powerful underlying theme that ‘their vision was greater than that of the authorities who had interned them’. Despite the appalling and over-crowded conditions and thuggish British guards, ‘A sort of Ship’s University’ emerged, described here by Hungarian-born Albert Karolyi. Meanwhile Gerd Buchdahl, a civil engineer from Mainz, Peter Herbst, a
philosophy student of Heidelberg, and Peter Laske, a Berlin accountant, drafted a camp constitution on toilet paper. Internees at Hay took it up with few amendments. An indefatigable commitment to dignity, helped mould the collective will.

Under the umbrella of what the artist Fritz Schönbach described as ‘a small working republic’, sport, religion, culture, music and arts flourished at Hay, Tatura and Orange. ‘Music was one way in which Berlin and Vienna were brought back to the bush.’ Nevertheless the strange animals and plants and Australian guards—‘mind the rifle while I roll a cigarette’—intrigued and confused European eyes and senses. Some like Hans Lindau sought order through the science of classification. He wrote a thesis on the botany of Australia on 2,500 individual sheets of toilet paper: ‘A labour of love and an instance of the kind of affirmation of the life of the mind created by internees’.

This is an emotionally mature and balanced work, as one would expect from historians of this calibre. For all the affirmations of the human spirit the book contains, loneliness and frustration still feature heavily. The artist Fritz Schönbach captured ‘isolated men, longing for their loved ones on the other side of the world’. His sketch entitled ‘Still thinking of his girl’ draws the eye to a single man striding alone, ‘without an outlet for his frustration’. The art of Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack and Fritz Loewenstein contrasts the ways internees viewed a life of internment swallowed by the parched Australian bush. Hirschfeld-Mack’s woodcut dwarfs ‘Camp Orange’ in a vast landscape that offers a vision of ‘hope, not … despair’, whereas Loewenstein’s sketch, ‘Barbed wire, Orange,’ depicts the same landscape from behind barbed wire. There are so many interesting biographies captured in this visual history that it promises to absorb different readers at different places. However, the previously mentioned Fritz Schönbach delights throughout. His sketches have a dissident quality that can amuse or hit with great force upon a hapless target. ‘There’s a song in the air’ is a wonderful sketch that depicts writhing, frenzied internees upon their introduction to that great (and infernal) Australian—the fly.

_Dunera Lives: A Visual History_ is printed on high-quality paper, which may have been chosen to enhance the aesthetic quality of images contained in the book. This, ironically, contributes to one of the book’s few flaws. It is literally a weighty tome. For a paperback, it is heavy and difficult to handle. One presumes that readers familiar with the
historians or with Jewish–Australian historiography will not be deterred, but it might put off readers new to the authors and the topic. That would be a shame. Books like this one, which combines visual history and powerful narrative that can be enjoyed outside the academy, are like hens’ teeth.

With so many interesting ‘Dunera Boys’ to choose from one can only anticipate the choices the historians will make in volume two. Sadly, the voice of Ken Inglis will be absent. His great mate Bill Gammage will carry the torch, and, with the writing talents of Seumas Spark emerging, volume two promises to let good writers write.

_Dunera Lives. Volume 1: A Visual History_ is prescient in reminding us how quickly fear and loathing can usurp the humanitarian impulse in times of so-called national crisis. However, the final word ought to go to the ‘boys’. Their story is ‘a testament’ to those who have ‘outlived war and the injustices it produces’.

_Lucas Jordan_

_Hanging Rock—A History_


Like many Australians, I acknowledge that my image of Hanging Rock has been coloured by the haunted idyll of Peter Weir’s film, _Picnic at Hanging Rock_, even though I appreciate that Weir’s Rock is a fiction. One of the virtues of Chris McConville’s _Hanging Rock—A History_ is that it alerts us to the interesting and revealing history that this geological monument had already acquired before Joan Lindsay set the whole picnic charade in motion in 1967 with the novel that Weir appropriated.

Thomas Mitchell, enjoying the verdant pleasures of Australia Felix, must have passed the Rock but made no comment on it; he was more concerned to find his way to the top of the mountain that he named Macedon. It was Victorian surveyor Robert Hoddle who gave the Rock its first official name, Diogenes Mount, in 1843. Like many early travellers he remarked the rich park-like character of the landscape, and McConville comes close to suggesting that Hoddle may have sensed that its inhabitants, the Aboriginal peoples, might have had something to do with creating it. Squatter Edward Dryden gained a ‘Depasturing
Licence’ in 1840 giving him some control of the Rock, which came to have his name attached to it. However, by 1870, when a public recreation reserve next to the Rock was proclaimed, the name Hanging Rock was preferred. In 1884 the Victorian government’s repurchase of the Rock itself, and an additional 72 acres, acknowledged the importance that Hanging Rock had acquired.

