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ON INDEXING THE *ARGUS*

John Hirst

Abstract

This article is based on a lecture given to the Royal Historical Society of Victoria in August 2012. It describes a project, headed by the author and now 30 years old, to bridge ‘the gap’ of 50 years in the indexes to the Melbourne newspaper, the Argus. It also argues the advantages of the resulting indexes over the search facility provided by the National Library of Australia’s website, Trove.

I FIRST HEARD THE TERM ‘The *Argus* Index Gap’ in 1983. I was attending a meeting of the History and Heritage Committee of the organisation charged with honouring Victoria’s sesquicentenary. I left the meeting with the responsibility of filling this gap. Doing useful and lasting things was the mantra of the celebrations.

The *Argus* newspaper was published in Melbourne from 1846 until 1957. There are indexes to the paper from 1846 to 1859, the work of J.A. Feely, a former state librarian. The *Argus* itself published indexes from 1910 to 1949. In between is ‘The *Argus* Index Gap’. ‘Yawning Chasm’ might be the better term. There are fourteen years done by Feely; the *Argus* itself did 40 years. The gap—1860 to 1909—is 50 years!

Still, the existing indexes made the *Argus* the best-indexed metropolitan newspaper in the country. Australian researchers do not have the advantage of those in the United Kingdom and the United States who can go to continuous indexes of *The Times* and the *New York Times*. When I explained this lack to a scientific colleague, he said no other money should be spent

on Australian history research until such a basic resource as the *Argus* was indexed.

Sadly, this is not how history research is run. The amount of money that came through the History and Heritage Committee was enough only to get started. For a time we had substantial grants from the Australian Research Council (ARC) but unaccountably they ceased. Since then, we have survived on small grants from a wide range of sources. When I run my eye down the grants given by the ARC to individual research projects, I say to myself: ‘for that money I could give you indexes to ten years of the *Argus*’, which in most cases would be a better way to spend the money.

So the work has been done on a shoestring budget. Nevertheless, we have now completed the indexes for the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s. Nearly all the budget has gone to pay the chief indexer, who almost from the start has been Geraldine Suter. Her work has been outstanding; she won the Australian Indexers’ Prize for our first volume, the index for the year 1860. The work of reading and recording the contents of the paper has been done by volunteers. Their labours have been co-ordinated and checked by Diana Phoenix, volunteer in chief.

The *Argus* was chosen for this index project not simply because there were already some indexes to it; the *Argus* was also the major newspaper of record in Melbourne. The radical liberal paper, the *Age*, is better known but it was smaller. The *Argus* was conservative—or, as it would say of itself, constitutionalist—but the politics of the paper did not substantially affect its news reporting.

Papers of record no longer exist. Let me describe them by contrast to the so-called quality press of today. If a premier was launching an election campaign, the *Argus* would report his speech in full—not simply the highlights or the surprises or the differences from previous positions but the full thing. An editorial might deal with it, but there was no other commentary.

A paper of record gave a complete coverage in another sense. It recorded the whole life of the town; it recorded events, even if they were only routine. What news editor today would include this report?

The adjourned annual meeting of the Melbourne Philharmonic Society was held last evening in the Mechanics Institute Hall, Mr Sumner in the chair. The minutes of the annual meeting having been read and confirmed, Mr Rutter brought up the report of the special committee appointed at the former meeting to revise the rules and constitution of the society, and the rules were gone

through *seriatim*, the great majority of them being merely verbally amended. In others a few alterations of no general interest were made. The meeting then adjourned at a late hour, till Tuesday next, when the elections of officers will take place. The attendance of members was numerous.¹

We might speculate on the calming and reassuring effect of such reports on newspaper readers. For historians, the benefit is obvious; there is a continuous reporting of the activities of all the institutions in the city. So the affairs of the University Council, the Hospital Board, the Port Authority, the Acclimatisation Society, the Royal Society and more are diligently chronicled. A lecture such as the one on which this article is based, a presentation to a historical society, would certainly have been recorded.

Crime sold then as now and was a staple of the papers, but not only violent, salacious and horrifying crime, the good English murders, as Orwell called them. Routine crime was also reported. If your house was robbed, you had the satisfaction of seeing it reported in the newspaper. Every case before the courts was reported, starting with the drunks and disorderlies, which would be listed by name with no other details. We decided not to include these in the index; our test was a report of four or five lines or more. That includes crimes that were trifling enough: a man steals a bottle of wine from a pub.

Our index is not a list of references under headings. There are headings but the entries appearing under them have a brief description of what the relevant articles in the paper cover. So, if you look under 'Rabbits' in 1885, you will find successive entries reading: 'simultaneous rabbit destruction in Victoria to begin today'/'efforts of Samuel Avery, Belfast council rabbit inspector'/'poison pollutes rivers in Wyndham shire'/'successful use of poison at Kerang'. These four entries are among the 180 entries under the heading 'Rabbits' for that year—all of course with references to the date the articles appeared in the paper, the page number and the column. In these entries, as in others, mini-stories jump out: 'unemployed sent from Melbourne to destroy rabbits in Wimmera'/'unemployed arrive in Dimboola'/'unemployed complain of rates for rabbit destruction'/'unemployed depart Dimboola for city'.

I hope the benefit of such a detailed index will be immediately apparent. However, increasingly we are told that there is no longer a need for an index because the paper can now be read on-line on the National Library of Australia's Trove website and searched by word. You could search 'rabbits' by word, certainly, and generate thousands of hits and go down

many burrows. Or you could read our entry and see immediately what was going to be useful.

‘Railways’ in the 1880s occurs more times than ‘rabbits’. If you wanted to follow that most important matter of public policy by a word search, you might begin to classify the railway entries by area: Gippsland railways; railways to the north-east; railways to the Western District and so on. Then you might categorise by subjects that relate to railways as a whole: tariffs; Sunday trains; accidents; administration; excursion tickets and so on. Our index has done all that for you. The first sorting on any major subject has already been completed. If you do not trust our sorting, you can search our index by word.

The places that railways served still have the same names, more or less, as when they were built. Nearly all the electorates for state politics have changed their names and none has the same boundaries. If you wanted to study a 19th-century election, you would take a long time to get your bearings. Our index records all the activities of a general election under the names of individual electorates, some one hundred or more. So candidates, and the towns and districts where they campaigned, are grouped ready for study. Candidates with similar names have been allocated to the correct electorate.

If you are interested in a hotel, you can find it by a word search but, looked at with all the other hotels in our index, you will gain some idea of what sort of hotel it was. How often, compared with the rest, was its licensee before the courts for opening after hours or allowing prostitutes on the premises? As you look down the hotel entries, two establishments stand out as places where meetings were held: Scotts, and Young and Jacksons. Scotts was the gathering place for the élite: stock-exchange dinners; entertainments for visiting celebrities; conferences of sheep-breeders; meetings of the electors for the Murray and Balranald electorates. Murray and Balranald were electorates in the Riverina in New South Wales and the electors were the Victorian squatters and pastoralists who ran sheep there. They met to decide which candidates they would jointly support and then organised a special train to take them to the poll. Young and Jacksons was the sporting men’s pub; it hosted meetings to organise football, rowing, cricket and tennis. You can see why when the nude painting of Chloe was denied a home at the gallery it went to Young and Jacksons.

Searching an old newspaper by word will not work if you do not know what words to use. If you search the *Argus* under the words ‘child abuse’,

you will find nothing. What we call child abuse was in the 19th century called 'child cruelty', 'child desertion', 'child assault' and 'child neglect'. Our index gathers these together under the heading 'Child Abuse' and has cross-references to other related subjects. From this you will see that our subject headings very helpfully follow today's usage. When the head of the Australian section at the State Library, Tim Hogan, tells his staff that they must use indexes and not simply word searches, he uses the example of 'Aborigines'. Searching by that word will miss entries where Aborigines were referred to as 'natives' or 'blacks'. The term 'Indigenous', now used almost universally for Aborigines, was not used at all in the 19th century. We probably need now to have a cross reference from 'Indigenous' to 'Aborigines'.

If you search the *Argus* by the word 'rape', you will not recover all the rapes. Rape was also referred to as 'capital offence', 'outrage', 'attempted violation', 'criminal assault' and 'indecent assault'. This was partly through delicacy but also because rapists might not be charged with rape. They were mostly charged with a lesser offence because rape was a capital offence and juries were reluctant to convict, even though an execution for rape was rare. For 1862, of the 40 entries our index has included under 'rape', only six mention that word.

It might seem a minor matter but we have helped researchers immensely by sorting out the inconsistencies in the naming of individuals and organisations. Quite frequently, journalists did not use initials, still less full Christian or given names, for individuals and they made a stab at the spelling of the surname. We have, as best as we could, sorted out all the 'John Williams' and separated the 'Stevens' from the 'Stephens'. We have also established whether the 'United Carpenters' was the same organisation as the 'Amalgamated Carpenters'. Sometimes we have had to give up and put all likely bodies under 'Carpenters'.

Indexes can guide you to what you want to know; scanned quickly they can also guide you to what you do not know. There are, as Donald Rumsfeld famously said, not only known unknowns but also unknown unknowns. A historian of any period in our history would do well to flip through the pages of our index. Historians used to be told to exhaust the sources; for most subjects that is impossible. I received the better advice that, if you are attempting to master any period, read at least one major source throughout. When I began work on convict society in New South Wales, I read every issue of the *Australian* from 1824 onwards. That was

possible because it was small paper and not issued daily. You would be hard pressed to read the *Argus* in full for say a decade, but you could skim through a decade of our indexes.

I have read all our indexes as the final checker of their accuracy and coherence. I have learnt many things that I have not seen in the history books. I did not know, for example, that there was an anti-transportation movement in Victoria in the 1860s. I assumed that movement ceased when the British government halted transportation to eastern Australia in 1852. I was wrong. The movement was revived in Victoria in the 1860s in an attempt to stop transportation to Western Australia, which had commenced in 1850. Our index for 1864 carries four pages of entries on this movement, which refer to public meetings, petitions, resolutions by local government bodies, inter-colonial conferences, and an Anti-Transportation League. I have always boasted that our index entries are so good that you can write history from them without having to look at the newspaper itself. I now reveal for the first time that the paragraph on this movement in my book on Federation, *The Sentimental Nation*, was composed in this way. It reads:

Some of West Australia's convicts moved east when their time was up. This was a minor annoyance, but the very presence of convicts in the west was a reproach to the east. It kept alive the association of Australia with convictism, which the eastern colonies were desperate to put behind them. In the 1860s they mounted a strong campaign, led from Victoria, to persuade Britain to abolish transportation. The *Argus* in Melbourne sent a reporter to the west to do an exposé on the degradation brought by convicts. When the colonial governments threatened to stop subsidising the mail steamer that called at Albany, the British government gave way, and transportation ended in 1868.

When I looked over these index entries again in preparation for my paper to the RHSV, I was surprised that I did not include in my account one delightful aspect of the campaign. Edward Wilson, one of the proprietors of the *Argus*, put up money so that time-expired convicts, if they wished, would receive free passages back to the mother country. An enduring colonial fantasy: send the convicts back to where they came from.