With its unusual volcanic formation of clustered columns of rock, Hanging Rock commanded attention and, as McConville puts it, ‘seems even more odd, even unsettling, since it appears suddenly over undulating paddocks’ (p. 8). Its geological character as a mamelon was not fully appreciated until the twentieth century. Nor was its significance for the Aboriginal peoples, particularly its association with trade in the greenstone found near the Rock, understood. The German naturalist, William Blandowski, who had fled Berlin in the wake of the 1848 revolution, was unique in taking a serious interest in Aboriginal kinship and land management. In his romantic sketches of Hanging Rock, Blandowski foregrounded Aboriginal figures ‘to heighten a sense of the majesty of nature’ (p. 32).

With the onset of closer settlement, nearby farmers squabbled over rights to the Rock’s nearby water. In the meantime the reserve was fast becoming a popular destination for both locals and day-trippers from Melbourne. Indeed, thanks to the popular illustrated press, the image of Hanging Rock was spreading far and wide. As early as 1873 some 3,000 people were attracted on New Year’s Day when there was, according to the Kyneton Guardian, ‘a great variety of amusements’, including horse racing and dancing booths (p. 138). By the twentieth century the governor was bestowing his patronage on the New Year races, and by 1916 up to 20,000, some now with the aid of the motor car, were attending. The 1980s saw the advent of pop concerts with stars such as The Seekers, Leonard Cohen and Bruce Springsteen taking the stage.

This draws our attention to a familiar issue in Australian cultural history, the tension between the popular pursuit of pleasure and the need felt by society’s moral arbiters to regulate and impose respectable order. It is no surprise that some of the churches were disturbed by the spread of horse racing and the gambling associated with it, but increasingly there were also those who valued Hanging Rock and its flora and fauna as an environmental asset—ramblers, bushwalkers and naturalists—and saw the carnival atmosphere as inappropriate and damaging to the site. Even young rock climbers, who might have seemed like bushwalkers,
became a concern for the damage caused by their amateurish assaults on the rock face. Those who wanted to ‘modernise’ the facilities available to tourists found themselves resisted by an odd alliance of moral and environmental forces.

There was always an element of mystery attaching to Hanging Rock, which *Picnic at Hanging Rock* exploited—its unusual geological features for starters. McConville begins his narrative with the experience of an 1870 group of young holiday-makers who made the ascent from a difficult angle, one of their number commenting on its ‘weird and spectral appearance, something like that of a ruined castle’ (p. 8). A hundred years later Peter Weir, a Sydneysider, was seeking out the Rock for the first time, in the company of producer Patricia Lovell. They had got lost, finding themselves in Bacchus Marsh, and had almost given up when, in Lovell’s words,

> we suddenly drove over a rise and there on the plain below us was an eerie mass of boulders spewing out of the earth with trees emerging at strange angles from the top. Hovering over this was a single cloud. There were no other clouds in sight. It was chilling to come across it (Hanging Rock) this way. (p. 191)

What better introduction could Peter Weir have had!

*Hanging Rock—A History* is splendidly illustrated. The early photographs by Richard Daintree, an employee of the Victorian Geological Survey, are notable, but there are also postcards and photographs taken by the pleasure seekers. Hanging Rock has of course attracted painters. McConville discusses McCubbin’s benign images of the Rock, but alas no painting of his makes it into the book—rights too expensive perhaps? However, William Ford’s *At the Hanging Rock* serves a similar purpose in emphasising the relaxed atmosphere and conveying an image of the Rock as a sociable, scenic meeting place. There is also a surprisingly garish Fred Williams. Sometimes I would have appreciated some interpretative comment in the captions.

At $24 Chris McConville’s handsome and thoughtful *Hanging Rock—A History* is a steal. It can be purchased through hangingrock.net.au. But a surprising omission by the publisher, Friends of Hanging Rock, is a biographical note on the distinguished author, who has published widely on Australian cultural history and heritage.

*John Rickard*
There are many categories of casualties of war, some obvious, some not so. Amongst the latter are expatriate nationals who happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. One such victim was Hans-Wolter von Gruenewaldt. A German national, he was working as a mining engineer in South Africa when the Second World War broke out. To avoid being arrested as an enemy alien, he tried to return to Germany by signing up as a seaman on a German cargo vessel, but the attempt was foiled when the ship was captured by the British Navy in the mid-Atlantic. He was then put on a ship taking prisoners to Canada that was torpedoed by a German U-boat off the Irish coast. Along with the other survivors, he became one of the 2,500 passengers transported to Australia on the infamous HMT *Dunera*.

Von Gruenewaldt was sent to the Murchison Internment Camp, known as Camp 13, one of the eight camps within or around the triangle formed by Rushworth, Tatura and Murchison, established in Central Victoria (and elsewhere in south-eastern Australia) to house ‘enemy aliens’.

The treatment of prisoners in these camps often depended on the personalities that guarded them. At Murchison, von Gruenewaldt and his fellow internees were treated fairly well. Their food was good—they grew much of it themselves—and they developed a range of social, sporting and cultural activities to overcome the tedium and boredom of camp life. Von Gruenewaldt wrote in a memoir:

> Our Camp Commandant, Maj. Hutton and especially his adjutant Capt. Henderson were wonderful people apart from being good officers. They had consideration for our predicament and did not exploit the situation. Through their treatment, a gentleman’s agreement evolved and as long as we did not cause them any difficulties we could have anything, which they could organise—a principle that worked very well.