I also learnt from the index that Victorians started a new colony in northern Western Australia in the 1860s, at a place called Camden Harbour. This movement was encouraged and supported by the governor of Western Australia, who wanted Europeans to settle in the Kimberly. The colony was a disaster. Its fortunes can be followed in the our index entries: '100 persons with 5,000 sheep, 30 horses and 100 dogs and stores for 12 months leave

for Camden Harbour’, then, six months later, ‘settlers return to Victoria due to sheep dying and no income’. In 1990, the press of the University of Western Australia published a history of this colony by Christopher Richards, *There Were Three Ships: The Story of the Camden Harbour Expedition 1864–65*.

Richard Twopeny in *Town Life in Australia* celebrated Melbourne’s entrepreneurial spirit with interests and concerns reaching far beyond Victoria:

If there is a company to be got up to stock the wilds of Western Australia or to form a railway on the land grant system in Queensland, to introduce the electric light, or to spread education among the black fellows, the promoters either belong to Melbourne or go there for their capital.

Our index gives abundant support to this. Twopeny omitted the great interest that Melbourne and Victoria had in the Pacific for trade and missionary endeavour. Here are two adjacent entries in the index for 1868:

Rev. Thomas Barker murdered in Fiji, first missionary martyr of Australian Wesleyan Church.

Project to form Fiji Banking and Trading Company.

And later:

King Thakombar repudiates treaty with Fiji Banking and Trading Company. There was much more interest in the *Argus* in the Pacific islands, New Zealand and New Guinea than there is in any Victorian newspaper today.

One of the joys and traps of turning the pages of old newspapers is that you can be diverted by stories of no relevance to your project. Even a paper of record like the *Argus* was alert to the bizarre and quirky. Our index can give you plenty of these:

Man trying to kill snake strikes gold at Inglewood;

A man charged with stealing several copies of the temperance magazine *Band of Hope Review* is discharged because no owner could be found;

A man charged with attempted murder of his housekeeper gets off after he married the housekeeper and signed the pledge.

This is one more way of saying that our index is a summary of the paper, not simply an index to it.

It is time to confess that our index does not cover everything. We do not index advertisements or regular listings to which there are already good indexes like births, marriages and deaths, appointments to the civil service, and government land sales. We do not record regular sporting events. If you want football results, you look in the paper on Monday. We do index the administration of sport and special sporting events. We do not index foreign news unless there is an immediate connection to Australia, nor the domestic affairs of other colonies. Frequently, news from other colonies will be in the paper because there is a Victorian connection—it is then indexed. Our brief for the index is to include Victorian news broadly understood and national news. Our index will be a complete guide to the *Argus*'s coverage of Federation in all six colonies. For feature articles, we place no limitation; features that deal with an Australian subject in any colony or state are included. All book reviews (whatever the book's subject) and all stories and poems are indexed. So the *Argus* as a literary magazine is completely indexed.

To make up for our omissions, we index all editorials and all letters to the editor, no matter what their subject. Hence, whatever subjects were agitating the minds of the editors and their readers are included. If the *Argus* editorialises on Gladstone's budget, that will be indexed, even though the news item on the budget has not been. It can very readily be located a day or two before the editorial.

The omissions from our index are not nearly as disabling as what you are unable to search in the *Argus* by word on the Trove website. On Trove, you are not searching the paper itself. You are searching a very imperfect digitising of the paper. This digital version was made from a very fuzzy microfilm copy of the original, with the result that much of the paper was rendered into gobbledygook. That nonsense version was sent to India, where a team of workers put into correct English the first two sentences of each article. So a search by word will find the word if it appears in the first sentences of an article; it may find the word in the rest of the paper if it chances to appear there in correct form. It gets worse. In the 19th century, the news of the day was presented in a continuous stream without headings and with not so much as a gap to separate one story from the rest. In India, only the first two sentences of the first item were corrected. Most of the day's news, then, is totally uncorrected and searching by word in these columns therefore is very much hit and miss.

The *Argus* Index project was funded in the first place so that Victorians generally, and not merely researchers, would get access to this historical source. We have been true to that aim in modifying our subject index by a strong emphasis on place. We think school children and amateur researchers are highly likely to be interested in the history of their immediate locality. So, instead of the doings of a local council appearing under local government, which is where the *Argus*'s own index placed them, we index under place. We also put under place entries on local churches (with only the affairs of the denomination itself being put under its name) as well as entries on fires and bushfires. The reports of fires, which were very common, are often revealing of the construction of homes and businesses. These regular entries, together with those on special events and occurrences, give a solid basis for the exploration of local history.

Now that I have persuaded you of the virtues of our index, you will want to know how to consult it. The index for the 1860s, in five bound volumes, is held by major libraries. When we applied for funds from the ARC, we undertook to make the index more accessible by placing it on-line. The National Library became a partner in the project and took responsibility for providing the on-line service. In conjunction with the library, we developed a wonderful site on which the indexes for the 1870s appeared. Sadly, in early 2012, when we sent the library the indexes for the 1880s, it announced that, owing to changes in its IT services, it could no longer host the *Argus* Index site. We tried to keep the library to the obligations it had undertaken and failed. It offered to provide the indexes in PDF form and suggested they be put on-line by La Trobe University. We have reluctantly accepted this option. The transfer is still in train.

This experience has warned us of the insecurity of material placed on-line. We have now put bound copies of the indexes for the 1870s in the state libraries of Victoria and New South Wales and, shortly, we will be sending them bound copies of the 1880s indexes. I hope that does give our work a guaranteed long life, though librarians, contrary to their fuddy-duddy image, have recently been known to throw books out as they hasten to embrace the new forms of digital technology.

In summary: a set of the indexes so far completed (for the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s) can be found at the state libraries of Victoria and New South Wales. We hope that soon all the indexes will become available on-line through La Trobe University. We have begun work on indexing the 1890s.

The reading and recording of the contents of the paper for this decade is complete.

The project has been running for almost 30 years and has been close to collapse many times as funding has dried up. Many individuals and organisations have come to our rescue, among them the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. I am very grateful for this assistance. In recent years, we have had regular support from the Edward Wilson Trust. The funds in this charitable trust were bequeathed by Wilson from the money he made as a proprietor of the *Argus*. We feel at last that we have found a totally appropriate patron.

NOTES

1 *Argus*, 19 February 1862, p. 5, col. b.

DAVID SYME'S ROLE IN THE RISE OF THE *AGE*

Elizabeth Morrison

Abstract

This article examines David Syme's management of the Melbourne Age newspaper business from 1860 until his death in 1908. Syme is credited with achieving the daily's exponential rise in circulation but this article considers the extent to which he was aided by circumstances and people. It argues that he drew advantage from key appointments and favourable conditions but his business acumen lay at the heart of his success.

DISTINGUISHED BY A TRADITION of investigative journalism, the Melbourne *Age* continues in 2013 as one of Melbourne's two daily newspapers, albeit with a diminishing circulation for the printed product as readers shift to obtaining news from various on-line outlets. The paper had an astonishingly huge circulation in the late 19th century, claimed to be the largest of any daily in the British Empire outside London.¹ It was deemed to exert a controlling influence on the politics of the day, a power ascribed to Scottish-born David Syme (1827–1908), a proprietor from 1856 and effectively in control from March 1860 until his death. This essay will examine this entrenched view, which made Syme a legend in his lifetime and well beyond, and will attempt to determine the extent to which he was indeed responsible for the dominance of the *Age* in the colonial newspaper world.

Started in October 1854, the *Age* for a time ran a poor third to the two long-established Melbourne daily newspapers—the *Argus*, which began in 1846, and the *Melbourne Morning Herald*, which had its origins in 1840 as

the *Port Phillip Herald*. While the *Age* circulation was 2,000 around 1860, later in the decade it had increased remarkably.² By 1892 it was estimated at 101,346; in 1907 it was higher still, at 113,476.³ The rival *Argus* had a circulation six times greater than that of the *Age* in 1856 but, by 1881, this had fallen to only one-quarter of the *Age* figure and, by 1892, to less than one-fifth.⁴ Thereafter, the trend was reversed and, by 1906, the *Argus* circulation had reached about three-fifths of that of the *Age* and was rising.

When this seemingly unabated *Age* circulation of the latter half of the 19th century and into the 20th is related to the growth of Melbourne's population, it appears that the *Age* made the biggest inroads into the metropolitan market from the late 1860s to the late 1880s. While in 1860 there was one newspaper for every 66 persons in Melbourne, the ratio was down to 1:13 in 1868, 1:8 in 1878 and 1:5 in 1887, this last ratio maintained into the 20th century.⁵ If the calculations are made using population statistics for the whole of Victoria, roughly the same trends are observable: 1:265 in 1860, 1:45 in 1868, 1:26 in 1878 and 1:13 in 1887; with a modest difference, the figure falls to 1:11 in 1906. These calculations, together with the *Argus* circulation figures, prompt consideration of why and how the 1870s and 1880s appear the age of the *Age*, and what happened in the 1890s to lessen the gap between it and its rival daily.

Much has been written about the political influence of Syme and the *Age*, generally treating the two as identical. One of the earliest expressions is Alexander Sutherland's, in the celebratory *Victoria and Its Metropolis* of 1888:

Between 1860 and 1880 the *Age* was practically the mover in all the democratic agitations which made the political history of the period. Orators and intriguers rounded up their flocks in Parliament; crowds of the free and independent voters took their way at successive elections to give their voice at the polling booths; but the voice was really the voice of David Syme, who, from behind the scenes, stirred up a people that was all unconscious of the secret power that moved it.⁶

This view was reiterated in 1892, in a series of articles on 'The Great Australasian Dailies', published in the *Review of Reviews, Australian Edition* and indicative of the high esteem in which the press was held then; at the start of the year, there were 21 capital city dailies (5 each in Melbourne and Sydney, 4 in Adelaide, 3 in Brisbane and 2 each in Hobart and Perth). The editor's foreword to the article on the *Age* asserts that this newspaper owed much

to the commanding personality and strenuous will of the one man who has controlled its fortunes for so many years ... A great journal, like a great ship, needs the control of a single will ... The *Age* is not only for its fortunate owner a mine of gold; it is a great political force.⁷

In similar vein, Prime Minister Alfred Deakin, in his introduction to the biography by *Age* reporter Ambrose Pratt, commissioned by Syme in 1907 and published posthumously in 1908, claimed that 'so far as the public knew, Mr. Syme was *The Age* and *The Age* was Mr. Syme. [The newspaper] was a power because he was a power'.⁸ Pratt in his preface went further, stating that Syme directed the policy of the *Age* and 'ruled its destiny. He founded its fortunes and created its power. For almost fifty years he was the most powerful person in Australia'.⁹ Syme's second biographer, journalist C.E. Sayers, in 1965 endorsed this wider claim, seeing his subject as 'a legendary figure who dominated the newspaper industry of Australia' and as 'a radical fighter of 19th century Australia [whose] instrument of ... personal vigour and power was "*The Age*"'.¹⁰

Two comments are called for. First, the reiterated praise of David Syme reverberates with the 'great man' theory of history, of which Thomas Carlyle was a major 19th-century proponent ('Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here').¹¹ Applying his dictum to the *Age* would indeed call for a study of David Syme. However, Carlyle's grand statement elides complexities of context, causation and contingency. Assessment of Syme's role requires not only examination of his capacities, actions and influence but, conversely, consideration of the multiplicity of influences acting upon him and the relevant opportunities available. The 'great man' needs to be contextualised in time, in place, and in relation to people with whom he associated in both public and private circles and who had supporting roles in the rise of his newspaper.