Captain Henderson during a routine search found a radio valve hidden in a bag of peas. Knowing they had an illegal radio, all he
said was, ‘Please you’ve got to hide this better’. However, there was an officer von Gruenewaldt describes as a sadist whose speciality was barring distribution of mail from family in Germany for set periods. As an indication of the generally good treatment they received in the camp, twelve of the ex-German POWs and their families returned to Murchison in 1974 and were entertained in the local RSL Hall.

Although the war in Europe ended in May 1945 and the Pacific War the following September, it was not until early 1947 that von Gruenewaldt was allowed to leave the camp and return to his native Germany. The conditions on board the ship that took him back to Europe, the SS Orontes, were appalling, and he and his fellow ex-internees arrived home in an emaciated state. After recovering, he returned to South Africa and died there in 1973.

Von Gruenewaldt was a talented water-colourist. At Murchison, he did sketches of camp life, painted seventeen murals for the officers’ mess and regularly drew caricatures and portraits of both his fellow prisoners and their guards. He also did backdrops and theatre scenes for plays performed in the camp, some of which he wrote himself.

In the early 1960s von Gruenewaldt wrote a short memoir of his time at Murchison. His son was responsible for translating this and also for donating to the Murchison & District Historical Society in 2007 many of the sketches and art works his father did in the camp. Unfortunately he could not donate the 1,500-page diary his father kept during his six and half years at Murchison. Von Gruenewaldt burnt it on his departure from the camp in February 1947; he had been advised to dispose of it in case it fell into the wrong hands and the entries in it caused offence or potential trouble.

This attractively produced book includes the translation of von Gruenewaldt’s camp memoir and reproduces in colour all of his known art work of the time, including the murals noted above. They now hang in the Community Hall and Nursing Home in Murchison. The book contains contemporary photos of the camp too, including aerial views courtesy of the National Library of Australia and scenes from within the camp now held in the Australian War Memorial and the Tatura and District Historical Society. In a nice touch, this volume also reproduces colour photographs of what remains today of the former camp shown opposite a watercolour by von Gruenewaldt of the same view. Although there is now very little left—a few concrete foundations, a decaying
building here and there—the memory of the Murchison Internment Camp lives on. This is very much a result of the surviving artwork of Hans-Wolter von Gruenewaldt and the enthusiasm of the local historical society.

John Arnold

Swanston: Merchant Statesman

Most Melburnians know Swanston Street, but few know anything about the man after whom it is named. Until now he has been a scarcely visible figure in the background, even to those with a serious interest in colonial history. Thanks to this study it is now possible to understand not only why Charles Swanston was honoured by having a street in Melbourne named for him in 1837 but also why he has been so little honoured in Tasmania since his death in 1850. For the first time the scope and depth of his involvement in the commercial and political life of Van Diemen's Land during the two decades he lived there, and his important role in the Port Phillip Association, have been documented fully and authoritatively.

Eleanor Robin introduces her study with the cautionary tale of what happened to the archive of the bank that Swanston managed and mismanaged, and how that affected the writing of history. After reading her book no one could doubt that she has worked her way through the 'thirty-nine archive boxes' in which were 'leather-bound letterbooks, ledgers, minutes, circulars, hundreds of bundles of bills, promissory notes, cheques, letters from clients and government officials and the significant business and private correspondence of the formidable Derwent Bank managing director, Captain Charles Swanston' (p. 1). She has not been overwhelmed by the mass of detail—though, perhaps, some readers will be—and is able to fashion a clear narrative. The book is an impressive demonstration of the value of patient and careful examination of documentary evidence, such as only a dedicated scholar is prepared to undertake.

Charles Swanston, who was 40 when he arrived in Hobart in 1829 after a military career in India, quickly became prominent in
Van Diemen’s Land as both a businessman and a politician. He was a member of the Legislative Council from 1832 to 1848, during which time he was a leading player in two major political controversies. He was deeply involved in the Montague affair in which he became a determined opponent of Lieutenant-Governor Franklin (cruelly lampooned by his opponents in the colony as ‘Uncle Foozle’); and, as one of the ‘Patriotic Six’, he was an equally determined opponent of Lieutenant-Governor Eardley-Wilmot. Robin’s interesting account of his political activities is distinguished by her sure grasp of detail.

Of most interest to Victorians, and especially Melburnians, is likely to be Swanston’s participation in the Port Phillip Association. Robin argues persuasively that he was more than the banker, which is how his role has been represented in the histories; she sees him, rather, as ‘the major strategist’, who ‘carried the bulk of the intellectual and administrative responsibility’ (p. 121). Although his name was to be preserved in a settlement that he apparently never visited, he did not otherwise profit from his Port Phillip venture. A chapter aptly titled ‘Lost Flocks and Distraught Shepherds’ describes in fascinating detail his ill-fated attempt to introduce sheep in the Barwon River area.