Second, assertions and explorations of political power do not in themselves explain the striking rise of the *Age*. Focusing on Syme's political wheeling and dealing, biographers have given relatively scant attention to his newspaper management skills. An exception is Ranald Macdonald, great-grandson of Syme and then managing director of David Syme and Co., who in 1981 gave a speech that outlined his grandfather's role and actions in the world of the press.¹² In 2012, he covered similar ground, when speaking to the induction of Syme into the newly created Victorian Media Hall of Fame. Macdonald said that Syme's contribution

was to build 'a thriving business based on upholding the values of good and fearless journalism' and to develop the *Age* 'into one of the truly great international journals'.¹³ With this view as a starting point, Syme's role has to be understood not exclusively in terms of the policies he and, through him, the *Age* advocated, but in relation to the components of his newspaper business management.

The period when the *Age* was started and thrived, the second half of the 19th century, was a propitious time for newspapers throughout the developed world. In Britain, the 'mother country', taxes and controls were lifted, as newspapers became an accepted and necessary part of the functioning of parliamentary democracy, encapsulated in the flowering of the fourth estate ideology.¹⁴ Along with this, a more widely enfranchised, literate and educated electorate was receptive to newspaper reading. Moreover, radical developments in printing technology enabled mass production and cheaper papers. Developments in transport technology—railways and steamships—facilitated their distribution, while the innovation of overland telegraphy and undersea cable communication enabled the swift transfer and procurement of news—a godsend to the producers of newspapers and a lure to their readers.

Conditions were especially favourable to newspaper publication in the Australian colonies, with a proliferation of new and expanding sites of settlement requiring outlets for news and information across the range of human activities—domestic, social, commercial, economic, political. Nowhere was this more so than in Victoria, the colony that detached from New South Wales on 1 July 1851, only weeks before the great goldrush ingress took the colony's population from 71,191 at the end of 1850 to 508,609 ten years later.¹⁵ The next three decades saw the dominance of individual gold prospecting (but not large-scale mining enterprises) give way to land settlement and agricultural activity, and to the establishment and growth of towns throughout the colony. The period also saw the phenomenal growth of Melbourne, the centre of governance and financial activity, its population of 23,143 in 1851 increasing to 459,360 in 1889, by which time the metropolis was known as 'Marvellous'. During these decades, hundreds of newspapers began publication in country Victoria, and scores in the metropolis.¹⁶ Some perished virtually at birth; a few, notably the *Age*, have lasted until the present.

David Syme had no part in starting the *Age*. Nor did the Eureka rebellion, although the newspaper first appeared on 17 October 1854, the day that

protesting miners burned down the Eureka Hotel. Launched by merchants Francis and Henry Cooke, the new paper was intended to have a distinctive religious if non-sectarian character and be a force for moderation.¹⁷ The Cooke brothers had been involved with the weekly *Express*, which had ceased publication in September, possibly intentionally because of plans to start the daily.¹⁸ As with many newspaper ventures, very soon the *Age* was on the verge of collapse. It was saved at the end of December by 26 members of its staff, chiefly compositors and printers, who bought in with shares of £25 each, a venture later described in an *Age* editorial as: ‘One of the most interesting experiments in the way of co-operative enterprise that has ever been tried in Australia. A body of working men undertook the herculean task of establishing a daily journal, solely by means of their combined labour.’¹⁹

But labour was not enough; good journalism was needed. Critically, early in 1955, two journalists defected from the *Argus*, which had abandoned its previously radical stand and was becoming conservative, just as the neophyte *Age* was espousing the miners’ cause. Both Irish David Blair and Scottish Ebenezer Syme, David’s brother older by two years, were ordained ministers who had turned to journalism. Ebenezer was an editorial assistant and journalist with the English *Westminster Review* from July 1851 to March 1853 before sailing to Melbourne.²⁰ These ex-clergymen provided the journalistic talent that was necessary to enable the *Age* to continue but not the funds sufficient to ensure its financial viability. In 1856, collapse seemed once again inevitable. Ebenezer Syme came to the rescue, buying the business comprising the *Age*, its two companion weeklies (the *Weekly Age* and the *Leader*) and the printing machinery for £2,000 at auction on 6 June. With no reserve funds of his own, he had borrowed the money and taken on a mortgage.²¹ An idealist with a gift for words, he had a reckless streak and no head for business. This did not bode well for the future of the *Age*.

At this point, David Syme came onto the scene and, through the rest of the 1850s, played a small part in the struggling *Age* enterprise. At 29, he had no particular occupational credentials.²² As a young man in Scotland, and influenced by his older brothers, he had attended classes in a dissenting religious academy. In 1848 (the year of revolutions) and 1849, he had travelled on the Continent and expanded his mental horizons. He then worked as a proofreader on a Glasgow newspaper until attracted to the gold mines of California in 1851 and the Victorian goldfields in 1852. He

prospected on the central and northeast goldfields with some success but, when unable to obtain redress after a promising claim was jumped, became disillusioned with mining. In 1856, he was ready for other employment.

Of potential but not immediate significance for the *Age*, David Syme became Ebenezer's business partner, the agreement recorded on a scrap of paper signed by both men, dated 26 September 1856, and announced in the *Age* of the following day.²³ Who suggested it, and why, is not recorded. David had been on the payroll since August at £5 per week and later testimony of a co-worker conveys that his systematic and thorough assistance in the *Age* office was extremely valuable.²⁴ But it was not affordable and his presence there lasted only to the end of 1856, although in the later 1850s he received a couple of small casual payments for unspecified work. Leaving the *Age* in 1857, he set up his own business as a public works contractor, tendering successfully for the badly needed construction and repair of roads and bridges in the developing colony and demonstrating that, unlike Ebenezer, he had a very good business head.²⁵ It is likely, but unverifiable, that he contributed some funds to the struggling 'E. & D. Syme' (the new *Age* imprint) enterprise.

In the late 1850s, the profits for E. & D. Syme were small and much of the purchase loan was still to be repaid.²⁶ To make matters worse, in 1856 Ebenezer Syme stood for and was elected MLA in the first parliament of 'responsible government' and thus had to divide his time between the *Age* office and the new (uncompleted) parliament building. Unsurprisingly, the quality of the journalism deteriorated, seen in leaders and reports that were obviously written in haste and unrevised. That the *Age* survived may seem miraculous. However, it retained a core readership, enough circulation to exist, because it expounded policies that resonated with the goldrush generation now seeking to leave the goldfields and settle down in the colony. These diggers wanted land made available and opposed any signs of governmental repression. Moreover, there was some further backroom Syme family assistance when brother-in-law John Gourlay, in Scotland a warehouseman, arrived with wife Margaret (elder sister to Ebenezer and David) in late 1857 and began employment in the *Age* counting house (office). Loyal and reliable, he would become paymaster and hold the position until 1894.²⁷

The situation of the *Age* became even more precarious in 1860. Ebenezer Syme, who had been unwell for some time, clearly was dying. David abruptly gave up his contracting business and took charge at the

Age office. Ebenezer died on 13 March from tuberculosis. Ten days later, the *Age* announced that David would conduct the business on behalf of himself and Ebenezer's widow, Jane, and their families. This decision was not easy, David later wrote, particularly because his contracting business was challenging, profitable and enjoyable.²⁸ But it was probably the line of least resistance. There were now two families to support. David, who married in 1858, had one child, with another to be born later in the year; Jane had five children aged between three and eleven. David acknowledged a moral, if not strictly legal, duty to his late brother and business partner. He and Jane negotiated a partnership agreement whereby they had equal shares in the business but he retained control. Returning in 1862 to England with her children, Jane was regularly sent remittances and reports by Syme (as David Syme will here be called henceforth).

Syme's major role in the rise of the *Age* began in 1860. Becoming a journalist by accidental necessity rather than intention, he threw himself into the job. (Journalist in relation to Syme means newspaper producer, rather than writer or editor; rarely did he write for the *Age* or the other publications in the *Age* stable.) He controlled every aspect of the business, from editorial to financial to technical, during this partnership with Jane (later there would be some delegation). He built on Ebenezer's reformist approach and policy agenda. A new element was the advocacy of protective tariffs. He was not, however, 'the father of protection', as biographer Pratt had designated him; tariff measures had been expounded years earlier by the owner-publisher-editor of the *Geelong Advertiser*, James Harrison, the matter having been raised by farmers on the Bellarine Peninsula.²⁹ But Syme saw it as essential to Victoria's economic development, and the issue became a central political contention.

Besides directing the policy of the *Age*, during his first five or so years in charge, Syme was learning the ropes, repaying the loan (accomplished by September 1862) and experimentally launching two additional newspapers: the weekly *Farmers' Journal* in 1860 and the monthly *Australian News for Home Readers* the following year. While the former was soon incorporated into the *Weekly Age*, it brought a highly relevant focus on agricultural information (if men were to have land, they needed to know how to work it). In 1867, the latter became the *Illustrated Australian News*, one of the best and by far the longest lasting of the 19th-century Australian illustrated newspapers. Both ventures helped raise the status of the parent daily.

Figures are not available for these years but indications are that the *Age* circulation gradually rose. Syme had worked himself to exhaustion and become alarmingly unwell by the end of 1865. At this point, the newspaper business might have folded, except for some valuable family help. Syme's brother, George, six years older and also a clergyman turned journalist, migrated to Melbourne, arriving with wife and young son in September 1863, and joined the E. & D. Syme staff soon after. Syme took restorative leave, placing George in charge during his absence from March to December 1866.³⁰ (Later George would be editor of the *Leader*, until retiring in 1884.³¹) While brother and brother-in-law would be concerned to look after Syme's interests, it is apparent from reports of Syme's send-off that there was also an *esprit de corps* amongst the employees, who respected and wished him well.³²

Syme made six overseas trips to Britain (1866, 1871, 1876, 1881, 1887, 1892). Some were via the United States; sometimes he was alone, sometimes with wife Annabella and children. While all excursions were beneficial for his persistently troublesome health, there were many other benefits. He had time to think and write during the long ship voyages (between 1870 and 1903, four weighty articles and four books would be published) and to make contact with publishers in London. He followed up his keen interest in matters of livestock, crops and agriculture generally. He visited relatives—English-born Annabella's and, until 1876, also his sister-in-law Jane to negotiate partnership matters. Always, and most importantly, he made press contacts, put himself in touch with trends and developments, and gleaned ideas to apply on his return to Melbourne.