On the evidence of the Derwent Bank Papers, Eleanor Robin concludes that ‘Swanston’s input into the Port Phillip speculation, from its beginning as a search for new land to the authorisation of licensed squatting and the Crown’s land sales, was a catalyst for the development of government policy for regularised settlement in the Australian colonies’ (p. 146). It is a large claim, but this book certainly establishes that Swanston was a much more significant figure than has previously been recognised.

Less certain is the claim implicit in the title of the book and put forward in the text. Robin suggests that, while today Swanston might be described as an entrepreneur, in his own time it was ‘more likely that he would have been described as a “merchant statesman”’ (p. 99). The term ‘statesman’—usually accorded, albeit grudgingly, by posterity to politicians who rise above the ruck—hardly seems justified. Was Swanston really so different from the other go-getters who sought to make their fortunes in the colonies? Eleanor Robin views him sympathetically, as one expects of a biographer, but on his character and personality she offers little more than commonplaces. Brushing aside Boyes’s well-known judgment of him as an ‘arrogant, proud, conceited
and officious man’, she does not feel it necessary to investigate how far her detailed account of Swanston as a manager might sustain or undermine that harsh judgment.

The story of Charles Swanston, the son of a tenant farmer in Northumberland who became an officer and a gentleman, is one of great expectations and ultimate disaster. After the ‘catastrophic failure’ (Robin’s words) of the Derwent Bank, which destroyed his reputation and led to his death (suicide?), his contemporaries had little wish to remember him, and succeeding generations showed little appreciation of his public activities. This book puts that to rights, but it left me wanting to know more of his personal story.

John Barnes

_Ned Kelly: Selectors, Squatters and Stock Thieves_

This study is not another biographical study of Ned Kelly but, rather, a detailed and elaborate examination of the cultural, social and political contexts of north-eastern Victoria in the late nineteenth century. These contexts, Doug Morrissey argues, help to explain the actions and behaviour of the Kelly Gang and its followers. More importantly, they allow us to understand that the historical and historiographical narratives that valorise Ned both as a victim of squatter and police oppression and as a champion of the rights of the poor and downtrodden selectors is not only reductionist but for the most part just plain wrong.

Morrissey admits that growing up in Kelly country he believed in the myth of Ned as an advocate of an oppressed rural working class. But his research into the Kelly family and the community in which they lived convinced him that the outlaw and his accomplices were nothing more than common criminals. In setting out to elaborate on this argument Morrissey constructs a series of chapters about the Glenrowan and Greta community, focusing on British Protestants and Irish Catholics, schoolteachers, policemen, squatters, selectors, storekeepers, millers and stock thieves. He argues that the community was characterised by two contrasting and conflicting cultures, one marked by respectability, decency and respect for law and order, the
other based on violence, drinking, gambling, and sexual promiscuity. The second (minority) culture was centred on the grog shanties that were to be found throughout the area and was the one embraced by the Kelly, Quinn and Lloyd families.

Morrissey’s purpose is to attack the arguments of contemporaries and subsequent historians who sympathised with Kelly and portrayed him as an advocate of the rights and interests of the poor—especially the selectors of Irish Catholic descent. He argues that most Irish settlers supported Home Rule nationalism rather than Ned’s revolutionary version. Moreover, there was little conflict between Protestants and Catholics because almost all citizens co-operated to ensure a harmonious community. Kelly was not an Irish Catholic leader but rather a member of the counter-cultural shanty culture. Similarly, while Kelly sympathisers portrayed the police as corrupt, arbitrary and authoritarian in their dealings with the Kelly family, Morrissey argues that most officers were professional and disciplined upholders of the law. Perhaps most importantly, Morrissey is determined to rescue the selectors from a reputation as farming failures. While acknowledging that the success of selection was variable he argues that most of those who took up land in Kelly Country managed to hold onto their land and rise from subsistence to relative success in a market economy. They achieved this through a discipline reflected in their adherence to an ethic of hard work and respectability in contrast to the Kellys, whose decadent and undisciplined lifestyles doomed their prospects as farmers. And, finally, Morrissey argues that Ned Kelly had only limited support and sympathy in his community. His lifestyle of decadence and cruelty, and his practice of stock theft from the flocks and herds of selectors as well as squatters, earned him a reputation as a narcissistic, self-promoting, bully, murderer and liar.

These are fascinating and important arguments set out with force and conviction, and accompanied by a certain amount of (undocumented) statistical evidence. These arguments are not wholly original—previous historians have also challenged Kelly’s motives, reputation and popularity—but this is a more sustained attack on Kelly than any previous historian has mounted.

But the book left me with an immense sense of frustration. Although it is based on wide research amongst printed primary and archival resources and makes frequent references to the Kelly
historiography (without ever naming the specific historian referred to), this book contains no footnotes and no bibliography. The reader is assured that source attributions can be found in the author’s original PhD dissertation, although Morrissey also points out that the book is an extensive revision of the thesis. How many readers are likely to travel to the La Trobe University Library to attempt to match the thesis footnotes to the book’s arguments? As with any other scholarly work, the book must be assessed without reference to the thesis. Perhaps it is a legacy of my rigorous postgraduate history training at Johns Hopkins University, but I find it impossible to give the same weight to this undocumented history as, for example, to John McQuilton’s The Kelly Outbreak: The Geographical Dimension of Social Banditry (1987).

Richard Waterhouse

The Maddest Place on Earth

The Maddest Place on Earth is the ‘true story’ of the development of asylums and their populations of the mad in nineteenth-century Victoria. Jill Giese, a clinical psychologist and writer, has traced the stories of early commentators—a ‘mad’ artist, a doctor, and a journalist—to enter into the worlds of the time that the colony was forging its culture of mental health provision. These tales are, in part, well known, but Giese has assembled a history by using new ways to narrate the past. Drawing from primary sources and some secondary source histories, her book is a creative and insightful look at the way madness was understood in the second half of the nineteenth century in Victoria.

With the stated aim to ‘bring the asylum worlds of very real people to life’, Giese uses evidence in a way that breaks open the conventions of history writing. For instance, the writings of the ‘Vagabond’, a journalist later identified as John Stanley James and who also published under the name of Julian Thomas, are placed in italics throughout this work. Giese aims to weave in and out of his account of life inside the institution at Kew and to provide glimpses of the historical context, including her own narrative of events and conditions. Her generous quotations of the Vagabond may be slightly misleading, for her book is not only a vehicle
to allow his voice to speak. Giese also finds ample evidence from other historical actors of the period, people who worked among the mad or who were taken to the asylums themselves.

Both the Yarra Bend Asylum and Kew Asylum were subject to inquiries early in their years of operation. This was in part a reaction to a worldwide trend to exposés of asylum practices; in England, similar press coverage had led to significant reforms by the middle of the nineteenth century. However, Victoria was different; it had only ‘settled’ in the 1840s and become a colony by 1851, so any nascent humanitarian hope for asylums built on the premise of reform in Britain was unable to take hold. Asylums were basic places; at the Yarra Bend, where all ‘classes’ of patient were sent, conditions verged on the horrific before the arrival of Doctors Embling and, later, Bowie, and were known to be ‘unruly’ and violent.

One of the strengths of this book is the insight it provides into the viewpoints of the medical men; their own journeys from Britain, the account of their interventions into the disarray at the asylum, and their backgrounds and training all provide a useful counterpoint to a focus on asylum structures and regimes often found in the scholarly literature. Giese makes much of her historical imagination—the art of showing how people thought and felt by reading the sources deeply and with empathy. *The Maddest Place on Earth* also endeavours to engage readers in some patient stories, which are powerful in the context of the larger narrative of mental health history Giese aims to set out. The stories presented in this book are pithy, part of a nicely crafted narrative of people, places, laws and events, as well as reflections on the meanings of treatment practices and modalities of asylum hospital care.

What kind of historical contribution does this book make? It is certainly intensely interesting and engaging; readers will find much here to stimulate their thinking about madness in colonial society. It also provides a layered set of stories to better complete the picture of the past. Giese makes good use of the array of contemporary sources including patient case notes, published and unpublished sources, newspaper accounts, legislation, immigration records, and many more sources, bringing new ways of seeing and using this evidence to light—and life—as she had hoped. Her use of academic sources is more limited, perhaps intentionally; there are many published studies about gender, ethnicity, the medical worlds of the asylum, work and violence, to name a few
examples, not referred to here, and a range of useful Australian studies of asylums left out, which—without wanting to seem ungenerous—seems like a glaring omission. If Giese sought to add new value to the field, it might have been worthwhile to show what other modes of historical writing have captured this story, if only to point to their limitations in the context of writing a new account of the 'maddest' colony.

*Catharine Coleborne*

**The Master Gardener: A Biography of T.R. Garnett**

I had the privilege of meeting Tommy and Penny Garnett in the early 1990s at The Garden of St Erth. As a keen gardener, creating an acre garden in nearby Woodend, I was very interested to see how they were managing the challenging gardening conditions of Blackwood in Central Victoria. St Erth's reputation as a special garden was widely known through local knowledge and Tommy's garden-related articles in the *Age*. Despite it being over 25 years ago I distinctly remember their passion and enthusiasm for their garden and their willingness to share their experience and knowledge with anyone who showed an interest.

However, Andrew Lemon’s in-depth biography reveals that there was a great deal more to be learnt about Tommy Garnett than can be gleaned from a brief but very informative visit to his garden at Blackwood. Few were aware in those days of Tommy’s academic career in the English public-school system, his prowess as a cricketer, his contribution to the Second World War or his lifelong study of birds. More widely known was that, prior to developing his property at Blackwood, he had been head master at Geelong College (1961–1973), and that his writing in the *Age* was something not to be missed each week.