Syme returned invigorated from his trip in 1866. The year 1867 was the start of a period of initiatives on many fronts, amounting in hindsight to what appears to be a systematically planned program but may have been in part *ad hoc* moves as circumstances indicated and opportunities offered. In any case, there was a huge investment in development. He was able to devote energies to this because he had the good fortune, and perhaps conscious good judgment, to employ James Harrison early in 1867. With a wealth of experience in running the *Geelong Advertiser* for many years, Harrison had come to Melbourne to pursue his scientific interests but needed a steady income. An unsung saviour, unmentioned in Syme's memoirs and virtually ignored by biographers, he became editor of the *Age* and science journalist for the *Leader*.³³ That he was also a mentor, source of advice and organiser of office routines is apparent from his employer's

extreme dismay when Harrison left in 1873 to take an experimental frozen meat shipment to England.

Syme's first move on his return was to lower the price of the *3d Age*. This was to attract readers and advertisers away from the *Herald*, which had become a penny paper in 1863. It was done in two stages: to 2d on 1 January 1867, then to 1d on 1 June 1868, citing the example of English provincial papers. His next was to eliminate altogether the *Herald's* morning daily competition by buying out the business in November 1868 when, fortuitously, it was in financial trouble, and turning it into an evening paper in January 1869. Although he used one of his employees as a front (named as the purchaser) he failed to disguise his involvement and news soon leaked out.³⁴ Another morning paper, the *Daily Telegraph*, was soon started by disaffected *Herald* employees, but was never remotely a threat to the *Age*. With the purchase of the *Herald* came the companion monthly *Illustrated Melbourne Post*. It was strong competition for the *Illustrated Australian News*, and promptly discontinued by Syme. He disposed of the evening *Herald* two years later. Another consolidation of the newspaper stable was the incorporation of the *Weekly Age* into the *Leader* in September 1868, making more rational use of resources and strengthening the rural component of the latter.

These moves indeed boosted the *Age* circulation. On 13 July 1869, the *Age* announced that circulation had risen from 13,000 to 14,500 in a mere six weeks. But, by 1871, when it was 16,000, the printing machines had reached capacity output and Syme was looking to import state-of-the-art rotary printing technology for mass production. In 1866, he had got wind of such developments, which the London *Times* adopted in 1868 with its 'Walter' machine. In 1871, he travelled again to Britain, where he inspected 'Victory' machines operating in several English and Scottish newspaper offices and ordered one from the Liverpool manufacturer. Though it was installed in 1872, many technical problems had to be resolved before it was in working order but Syme's persistence and tenacity were evident in his attention to even tiny details.³⁵ This is apparent from the correspondence copied into the office letterbook that he began to keep on his return in 1871—whether suggested to him in Britain, or by Harrison, or because he now saw the necessity of keeping track of transactions. By no means all of his outgoing correspondence was copied into the six letterbooks in existence, however: apparently only those items that he anticipated might be needed for later reference.³⁶

By introducing the rotary press, Syme set a lead and example to be followed shortly by several other newspaper offices in Australia and New Zealand. With his first Victory press eventually in good working order, he purchased two more in the 1870s. The average daily circulation of the *Age* rose as desired and planned for—it was 20,027 in December 1873, 32,000 in February 1878.³⁷ This increase coincided with the rise to political power of the liberal reformist faction led by Graham Berry, with the strong support of the *Age*.

With the means to produce, in whatever numbers demanded, a penny paper that gave voice to a popular political line, Syme turned his attention to the content of the *Age*. One attraction introduced to synchronise with the announcement in April 1872 of the new means of production was an instalment of serial fiction in the Saturday issue. The *Age* was the first Australian daily to feature this (weeklies had done so for some years). Corresponding with agents and contacts in London, Syme was personally and centrally involved in finding the right novel to launch the feature.³⁸ Although he was not entirely happy with the first novel procured for serialisation—Mary Braddon's bestselling *To the Bitter End*—it proved a popular choice. He was beaten by the weekly *Australasian* in procuring local rights to serialise the latest Anthony Trollope and George Eliot novels but was pleased to secure Trollope's novella, *Harry Heathcote of Gangoil*, set in Australia, as the second serial. While he appears to have handed over responsibility for selection once the feature was established, he continued to monitor sources of supply and suitability of titles. Serial fiction, mostly the latest novels by English authors, but occasionally works by Australian novelists, notably Ada Cambridge, continued to be a strong and appealing feature of Saturday's *Age*.

Another element of content to which Syme gave particular attention was the supply of English and European news dispatched from London. He corresponded with, commissioned and issued instructions to contributors for the supply of columns to augment the regular 'News by the Mail' feature sourced from the monthly mailboat. Amongst the great tribe of overseas journalists whom he recruited as *Age* contributors during his management were two men he knew well and relied on heavily, as his letters to them attest. One was George Levey, who provided much of the 'London Letter' copy from 1873 to 1900. He edited and part-owned the *Herald* before Syme's 1868 purchase; from 1870, he had fixed-term appointments with a

succession of international exhibitions, chiefly as Victorian representative.³⁹ In between, he was usually based in London and available to Syme. The other was Harrison, who settled in London after the failure of his frozen meat trial and, from 1874 to 1892, sent a vast quantity of journalism on a wide range of subjects, many to make known, if not glorify, the extent, natural features, resources and technological developments of the expanding British Empire.⁴⁰

Syme also worked hard to make optimum use of speedy if terse communication from London. The cable connection from Great Britain and the north-south overland line through the Australian continent were finally completed and became operational in October 1872. To be inferred from letterbook copies of his correspondence on the subject and from correspondence between the *Argus* proprietors in England and their representative in Melbourne, Syme tried but failed in 1871 to have the *Age* accepted as a partner in the *Argus–Sydney Morning Herald* combination. This partnership had been formed in anticipation of the telecommunications link and a deal done with Reuters to supply the Australian colonies with a cable news service.⁴¹ While forced at first to subscribe to this Australian Press Association, he also worked to set up a supplementary source of supply for the *Age*, eventually recruiting the proprietors of the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* and the *South Australian Advertiser* as partners to provide a service in competition with the APA (also known as AAP). He was active in finding competent cable correspondents, journalist Philip Mennell proving the most satisfactory. Launched in 1877, the *Age–Daily Telegraph–South Australian Advertiser* service would be used by an increasing number of Australian newspapers and expanded, until amalgamating with the APA in September 1895 to form the United Cable Association, thus restricting Reuters to a minor role as a supplier of cable news to the Australian press.⁴²

After his successful exertions across all areas of management, Syme's workload was eased in 1878, when his nephew, Joseph (son of Ebenezer and Jane), became his junior partner.⁴³ Joseph had worked in the counting house of his uncle's firm since 1868, taken on at his mother's urging. After difficult, protracted negotiations with Jane, complicated by her remarriage and further progeny, Syme bought her out of the 50–50 partnership and Joseph bought in with a 25 per cent share. He was to oversee the business and technical side, Syme to manage the editorial and literary, to direct policy, and virtually have the final say on everything. The start of a new era was signalled when the newspaper business moved to new, grand,

purpose-built premises. Syme engaged leading architect Joseph Reed to design this adornment to the heart of Collins Street, the 'fashionable business area' of the city.⁴⁴

With an eye for talent, Syme was well served by the journalists he recruited. For several years in the early 1870s, Arthur Windsor contributed leaders for the *Age* before joining the regular staff and becoming editor until his retirement in 1900.⁴⁵ While not a skilled manager of people and routines, he was erudite, discerning, at ease with Syme's policies and a journalistic tower of strength. Further substantial and valuable journalism was provided by Charles Pearson, educationist, historian and politician educator, politician and writer, who was nearing 50 when he began to write for the *Age* in 1878. He contributed until his death in 1894.⁴⁶ Alfred Deakin also became a contributor in 1878.⁴⁷ At first Syme was a mentor to the young man; later the two became lifelong friends. That he was instrumental in having his protégé enter politics also gave him a conduit to the corridors of power, Victorian and, from 1901, federal.

Transforming the *Age* into a newspaper of Australian and international standing, Syme in the 1880s extended overseas coverage beyond Britain and Europe to the United States and to areas of Oceania being eyed by imperial powers. That these were his initiatives is clear from his correspondence. He obtained firsthand reports about farming and irrigation in the United States by sending *Leader* agricultural editor John Dow (also an MLA and thus another political connection) in 1883 and again in 1885 (this time accompanying the Victorian royal commission on irrigation). In 1883 and again in 1884, when New Guinea was becoming a territory of interest to imperial powers, he dispatched exploratory expeditions, the first led by adventurer George Morrison (later to have a stellar career as the London *Times* China correspondent), the second by hothead shipmaster John Strahan. Both ventures came to grief and were aborted, providing some arresting copy but not the findings intended. More productively, if less dramatically, he lined up correspondents to report from other areas of colonising interest in the region, in particular New Caledonia and New Hebrides.

Melbourne's boom of the 1880s was boom time for the *Age*, which increased dramatically in size to carry not only more journalism but a vast amount of advertising copy related to land speculation and property development. Printing demands were met by replacing the sturdy Victory machines (sold off to smaller outfits) with more powerful ones from the

American firm of Richard Hoe.⁴⁸ Profits soared, reaching an extraordinary peak in 1888, the year of the Melbourne International Centennial Exhibition, where an impressive display in the Victorian Court lauded the achievements of the *Age*.⁴⁹

By contrast, the first half of the 1890s saw the onset of economic depression in Melbourne and the demise of two of its daily newspapers—the *Daily Telegraph* in May 1892 and the *Evening Standard* in October 1894. If this might be thought favourable to the *Age*, the *Argus* price reduction to 1d on 1 April 1893 was less so. The average daily circulation of the *Age* was 101,346 early in 1892 but no further figures appear to have been provided until 1906, which prompts the conjecture that they levelled off or even declined for a time.⁵⁰ The *Age* weathered the storm, however, albeit with greatly diminished profits and a series of personal setbacks for Syme.⁵¹

After 1889, the partnership with Joseph deteriorated from unpleasantness into unworkability and was acrimoniously dissolved in 1891, Syme buying out Joseph for a very substantial sum.⁵² From November 1892 to July 1896 (traceable through reports in issues of the *Age* and *Argus* for the period), Syme was preoccupied with defending, eventually with success, a suite of libel actions for huge damages over criticisms of extravagance and waste brought by Chief Railways Commissioner Richard Speight and by other offended parties riding this litigious bandwagon. But, on the positive side, Syme was planning for a new generation of staff and managers and, turning 70 in 1897, giving thought to his own succession. To the position vacated by Joseph he appointed his eldest son, Herbert, who had been on the payroll for over ten years. He also took on his youngest sons: in 1893, Geoffrey as a reporter; in 1896, Oswald in the counting house.⁵³ He recruited a cadre of promising young men as reporters and leader-writers to complement and later to succeed the older generation of tried and tested staff. Published memoirs and reminiscences by some members of the new breed convey easy camaraderie amongst them and a somewhat awed distance from their respected and admired boss.⁵⁴

Syme's last major innovations for the newspaper business were in the late 1890s, one of which was the introduction in 1897 of linotype machines to replace letter-by-letter typesetting by an army of compositors.⁵⁵ The *Age* was not a frontrunner in adopting this technology, for the *Herald* had done so in 1895 and the *Argus* in 1896, and it was probably Herbert, rather than his father, who initiated and superintended it at the *Age*. It was Syme, however, who dealt personally with the redundancies of scores of

his employees—finding them other jobs or giving bonuses or, for older men of long service, pensions.⁵⁶ In line with welfare measures then being advocated under the ‘New Protection’ policy of the *Age* and the government of George Turner, but a radical departure from usual business practice, this set an example that was praised in the Australian printing trade journal.⁵⁷ The other achievement was the enlargement of the *Age* premises, begun in 1898 and completed the following year. The adjacent site in Collins Street was purchased and leading architect Robert Hyndman (who had trained under Joseph Reed) was commissioned.⁵⁸ The classical appearance of the façade, now doubled in size, was preserved, while atop the building was a statue of beaten copper—the mythological messenger god, Mercury, slayer of the god Argus of 100 eyes (said to be Syme’s only known joke).