The stimulus for Garnett’s achievements, as an Englishman who came to Australia in mid-life, was his intense curiosity about every aspect of his adopted country. It was this curiosity, underpinned by a sharp academic mind and an eclectic interest in the environment, social issues and education, that furnished such perspicacity to both his garden making and his writing.
Lemon’s decision to embark on Garnett’s biography with the story of St Erth and Garnett’s evolution as a gardener and a writer is insightful. Australian readers in particular will relate to this practical and creative stage of his life. Garnett’s literary style effortlessly ‘raised the bar’ of garden making from how to grow popular plants to exploring the science, history and botanical knowledge behind creating and conserving remarkable and enduring landscape spaces.

The first chapter of Lemon’s biography serves as a reminder of Australia’s post–World War II gardening history, in Victoria in particular. The key movements and issues that arose through the 1970s and 1980s are recorded. The stories of the people with whom Garnett engaged also recap the significance of influential Australian garden makers who were in practice from the 1920s onward: luminaries such as Olive Mellor, Edna Walling, Ellis Stones and Gordon Ford, all of whom were passing away from the 1970s onwards.

Lemon points out that Garnett was himself part of the ‘evolution of garden making’ and the resurgence of interest in gardening as both a creative and an intellectual pursuit. He was part of the vanguard of renewed interest in Australia’s garden history, the restoration of our regional botanic gardens, gardening organically and the establishment of Australia’s Open Garden Scheme.

The first chapter concludes with ‘Recognition’, which summarises Garnett’s publicly recognised achievements, in particular those that led to his OAM, awarded in June 1996, ‘as a man who has given outstanding service to the Australian Community in the separate fields of ornithology, horticulture and journalism’. This section alerts the reader to a multitude of ‘behind the scenes endeavours’ that resulted in the establishment of several societies and organisations dedicated to the conservation and recording of Australian landscape, flora and fauna. The award was timely as it occurred just as the Garnetts’ time at St Erth was coming to a close. The nomination details were extensive, yet Lemon points out that there was much more that could have been included.

Just as Tommy had a preference for telling his stories within themes, Lemon brings alive Garnett’s narrative by charting his life’s journey within six distinct ‘books’.

Following on from Tommy’s undertakings at The Garden of St Erth and his literary achievements, the reader can discover what ‘made the man’, his home and family life, his student days at Charter House and
the diversions of Westminster, all of which moulded ‘The Boy and the Young Man from 1915 to 1938’.

With the impending war in Europe Garnett’s control over his life became severely compromised. ‘Tommy’s War 1938–1946’ follows the personal impact of serving his country. As he rose through the machinations of wartime promotions to the rank of squadron leader, he developed the leadership skills that underpinned his post-war teaching career as master of prestigious schools, initially in England and then later in Australia.

Books four and five chart Garnett’s role as master of Marlborough (1952–1961) and Geelong Grammar and the ‘Lanchester Tradition’ (1961–1973) respectively. In both cases Garnett was the instrument of change and a strong and resourceful leader through turbulent times.

This meticulously researched biography, accompanied by images, is a pleasure to read and will appeal to a broad audience. The reader can follow the entire life story or easily dip into one of the ‘books’ to explore an aspect of particular interest.

Anne Vale

**Strength in Battle: The Memoirs of Joseph Anderson Panton, Goldfields’ Commissioner and Magistrate**

In the autumn of 1851, Joseph Anderson Panton disembarked the *Thomas Arbuthnot* at New South Wales after the long voyage from Portsmouth. The previous year, Panton had visited Robert Burford’s panorama of New South Wales in Leicester Square, though Burford’s scenic views had little prepared him for ‘this Land of Promise’. ‘In all my life’, he reflected later, ‘I thought I had never seen anything to equal the harbour or the suburbs and beauty of the town of Sydney as seen from the docks that March morning’.

A graduate of Edinburgh’s Scottish Naval and Military Academy, the young Panton had arrived in Australia on the advice of his uncle, Colonel Joseph Panton. The ‘whole family’, his uncle had urged him, ‘had been soldiers or sailors, and as there was nothing doing in the
service at the present time a grand opportunity lay for some member of the family to make money by settling’ in the colonies. Putting aside further study at the University of Edinburgh, Joseph set out for the ‘then almost unknown land—Australia’, to ‘go in for sheep-farming and make a fortune’. ‘We left our good ship with regret’, he recalled of his arrival in Sydney, ‘and here I may mention that on her return voyage to England she took home the great news of the discovery of gold in Australia.’

**Strength in Battle: The Memoirs of Joseph Anderson Panton, Goldfields’ Commissioner and Magistrate** offers a rich autobiographical account of the life and times of a notable figure in gold-rush Australia. Across the course of twelve engaging chapters, expertly edited and annotated by the late Hugh Anderson, we follow Panton from his early schooldays in Aberdeen and his time at the Naval and Military Academy through to his arrival in Australia and his work in the pastoral industry on the Goulburn, before witnessing him being swept up in the whirl of the Victorian gold rushes and heading off for the Mount Alexander Diggings.

‘Although my intention had been to follow sheep farming as an occupation’, Panton realised, ‘my experience … led me to conclude that it was not a desirable occupation now that the attraction of the goldfields had made labour so difficult to obtain. Everyone seemed to be attracted to the goldfields’. Panton briefly returned to farming, but the bulk of the memoir covers his professional life on the Victorian goldfields—as assistant commissioner at Kangaroo Gully and then senior commissioner at Bendigo—as well as excursions through the Mallee, a sojourn in Europe, and, finally, travels in Australia’s North West.

For readers with an interest in Australian history, Panton’s memoir provides a dazzling array of first-hand insights into the colonial past. As **Strength in Battle** unfolds, the goldfields come to life, populated by an ensemble cast of notable gold-rush characters. As we follow the commissioner across the Bendigo diggings, we are introduced to some of the leading political figures of the era (such as Governors La Trobe and Hotham); well-known travellers and chroniclers (such as Robert Cecil, the future Marquis of Salisbury, and William Howitt); and fabulous celebrities (such as Lola Montez). Alongside the expansion of British settlement, we also encounter through Panton’s reminiscences some of the diversity of life on the diggings. At various points Indigenous
Australians, Chinese miners, Maori miners, Germans, Poles, and Americans (including African–Americans. In Panton’s words, ‘the jetsam and flotsam’ from ‘all parts of the world’ take centre stage in the commissioner’s narrative.

*Strength in Battle* also offers us important first-hand observations of the development of Bendigo and of the tremendous environmental transformations unleashed by the rush for gold—as the earth ‘was torn up and occupied by the miners’. Being a commissioner’s memoir, this account makes law and order a predominant theme. Through Panton, we gain valuable perspectives from the government side on key political developments such as the Red Ribbon Rebellion and Eureka, which he describes as ‘that contemptible attempt to raise the flag of rebellion where people have protection under the Union Jack’. But we are also invited to tag along and observe less consequential, but no less fascinating, details of the everyday life of the diggings and the authorities’ struggle to maintain order. In this capacity, we come across policemen and soldiers, diggers, doctors and dentists—often with dubious qualifications—and the enterprising proprietors of both legitimate and illegal businesses.

As editor and annotator of Panton’s memoir, Hugh Anderson is meticulous. His introductory essay and detailed explanatory footnotes throughout the volume provide invaluable background to Panton’s reflections, and guides to further reading. This wonderful volume, brought to publication after Anderson’s passing by his son Warwick Anderson, as well as James Dunk and Nick Walker from ASP, is essential reading for anyone seeking a path back to the goldfields.

*Benjamin Mountford*
Notes on Contributors

John Arnold has worked as a librarian, bookseller and academic. He had a long association with the National Centre for Australian Studies at Monash University before retiring in 2012. He edited the La Trobe Journal from 2008 to 2018 and has published widely on the history of the book in Australia and Australian expatriate publishing in England.

John Barnes is emeritus professor of English at La Trobe University where he taught Australian literature for 25 years. His most recent book is a biography, La Trobe: Traveller, Writer, Governor (2017). He is now in search of a publisher for a volume of memoirs, Partial Portraits: Essays in Remembering.

Marilyn Bowler completed her Arts degree at Monash University as a trainee teacher in the 1960s. In 2008, she undertook a Master of Arts at La Trobe University examining the effects of teaching studentships on recipients’ lives, knowing how much her own studentship had affected her own life. Marilyn is a past editor of the Victorian Historical Journal.

Catharine Coleborne is professor and head of the School of Humanities and Social Science, University of Newcastle. She has used the case records of the Yarra Bend Asylum in her published works. Her books include Reading Madness (2007), Madness in the Family (2010) and Insanity, Identity and Empire (2015).

Peter Edwards AM, is an honorary professor at Deakin University, Melbourne, and a visiting professor of the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra. He is the official historian and general editor of the nine-volume Official History of Australia’s Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948–75, including his volumes on strategy and diplomacy, Crises and Commitments (1992) and A Nation at War (1997).

Miranda Francis is a history PhD student in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at La Trobe University. Her project examines mothering in post-1945 suburban Melbourne and is based on life-history interviews with women aged over 60. Teaching studentships changed a number of her interviewees’ family and work lives and she has written about this in Provenance.

Lucas Jordan is the author of Stealth Raiders: A Few Daring Men in 1918 (2017). He has taught history to undergraduate students at Deakin and Monash universities and has written a global report for Amnesty International. He currently teaches history at Western English Language School in Melbourne and is a visiting fellow with the College of Arts and Social Sciences, Australian National University.
Judy Maddigan is president of Public Record Office Victoria’s Public Records Advisory Council. She was elected to the Victorian seat of Essendon from 1996 to 2010, and was speaker for the Legislative Assembly in Victoria from 2003 to 2005, the first woman to serve in that distinguished role. Throughout her years in public office Judy has also been involved in numerous community groups and historical societies as well as the Living Museum of the West.

Andrew J. May is professor of history in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne and author of Welsh Missionaries and British Imperialism: The Empire of Clouds in North-east India (2015).