Syme took a prominent part in the politics and celebrations leading up to Federation, but his personal attempts to influence the course of events thereafter, in particular through his association with Deakin, were less effectual. Conversely, it was more often that Deakin sought to influence Syme in order to have certain views advocated in the *Age*.⁵⁹ In the early years of the 20th century, Syme was withdrawing from direct control of his newspapers and preoccupied with his other interests. He wrote a last book, *The Soul: A Study and an Argument*, expounding a scientific basis for immortality, published in 1903. He devoted much attention to his several farms, two managed by sons Francis and Oswald (who had given up newspaper work), and to other real estate interests. He initiated and supervised a property development project, Melbourne Mansions, another architectural contribution to Collins Street.⁶⁰ In 1905, he appointed son Geoffrey his secretary to assist with all his business affairs, including newspaper management.⁶¹ He became seriously ill in 1907 and died from oesophageal cancer on 14 February 1908, aged 80.⁶²

Of Syme’s legendary political influence, John La Nauze has suggested that possibly ‘Syme did not always create waves but rode on their crests’.⁶³ Whatever the truth of this, as newspaper manager, he was undoubtedly the agent in elevating the *Age* from an arguably inconsequential rag to a mass-circulating power in the land, its rise paralleling that of Melbourne. Taking control in 1860, he brought stability. From 1867 to the late 1870s, by stages he cleverly captured the largest market share for his *Age*. Thereafter he helped make the *Age* a newspaper of international standing and had a dominant role in the emerging Australian press network—taking the initiative in joint ventures with ideologically akin newspapers, and co-

operating with competing concerns when convenient. Geoffrey Serle has written that the peak of *Age* power occurred in the 1890s.⁶⁴ If so, this may be credited to Syme's achievements in the decades preceding. Although still at the helm in the 90s, he was no longer the driving force, having already set standards, gathered a good staff and established momentum.

Syme had the right qualities to play this key role in elevating the *Age* and turning great profits for his newspaper business—tenacity, clear-sightedness, thinking outside the square. He was a keen man of business, a shrewd judge of staff and contributors, and had a good sense of how to shape his newspaper not only to influence but also to edify and appeal to readers. And, crucially, he had fortunate circumstances and strong personal support. Victoria in the later 19th century was good for newspapers. Syme's situation of on-the-spot overall control over a long period of time is unusual if not unique for an Australian metropolitan daily of the time. For the critical period from the late 1860s through the 1870s, the *Argus* proprietors were in England, exercising control but out of touch with the Melbourne scene and bedevilled in communication by the tyranny of distance, while the *Herald*, also with an expatriate owner for a time, fell on financial hard times and had a series of proprietors. Syme's dictatorial position and manner may have been resented, but those who experienced it generally respected him and followed his constructive if autocratic bidding.

If Syme's competent team of employees and contributors resulted from his good judgment, the help from his family was largely from chance. Brother Ebenezer left a legacy of promising policy direction. Brother George and brother-in-law John Gourlay were useful examples of loyalty in the ranks, as well as competent in their own spheres of work. Although nephew Joseph was a mixed blessing, for several years he enabled his uncle to focus on his editorial and literary domain at a time when this was critical to broadening the *Age* content. Syme was fortunate in having produced several sons, two of whom he groomed for senior positions, Geoffrey in due course becoming managing editor. Syme's wife, Annabella, provided a stable domestic environment and was a close confidante and companion. More than a family business, as were many newspapers of the time, Syme's had the makings of a press dynasty that would endure to the late 20th century, producing a newspaper that would outlast it into the 21st.

NOTES

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THE SECOND GENERATION: GEOFFREY SYME, MANAGING EDITOR OF THE *AGE*, 1908–42

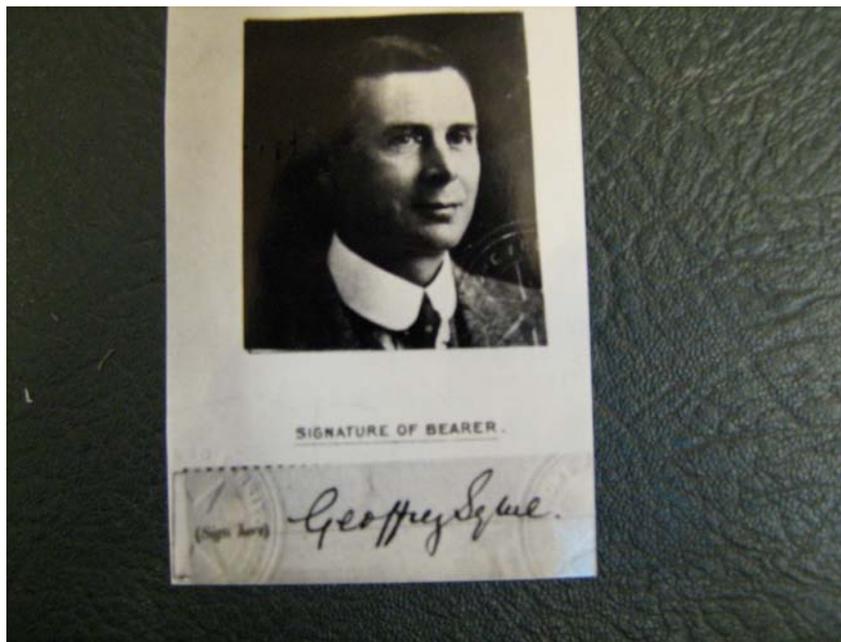
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Abstract

*Melbourne spawned three newspaper dynasties: the Symes, the Mackinnons and the Murdochs. While the first generation of each of them has been well studied, historians have left the second generation of the Symes and Mackinnons largely untouched. This article focuses on Geoffrey Syme, who became managing editor of the *Age* after his father David Syme's death in 1908. It provides a brief sketch of the man, describes the editorial legacy he inherited from his father and how he developed it, and briefly compares him with his counterpart at the *Argus*, Captain Lauchlan Mackinnon.**

THE COLONIAL NEWSPAPERMAN Edward Wilson and his longtime rival, David Syme, have garnered much attention from historians interested in their comparative influence and contributions to political discourse during Victoria's formative years. The discussion has largely concentrated on the question of how authentically liberal Wilson's *Argus* was, especially set against Syme's *Age*.¹ Geoffrey Serle defined the terms of the debate with his perceptive commentary on Wilson's ambivalent outlook, which, he wrote, ranged from 'staunch democrat' to worried élitist: 'The problem of the day was "conservatising democracy"'.² However, there appears to be little argument among scholars that it was not Wilson, but Lauchlan Mackinnon, co-owner of the *Argus* after 1852,

* The author wishes to thank Veronica Condon for permission to quote from her mother's letter to John Curtin, and for permission to quote her unpublished essay.



Geoffrey Syme, passport photograph, 1918
Syme Family Papers, SLV

who was principally responsible for transforming the paper into a more conservative Melbourne masthead. Denis Cryle has charted Mackinnon's ascendancy after the 1860s, observing that his management style was based on 'economic and business principles rather than on the reformist politics and populist liberalism which had been the hallmark of Wilson's editorial years'. Cryle notes that Mackinnon, by grooming his cousin (and namesake) to succeed him, established 'a pattern of conservative newspaper management' that produced an editorial identity based on 'profit and prestige'.³ By the end of the 19th century, the paper had descended into 'abject Toryism', the journalist Montague Grover noted with wry hyperbole, calling its political outlook 'almost medieval'.⁴

The *Age*, meantime, still led by the dominating figure of 'King David', continued the progressive stance with which it had been identified since its founding in 1854. Syme made his newspaper a locus in the public sphere where the agendas of various groups—workers, wealthy manufacturers, and social reformers—converged:

He spoke simultaneously, and at the time without necessary inconsistency, for the ex-miners and immigrants without property, for the small farmer and for the industrialist—groups whose interests were sufficiently united at that period to justify the common label, “democratic” or “liberal” ... [F]or a generation and more in Victorian history the interests of these groups were largely identical; and the common factor was nationalism, the desire to create a political and economic society which should be something more than an extension of the English home-market.⁵

This agenda came to be known as Deakinism, after its leading advocate, Alfred Deakin, chief protégé of Syme and three times prime minister in the first decade of Federation. It was an antipodean strain of New Liberalism, a late-19th-century variant of English liberalism that had at its heart a vision of citizens bound to an ethical state in mutual obligation: the fair go, as Australians called it.⁶ As well as espousing national economic and social development, Deakinism promulgated meliorist and redistributive measures such as the old-age pension and industrial arbitration. It reached its most idiosyncratic expression in the policy of New Protection, by which the state intended to extend protective tariffs to industry in return for fair wages and conditions for workers.

Such then were the editorial legacies handed down to the second-generation proprietors of the *Argus* and *Age*, men who were part of family dynasties but who interested the historians much less than had their famous fathers and uncles (let alone the men of the Murdoch dynasty). Two of them in particular deserve further study, given their influence over their newspaper’s style and development: at the *Argus*, Captain Lauchlan Mackinnon, general manager from 1920 to 1934; at the *Age*, Geoffrey Syme, fourth son of David, and managing editor from 1908 until 1942.

Syme was his father’s designated successor at the editorial helm of the family business and controlled the newspaper’s policy until he died. Though the subject of a judicious entry by Geoffrey Serle in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, he has been overlooked by the major historians of the Australian press and makes only a minor appearance in historical studies of Australian liberalism, mainly in the work of J.A. La Nauze and John Rickard, who both identified him as a short-lived member of a Liberal Party organisation set up in 1909 to support Alfred Deakin’s prime ministership.⁷

This article serves as a biographical sketch of the man and an introduction to the political and editorial legacy he inherited from his

father and developed as his own. It also briefly compares the style and social standing of Syme and Captain Mackinnon.

A Second-generation Syme

Geoffrey Syme is a contradictory figure in 20th-century Australian history, the publisher of a leading Australian newspaper famous for its aggressive political commentary, yet a private man whose personal vision of the world and politics is not easy to discover, let alone assess. While his father wrote several books of political economy and philosophy, and commissioned a biography of himself that outlined his own view of his public influence, the younger Syme published nothing significant under his own name during his lifetime, and his personal papers, with the exception of some letterbooks in the State Library of Victoria, are privately held by his descendants.⁸

Geoffrey Syme's long stewardship of the *Age* over more than three decades was the central fact of his existence, the central statement of his life's work, as his widow Violet attested after kidney disease and overwork killed him in the anxious year 1942. 'His only wish was to serve Australia through the "Age" and to uphold the example set by his father', Lady Syme wrote to Prime Minister John Curtin in response to his official condolences.⁹

'Son of a famous father', the Melbourne *Herald* said of Syme in his obituary. 'It was characteristic of the part he played in Melbourne journalism that through his long association with leadership of the *Age* he was comparatively little in the public eye.'¹⁰ His dislike of the public spotlight was in marked contrast to the newspaperman who dominated Melbourne journalism in the period, the *Herald's* publisher, Keith Murdoch, and helps explain why Geoffrey Syme is not as well known to history as he should be, especially by comparison with Murdoch.

A more substantial portrait is possible. The papers of Alfred Deakin and Deakin's son-in-law, Herbert Brookes, provide significant insights into both the man and his politics. As well, members of the Syme family and journalists who worked for him have written about him. His youngest daughter, Veronica Condon, in addition to her unpublished biographical essays, has recently created a substantial web resource dedicated to her father's history and the history of his time at the *Age*.¹¹ Most significantly, there are the pages of the *Age* itself. They constitute the major primary source for research into Geoffrey Syme's political and social attitudes.

In an era when politics was polarising between the Labor and non-Labor parties, Geoffrey Syme perpetuated the apparent inconsistencies of

19th-century liberalism. A man might be the owner—as Syme was—of a fine mansion at Kew, a two-storey house on the beachfront at Mordialloc, and a farm in the Yarra Valley, set on land of which the Wurundjeri people had been dispossessed half a century beforehand;¹² his daughters might be raised—as Syme’s eldest daughters were—in the indulged circles of Melbourne society in the 1920s, their lives a round of balls, race weeks, and golf and ski-ing parties;¹³ and he might own one of the country’s best known newspapers—as Syme effectively did. Yet, if he was Geoffrey Syme, he went to his office every day except Sunday, and ordered up an editorial reflecting his liberal views—striking a blow for responsible trade unionism (a major theme), defending the machinery of industrial arbitration, or celebrating the political commonsense of the average Victorian voter in the face of the ‘power of the Tammany machines’.¹⁴

From David in the 1880s to Geoffrey in the 1930s, the Symes saw no discrepancy between their privileged situations in life and what Macintyre describes as ‘the larger programme that was liberalism ... a march of material and moral progress, prosecuted in the name of the people and portrayed as conferring universal benefit through the enhancement of individual liberty’.¹⁵ In this code of liberalism, one illuminated by Anthony Arblaster’s analysis of property’s intrinsic relationship to liberalism, there was at root no contradiction between possessing immense personal wealth and promulgating a social liberal program; it was an item of faith with such liberals that any man of ability (and the use of the masculine form is deliberate) could become the author of his own material and social success, given shelter and food, education and opportunity.¹⁶

It was not the poor but those wealthy men who were not prepared to share the opportunities the new country offered that offended David Syme. His newspaper’s columns attacked grasping landowners and successful capitalists who countenanced the exploitation of the less advantaged in order to feather their own nests. When he died, his estate was sworn for probate at £880,000 and put in trust for his children and their heirs.¹⁷ Along with the wealth they inherited, the younger Symes acquired an understanding that the family’s liberal traditions separated them from most other sons and daughters of the rich. According to family lore, David even forbade his children ever to set up residence in Toorak, presumably because it was the resort of the governor of Victoria and the squatters, merchants, Tory members of the Legislative Council and others whom he

had identified as the enemy in his long struggle to win representation for the workingman.¹⁸

Whether or not Syme in fact raised this prohibition, it was not a sustainable *modus vivendi* for subsequent generations of the dynasty, who through their wealth and family connections, automatically became part of established Melbourne. Inevitably, the second and third generations counted among their intimate and broader acquaintance many denizens of Toorak and mingled with the ‘capital-e’ establishment at club and committee table.

The contrasts between Geoffrey Syme and his counterpart at the *Argus* are discernible, though subtle. Captain Mackinnon, the third member of the clan to lead the *Argus*, became general manager of the paper after serving in France in the 1914–18 war with the Royal Army Service Corps. He resided in Toorak, in a turreted mansion on Orrong Road, and motored to and from the office in a chauffeur-driven Rolls Royce.¹⁹ A longstanding member of the ultra-establishment Melbourne Club, he was well known there as a blackballer.²⁰ He was also associated with the Melbourne Polo Club. For sport, he ‘rode to hounds, was an outstanding polo player and a prominent race horse owner’.²¹ He was a professional newspaperman but his lifestyle encapsulated the motif described by Cryle: ‘profit and prestige’.

Geoffrey Syme was also a sporting man. He drove himself to work by car, in later years a black sports Bentley, which he parked at the Eastern Market.²² Like Mackinnon, he enjoyed horse racing, but his tastes were otherwise less élitist. In his youth, he was an aficionado of the football pitch not the polo field and, in middle age, enjoyed a round of golf with his brothers, old friends such as W.S. Robinson, or members of the *Age*’s golf team.²³

David Syme’s sons were active members of the Athenaeum Club, which their father, a founding member, had enthusiastically supported in opposition to the ‘soft-headed flunkeys’ of privilege and illiberal-ism who frequented the Melbourne Club a few doors up the road at the top of Collins Street. Geoffrey Syme joined the Athenaeum in 1905 and, over the years, was often there. Photographs of its honour boards that appear in Pacini’s history of the club show Syme as a winner or place-getter in its annual billiards contests in 1907, 1916, 1920, 1922, 1923, 1931 and 1932.²⁴

The Athenaeum’s membership included many influential Deakinite and post-Deakinite liberals, from politicians such as W.A. Watt and Donald Mackinnon to their political supporters in business and the pastoral industry. The club was riddled with members of the Collins House group,

a network of mining magnates and financiers associated with Watt.²⁵ This intermingling of interests made the Athenaeum a natural base of Liberal political operations and a source of political intelligence, but it was also somewhere that the managing editor of the *Age* could relax with close friends such as distinguished radiologist Herbert Hewlett, Syme's longstanding rival at the billiards table.²⁶

More unexpectedly, Syme was from 1912 (four years after his father's death) a member of the establishment Australian Club in William Street, a popular base for the land agents, lawyers, judges and stockbrokers whose chambers and premises were at the western end of the city.²⁷ There he liked to lunch with his friend W.H. 'Billy' Williams, a County Court judge remembered with affection for his bluff humour.²⁸ Contrary to public perception, Syme had a wide acquaintance. To portray him simply as a minor version of a formidable, forbidding father is wrong.

David Syme's reputation was that of a rugged individualist and isolate. But though his difficult early family circumstances in Scotland and his immigrant struggles had undoubtedly shaped the front that he presented to the world—'grim experiences had made him grim', as Deakin put it—his own children, especially the younger ones, grew up in prosperous, relatively happy circumstances.²⁹

Geoffrey was the second youngest son, born in 1873. He was educated at Kew High School (a private college near the family home) and at the University of Melbourne, though he did not complete the arts degree in which he enrolled, instead starting work at the *Age* in 1893. In 1901, his father sent him to England to learn more about the newspaper business, and there he met his bride. Syme married into a British family, the Garnetts, more distinguished than his own antipodean family but not unlike it (in fact, related to his mother).³⁰ Politics, literary culture, business and property mingled comfortably in the family concerns.³¹

Violet Addison Garnett was the great-granddaughter of Thomas Garnett, a wealthy cotton miller.³² Her father, who followed his father and grandfather into textile manufacturing and local politics, was a Tory; he became mayor of Clitheroe, Lancashire, and chairman of the Clitheroe Conservative Club.³³ One of Thomas Garnett's brothers was Jeremiah Garnett, an early editor of the *Manchester Guardian*.³⁴ This paper had immense New Liberal prestige by the time Geoffrey Syme met his bride but, in Garnett's era, it was Whiggish rather than radical.³⁵ By 1901, the family was best known for its contribution to British literature. Richard Garnett,

its most eminent member, was a familiar name to Australian readers as the general editor of the Library of Famous Literature, distributed here by Gordon and Gotch, and featured in *Table Talk*.³⁶ His son, Edward Garnett, mentored writers such as Conrad, Galsworthy and D.H. Lawrence.³⁷

Geoffrey Syme was 28 when he married Violet Garnett early in 1902, his bride only eighteen. To onlookers in Melbourne, this union between the embryonic newspaper magnate and his attractive, cultivated young wife must have seemed a promising departure from Syme form, for austerity and self-denial often appear in descriptions of David Syme (the young Keith Murdoch, applying to the wealthy newspaper proprietor for work, noticed with surprise that ‘he seems to wear cheap ties’).³⁸ If the *Age* was the first cornerstone of Geoffrey Syme’s life, then his relationship with Violet and their children (all girls) was the second. Herbert Brookes, writing to Syme in 1926, commented how he and his wife, Ivy, had been struck by the Symes’ ‘united contentment and mutual happiness’ during a chance encounter with them at the theatre.³⁹

Family histories suggest that Violet was more than capable as a hostess, with excellent taste and precise ideas about the right way to do things.⁴⁰ In 1923, when Geoffrey and Violet’s eldest daughter, Marjorie, married Lieutenant-Commander Geoffrey Haggard, nephew of the British novelist, Henry Rider Haggard, the guest list included names from Victorian politics such as Fraser, Best and Argyle, Toorak society names such as Winter-Irving and Grimwade, leaders of the Melbourne press, including Murdoch and Mackinnon, old families from the Western District, and prominent names from business, industry, science and sport. The nuptials at Holy Trinity Church, Kew, and the reception that followed at Blythswood, the family mansion, were reported by the *Sun News-Pictorial* in the fulsome manner in which it usually reported society weddings.⁴¹

Geoffrey Syme was an early member of the Melbourne Rotary Club, formed in 1921 by some of the city’s leading businessmen, and served on its Boys’ Work committee, which raised funds for the Boy Scouts movement.⁴² In 1928, along with other Victorian newspaper proprietors, he sat on the fund-raising committee for the construction of the Shrine of Remembrance; he also served on other committees for local good causes.⁴³ On a rare occasion, such as the visit of a leading British agricultural scientist in 1928, Geoffrey and Violet Syme could be found among the guests at a formal dinner party at Government House.⁴⁴

Yet Syme was not especially comfortable in the role of public man. Herbert Mishael, a long-serving member of the *Age* editorial staff wrote: ‘He made few public appearances, was a poor public speaker, and gave the outward show of being a stern, taciturn man’.⁴⁵ Veronica Condon noted that her father was ‘neither a scholar nor a writer’ and diffident about speaking in public. ‘If he was forced to make a speech he prepared it carefully and spoke it well. He was only really at ease in a small group.’⁴⁶ Outside the sphere of his newspaper operations, Syme rarely sought to assert his influence on public life.