Benjamin Mountford is senior lecturer in history at the Australian Catholic University in Melbourne. He is the author of Britain, China and Colonial Australia (2016) and co-editor of A Global History of Gold Rushes (2018) and Fighting Words: Fifteen Books that Shaped the Postcolonial World (2017).

Seamus O’Hanlon is associate professor at Monash University where he teaches contemporary and urban history. He is the co-editor (with Tania Luckins) of Go! Melbourne in the Sixties (2005) and author of City Life: The New Urban Australia (2018).

Bruce Pennay is an adjunct associate professor at the Albury–Wodonga Campus of Charles Sturt University. He is a regional historian who has a particular interest in post-war immigration. He has published work on the Albury–Wodonga National Growth Centre and on both Bonegilla and Benalla migrant camps. He is a member of the Wodonga and the Albury and District historical societies.

John Pickard, Department of Environmental Sciences, Macquarie University, has studied Australian rural fences for over 20 years, publishing numerous papers on their history and heritage. He is a member of the Royal Australian Historical Society and the Professional Historians Association.

Gary Presland, FRHSV, is an archaeologist and historian whose research interests have long been in Aboriginal history and natural history of the Melbourne area. He completed a PhD at the University of Melbourne, which was published as The Place for a Village and won Best Publication category in the 2009 Community History Awards. He is the archivist of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria (FNCV) and an editor of its journal The Victorian Naturalist. His history of the FNCV, Understanding Our Natural World, was commended in the 2016 Community History Awards.

John Rickard, FAHA, FRHSV, is emeritus professor in history at Monash University. He has written widely on Australian cultural history and biography, and his most recent books are An Imperial Affair: Portrait of an Australian Marriage (2013) and a revised version of Australia: A Cultural History (2017).
Anne Vale is a writer, garden historian, garden photographer and a public speaker. She is a past chair of the Australian Garden History Society’s Victorian branch, and a retired university lecturer. She is also the author of Gardens of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) (2018), Influential Australian Garden People: Their Stories (2016), and award-winning Exceptional Australian Garden Makers (2013). Anne has contributed articles to the online Encyclopaedia of Women & Leadership in Twentieth-century Australia (eds Judith Smart and Shurlee Swain), Australian Garden History, Historic Gardens Review (UK) and the RHSV’s Remembering Melbourne (eds Richard Broome et al., 2016).

Richard Waterhouse, FASSA, FAHA, is emeritus professor of history at the University of Sydney. He was formerly bicentennial professor of Australian history and head of the School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry at the same institution. He is the author of five books and more than 70 chapters and articles on aspects of the social and cultural history of Australia and the United States, including Private Pleasures, Public Leisure: A History of Australian Popular Culture since 1788 (1995), and The Vision Splendid: A Social and Cultural History of Rural Australia (2005).

Martin Williams graduated in engineering with two degrees from the University of Melbourne in 1976. He had a research career at the Department of Mechanical Engineering, University of Melbourne, the Australian Road Research Board, Technisearch Ltd, RMIT University, and retired as deputy chief of the CSIRO Division of Textile and Fibre Technology, the wool research laboratory of CSIRO; hence the interest in the pastoral history of Victoria.
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 History House, 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, details of 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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Guidelines for Contributors to the

Victorian Historical Journal

1. The Victorian Historical Journal is a refereed journal publishing original and previously unpublished scholarly articles on Victorian history, or on Australian history where it illuminates Victorian history. It is published twice yearly by the Publications Committee, Royal Historical Society of Victoria.


3. Articles from 4,000 to 8,000 words (including notes) are preferred.

4. The VHJ also publishes historical notes, which are reviewed by the editors. A historical note may be up to 4,000 words in length. It contains factual information and is different from an article in not being an extended analysis or having an argument. Submitted articles may be reduced and published as historical notes at the discretion of the editor(s) and the Publications Committee, after consultation with the author.

5. The review editor(s) commission book reviews—suggestions welcome.

6. The RHSV does not pay for contributions to the journal.

7. The manuscript should be in digital form in a minimum 12-point serif typeface, double or one-and-a-half line spaced (including indented quotations and endnotes), with margins of at least 3 cm.

8. Referencing style is endnotes and must not exceed 10 per cent of the text. They should be devoted principally to the citation of sources.

9. The title page should include: author’s name and title(s); postal address, telephone number, email address; article’s word length (including notes); a 100-word biographical note on the author; a 100-word abstract of the main argument or significance of the article.

10 Suitable illustrations for articles are welcome. Initially send clear hard photocopies, not originals. Scanned images at 300dpi can be emailed or sent on disk. Further requirements for final images and permissions will be sent if your article is accepted.

11. Titles should be concise, indicative of the subject, and can include a subtitle. The editor reserves the right to alter the title in consultation with the author.

12. Send an electronic copy of your manuscript, either on disk or preferably as an email attachment (.rtf or .doc or .docx file format). Email attachments should be sent to office@historyvictoria.org.au. Telephone enquiries to the RHSV office 9326 9288.

13. A signed copyright form for online load-up is required before publication.