Inside the newspaper’s Collins Street offices it was a different matter. Syme was just as absorbed by politics as his father had been, and expressed strong views about developing stories as well as broader editorial policy. Mishael, who briefly worked as a leader writer before being assigned other duties, reported that he had learned from personal experience that the editorial columns ‘expounded the proprietor’s point of view’.⁴⁷

Despite the gradual eclipse of Deakinism after 1913, Geoffrey Syme continued to cleave to Deakinite policies and political entities and to promote them vigorously, even as he lamented the passing of what he thought of as the middle force in politics. The *Age*’s strident attacks on the Bruce–Page government over its plans to abandon industrial arbitration in 1929, and the paper’s intermittent support for the Labor Party and for the Country Party in Victoria, can only be properly understood as part of Syme’s post-Deakinite agenda.⁴⁸

For several years, this approach repaid the paper financially. The *Age*’s circulation continued to climb after David Syme’s death, until it peaked somewhere around 151,000 in 1919.⁴⁹ Its gradual decline thereafter reflected both Keith Murdoch’s revitalisation of the Herald & Weekly Times stable and, from 1927, the onset of economic depression in Victoria. But Syme was not deterred from a Deakinite platform by the rise of popular journalism or by falling government expenditure. The paper’s editorial perspective remained remarkably consistent during his tenure, even if by the mid-30s it had developed a tired air.⁵⁰

A Second-generation Deakinite

Veronica Condon recalled her father as a man who worked hard at the *Age* office six days a week and thought almost constantly about political developments:

Each evening my father spent a considerable amount of time discussing the day's events with my mother. Their discussion was a prelude to the editorial conference the next morning. My mother had the quicker mind; she was better educated and more widely read than he was ... and had been brought up in a politically minded family ... but she was sometimes bored by the day to day Australian political life which was my father's greatest interest.⁵¹

Syme's interest in politics was instrumental and, in that, he was typical of Australian press barons. He followed the way the game was played, attempting to influence outcomes, both in party politics and in policy. The difference between him and Keith Murdoch or the Mackinnons was in the nature of his politics. Syme was not only a Deakinite but a more orthodox one than his powerful, idiosyncratic father had ever been. By 1909, his newspaper could reflect with the satisfaction of a true social liberal journal that 'the most characteristic feature about Australian legislation as a whole is its clearly indicated intention of promoting the well-being of the average individual, irrespective of sex, or age, or class'. Regardless of whether the legislation itself was successful, its aim, 'in a word ... is democratic'.⁵²

All Geoffrey Syme's editors possessed impeccable Deakinite connections. The first, Frederick Schuler, joined the paper in 1879 and became editor under David Syme in 1900. He knew Deakin well when the young politician worked as a Syme journalist; the two men continued a sporadic correspondence for years.⁵³ The second, Leonard Biggs, appointed in 1926, was an English journalist trained on the *Enfield & Middlesex Gazette*, a weekly newspaper with a liberal tradition, published on London's northern outskirts.

Biggs was a pamphleteer, publicist and activist whose thinking bore the imprint of English New Liberalism and Christian Socialism. At Hawthorn, in October 1905, he delivered a public lecture on Christian Socialism, later published in pamphlet form, in which he argued that 'Christ and His Church are not on the side of the Plutocrat, the Trust King, the man who corners wheat (or onions), the sweating shirt manufacturer, the rack-renter, but on the side of those who would so regulate society as to banish these inhuman monsters from our midst'.⁵⁴

His literacy in English liberalism proved valuable at the *Age*, where he built a successful career as a federal political roundsman, forming close relationships with various politicians including Deakin. He also worked as the *Guardian's* local correspondent.⁵⁵ He was a member of the Boobooks, a discussion club founded by Frederic Eggleston in November

1902,⁵⁶ whose progressive flavour is evident in its minutes: ‘Heine once described himself as having “herded with the Hegelians”. We Boobooks are a bit inclined that way too’.⁵⁷ The membership was a who’s who of talented young men associated with politics, literature, the law, the arts and, especially, the academy; many of them, as J.A. La Nauze put it, ‘would find some place in the history of their generation’.⁵⁸ Figures of national eminence sometimes attended as honoured guests, among them Deakin and William Jethro Brown.⁵⁹

There was a Deakinite faction in the Boobooks centred on Herbert Brookes. It included John Latham, a young barrister who was a member of the Liberal Party organisation associated with Brookes, and their mutual friend Walter Murdoch, who taught English literature at the University of Melbourne and, as ‘Elzevir’, wrote a column on ‘Books and Men’ for the *Argus*.⁶⁰

Brookes and Biggs were also friendly. The Englishman became a member of Brookes’s eccentric literary club, the T.E. Brown Society. The Biggs family occasionally holidayed with the Brookeses at their beach house near Geelong, and their children met at birthday parties.⁶¹ The two men corresponded for many years, on many topics; there are 121 letters between them in the Brookes Papers in the National Library, and the tone of many suggests that, though this was by no means a relationship of social equals, it was an enduring bond underpinned by trust.⁶² Brookes and Biggs were both zealous Protestants, and their correspondence was often tinged with the language of their Christian faith.⁶³ Brookes helped Biggs to a job with the office of the National Union. But he was outmanoeuvred there by his more conservative rival, E.H. Willis, and returned to the *Age* shortly before Schuler died and the editorship fell vacant.⁶⁴

The son of a cashier on the Great Eastern Railway, Biggs worked with great energy and application to build a successful public career, assiduously seeking speaking engagements and cultivating contacts.⁶⁵ The first history of the Savage Club summarised his connections: ‘Lay Canon in St Paul’s Cathedral, Melbourne; member of the Hawthorn City Council; authority on housing problems; member of the Melbourne Athenaeum, Royal Society of St. George, and the Melbourne Chess Club; one of the trustees of the National Art Gallery; public speaker, and radio broadcaster’. The writer, David Dow, concluded of Biggs: ‘All told, he was, perhaps, the Club’s most serious-minded Savage’.⁶⁶ (Given the club’s self-identification with Bohemianism, this seems something of a mixed report card.)

Geoffrey Syme, by contrast, did not have to perform for his high position in Melbourne's ruling cultural caste. Though an exact contemporary of Biggs, he was not a member of the Boobooks or the Brown Society or the Beefsteaks; he moved in the circles of influence rather than of ideas. Though a committed Deakinite liberal, he remained a marginal figure in Deakin's small circle of trusted political supporters in Melbourne, partly because the politician had an intensely difficult relationship with the sons of his old mentor.

An entry that Deakin made in his journal about David Syme's latter years at the helm of the *Age* suggests mutual mistrust and jealousy:

[To] make [the *Age*] the paper of Victoria was the aim of his existence—After 1900 there was a feeble pretence of making it the Federal organ of Liberalism but it was only a pretence and after a time that became plain to everyone else if not to himself—I spoke to him very plainly of the suicidal character of its narrow policy but only succeeded in annoying him and in rousing to fever heat the jealousy and rancour of his sons who had reason to remember how little he relied upon them until his age and weakness obliged him.⁶⁷

Irritation beget irritation. Herbert Brookes inherited something of his father-in-law's resentment of Geoffrey Syme, and misunderstandings between the two contemporaries flared sporadically over the years. In 1926, when Biggs was promoted to editor, Brookes wrote to him with warm congratulations, at the same time disparaging Syme for editorial arbitrariness: 'We [Brookes and his wife, Ivy] feel confident the *Age* will slowly—very slowly (I say this advisedly) but most surely become less capricious and more consistent—less destructive and more constructive—an ever richer goldmine under your direction'.⁶⁸

Against this background of fraught personal/political relationships, and given his wife's English connections, it is hardly surprising that in some ways Syme felt more comfortable with the tenor and preoccupations of British Liberal politics. He had first landed in England weeks after Queen Victoria's death in January 1901, just in time to witness the birth of the Edwardian era, a period of prosperity and optimism but also of anxiety and change. His father urged him to make the most of the political and cultural opportunities: 'You should get to know as many literary people as you can: attend lectures, hear all the prominent preachers, and acquaint yourself with the intellectual life of London'.⁶⁹

H.H. Asquith, David Lloyd George, Winston Churchill, Richard Haldane, Edward Grey—all the Liberals who would dominate prewar

British politics after their party's landslide victory in 1905—had already made their appearance on the political stage. The contagious political and intellectual mood of London in the first decade of the century is vividly described in the young Keith Murdoch's account of the eighteen months he spent in London in 1908 and 1909. Failing to find a good job in journalism, desperate to be part of things, he attended the London School of Economics, falling under the spell of L.T. Hobhouse, by then its professor of sociology. The young journalist wrote with excitement to his father about the world of ideas that was opening up to him: 'I'm learning a great deal and feel much amazed and grieved by my absolute ignorance ... Have you heard of Hobhouse and Dickenson or any of the other lecturers at the School?'⁷⁰

Whether Geoffrey Syme, twelve years Murdoch's senior, ever experienced London's intellectual attractions in the same way we have not the information to judge. Nevertheless, business and family took him to England for long periods several times during his working life, and the *Age's* editorial columns made his admiration for Asquithian liberalism clear.⁷¹

By the time Syme became managing editor of the paper, much of the foundational British social liberal legislation (including old-age pensions, workers' compensation, and legislation to regulate hours and conditions in factories and mines) was already in place or a near reality. But perhaps the biggest reform of them all remained: Lloyd George's national insurance regime, which was legislated in 1911 and added to in following decades.

Syme was an ardent admirer of the scheme, which the *Age* dubbed a 'monumental measure'.⁷² For the next three decades, the paper would continue to advocate for the Commonwealth to introduce a regime of compulsory contributory social insurance similar to the British one, including protection against unemployment, illness and death of a family's main breadwinner. The *Age's* support for this policy became an important thread in the paper's close relationship with a future prime minister, Robert Menzies.⁷³

Geoffrey Syme also sympathised with British Liberal government reforms aimed at generating revenue for progressive social measures, and the concomitant campaign to curtail the peers' power of veto in the House of Lords. In 1909, the newspaper editorialised in defence of a tax on the unimproved value of land that Lloyd George had foreshadowed, essaying that the British chancellor of the exchequer's new tax was based on 'an old and very sound argument':

[T]hat land, from its very nature, receives an exceptional increment from the growth of population. It is, he says, a property value which neither the industry nor the skill of the owner increases to anything like the same extent that is caused by the expansion of trade, the growth of other forms of wealth, and the extra demand owing to the increase of population. He held that land increment, created by the people, really belongs to the people, and should be taken by the Government.⁷⁴

This editorial, which harked back to the sentiment of David Syme's early campaign to 'unlock the lands', suggested that the newspaper supported the Liberal government then in power in Victoria⁷⁵ in its plans to introduce a land tax, comparing it favourably with the British proposal:

It [the Victorian proposal] is certain to be assailed with the same kinds of objections against a class tax that are hurled against Mr Lloyd George in England. But the reply has been made a thousand times, and never refuted—that land owners are a very special class, and that land is the one form of property more than any other which has been found convenient for wise and just taxation, simply because the citizens give to it its value, which they are justly entitled to use for their own advantage. The value created by all belongs to all, and not to a class.⁷⁶

This was doctrinaire New Liberalism and completely at odds with the Syme family's extensive interests in land and property, as well as with David Syme's earlier rejection of land tax during the years when Henry George's proposals for a single land tax competed with Syme's advocacy of tariffs.⁷⁷

Less surprising, given the newspaper's long tradition of challenging the authority and composition of the Legislative Council in Victoria, was its sympathy with Lloyd George's efforts to tame the House of Lords. 'No sane Englishman' would really argue that the second chamber could be dispensed with, the newspaper opined, but the 'weak element' of the upper house was its hereditary peers, who should be replaced by life peers.⁷⁸ Syme was a loyal British Australian, as so many of his generation were, and would heartily approve the Balfour Declaration's vision of the Dominions as 'autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status'.⁷⁹ But, following his egalitarian father, he cared little for inherited rank. Instead, the Edwardian Liberal cabinets, which were generously endowed with men who were cultivated, sound thinkers and, in Lloyd George's case especially, charismatic, provided an undeniably powerful script for Geoffrey Syme. References to Asquith's political urbanity and

Lloyd George's courage would continue to appear in the editorial columns of the *Age* for many years.⁸⁰ As late as 1939, the paper's editorials could be found extolling Lloyd George's 'valiant service' to the cause of New Liberal reform.⁸¹

Geoffrey Syme's Legacy

Geoffrey Syme was in his own way a quintessential Edwardian liberal; for all his family's wealth and property interests, he was an advocate of meliorist and redistributive measures in a doctrinaire New Liberal and Deakinite mould. Political change, economic depression and war tested the *Age* and the relevance of its liberal ideology but Syme remained loyal to his old allegiances and political sympathies.

In 1941, very late in life, he accepted a knighthood sponsored by Prime Minister Menzies.⁸² The announcement of this award he celebrated quietly at home, surrounded by his family and by the editors and senior journalists who had played their roles in perpetuating and developing his father's liberal vision for the *Age*.⁸³ Imperial honours were something that his father and Deakin had disdained, associating them with patronage. But times had changed and Syme perhaps was anxious about his legacy at the *Age*. He had no sons to follow him into the editorial leadership of the paper. His younger brother, Oswald Syme, a farmer with some administrative experience at the *Age*, would pick up the reins of the newspaper business. The editorial leadership would fall to Geoffrey Syme's last editor, Harold Campbell. But the world was in the midst of a gigantic conflict, one that would consume the remnants of empire, challenge Australia's security and national identity, and ultimately produce a new world order. As he pondered his advancing years and declining health, Geoffrey Syme must have wondered: Who would keep the twin torches of David Syme and traditional Australian liberalism burning? Was it even possible?

NOTES

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W.L. BAILLIEU AND THE GROWTH OF THE HERALD & WEEKLY TIMES, 1889–1931

Peter Yule

Abstract

Between 1895 and 1930, William Lawrence Baillieu built one of Australia's greatest business empires. From the 1890s he was a major shareholder in what became the Herald and Weekly Times Ltd, and the financial success of the company added greatly to his wealth. He was a major player in many of the company's critical decisions but, while he occasionally used the company's newspapers to boost his business interests, unlike many plutocrats he was primarily interested in newspaper ownership as a business venture rather than a vehicle for promoting his political views.

BETWEEN THE TWO GREAT ECONOMIC DEPRESSIONS of the 1890s and the 1930s, the Melbourne business community was dominated by the massive presence of William Lawrence Baillieu (widely known simply as 'W.L.'). In contrast to the large majority of successful businessmen whose activities were largely limited to one industry or even just one company (think Sidney Myer in retailing, Staniforth Ricketson in stockbroking or Essington Lewis at BHP), Baillieu was a major, if not the major, figure in many industries—mining and minerals processing, metals manufacturing, brewing, rubber, city, suburban and rural real estate, stockbroking, electricity, paint, banking, and newspapers. In none of these industries was he simply a passive investor—he was always a creative dynamic force, setting up new businesses, engineering takeovers and mergers, introducing new technology. The companies he founded or

took from nowhere to great heights include many of the most famous names in Australian business: the Zinc Corporation (the main ancestor of Rio Tinto), North Broken Hill, Broken Hill South, Electrolytic Zinc, Broken Hill Associated Smelters, Metal Manufactures, Carlton & United Breweries, Dunlop, the Herald & Weekly Times, E.L. & C. Baillieu stockbrokers, and Baillieu Allard real estate. He rarely acted alone, usually working either with his younger brothers, Arthur, Edward (Prince), Norman, Clive (Joe) and Maurice (Jac), or a cohort of close friends including Monty Cohen, W.S. Robinson, Herbert Hoover and Theodore Fink. The Baillieu 'brotherhood', their close associates and the companies they controlled were known as the Collins House group from their headquarters in the Baillieu-owned office block at 360 Collins Street, and, for over half a century, they epitomised Australian capitalism.¹



W.L. Baillieu in 1897
Courtesy: Baillieu Family

Born in Queenscliff in 1859, the third of sixteen children of a humble boatman of Belgian/Welsh descent and his young bride from Somerset, William Baillieu stood out from a young age through his strong physique, gifts of leadership and sharp brain. At the age of fifteen he began work at the Bank of Victoria, where he received useful training in accounting before joining the new Federal Bank in Melbourne in 1882. He resigned in 1885 to form a real estate agency in Melbourne with Donald Munro, the son of leading politician and land boomer James Munro. How Baillieu met the Munros is unclear but it was possibly through Edward Latham, the proprietor of the Carlton Brewery, with whom Baillieu had formed a close friendship at Queenscliff while still in his teens. Baillieu quickly earned a reputation as ‘the greatest auctioneer of them all’ in the mad land boom of the late 1880s that saw property prices in Melbourne soar, and he made a paper fortune investing in the land companies that sprang up as the boom peaked.²

At the height of the boom, the firm of Munro & Baillieu established a powerful position with Melbourne’s newspapers, including the *Herald*, through the sheer weight of its newspaper advertising. It was reported in September 1888 that the firm placed a single order for advertising worth £4,000, which was sufficient for the *Herald* to ‘bring out an eight page paper with profit to the proprietary, and chagrin to [its competitors]’.³ Baillieu always remained aware of the power of advertisers, and this possibly explains the favourable treatment he consistently received in the pages of most Melbourne newspapers, even those in which he had no large shareholdings. The Sydney-based *Bulletin*, where he had no advertising clout, was always his harshest critic outside of the journals of the labour movement.

Munro & Baillieu’s advertising contract with the *Herald* was signed at the absolute peak of the boom. By the early 1890s, the economy was falling rapidly into what is still the worst depression in Victorian history. In common with most of the *nouveau riche* of the 1880s, Baillieu saw his fortune melt away as quickly as it had grown and, in July 1892, he was forced to make a secret composition with his creditors, paying sixpence in the pound on his massive debts.⁴

Most ruined land boomers disappeared from sight—many fled the colony, some suicided, a few went to jail and many more lived the rest of their lives in poverty. But not W.L. Baillieu. Motivated primarily by an unusually strong sense of family responsibility and loyalty, Baillieu built

a new fortune in the 1890s, with the cash flow coming primarily from real estate and stockbroking and the real wealth from gold mining.⁵ A further important, though not central, factor in the new Baillieu fortune was his ownership of a significant percentage of the shares in the company that owned the *Herald*, Melbourne's leading evening newspaper.⁶

Baillieu's association with the *Herald* came about through his friendship with Theodore Fink, a diminutive *bon vivant* Jewish solicitor, who, like Baillieu, made and lost a fortune in the land boom; he had also acquired further notoriety through his inventive use of the secret composition clauses of the Insolvency Act to help failed land boomers escape from their debts. Baillieu's friendship with the Fink brothers dated back to the early 1880s, and Theodore's brother, Wolfe, was a groomsman at Baillieu's wedding in 1887. In May 1889, the land boom had started to decline but Baillieu and Fink still felt themselves to be wealthy men and Baillieu readily agreed to Fink's suggestion that he join him in refinancing the *Herald*.⁷

Founded in 1840, the *Herald* had struggled through a succession of owners and editors before becoming an evening newspaper in 1869. From 1871 it was run as a partnership by Samuel Winter and John Halfey. Following Halfey's death in 1889, Winter approached Theodore Fink, who fancied himself as a writer and journalist, to become a partner in the business. Fink put together a small syndicate, including Baillieu and printers A.H. Massina and Ignatius Feigl, to form the Herald and Sportsman Newspaper Company. Of the thirty £1,000 shares in the new company, Winter received nine, Fink six, and the other syndicate members three each.⁸

Baillieu became a director of the new company as the paper struggled to retain readers and advertisers. Fink wrote in his unpublished memoirs: 'The early *Herald* was a primitive concern, and directors' meetings consisted of listening to accounts of struggles and losses'. Referring to his friend, Fink observed that: 'Baillieu, although courteous to his elders, was not a classical scholar and used expressive colloquial Australianisms; he was swift to take advantage of opportunity, and even in those early and hectic days seemed sure to get on'.⁹

However, in November 1890, as the economy worsened, the directors accepted an offer to buy the company. The brave purchaser was a company called City Newspapers Co., which published two long-forgotten Melbourne newspapers, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Evening Standard*. The agreed price was £35,000 with shareholders in the *Herald* to receive £3,500 cash for every three *Herald* shares, made up of 500 fully paid £1

shares in City Newspapers and the balance in cash over three years. The purchasers made the payment due in November 1891 but, in July 1892, City Newspapers was sold to a new company, Victorian Newspaper Co., and no further payments were made. City Newspapers went into voluntary liquidation in August 1893, still owing £14,663 for the *Herald* shares.¹⁰

The failure of the purchasers to complete their payments allowed Fink and Baillieu to regain control of the *Herald* and, in fact, to take over the whole of the assets of City Newspapers and the Victorian Newspaper Co., including the profitable *Weekly Times*. The process of the recovery of the *Herald* by Fink and Baillieu has always been a mystery, with the only available account in Fink's unpublished memoirs being clearly incomplete and probably self-serving. However, Peter Gardner has gone a long way towards explaining the complicated manoeuvres of the various parties in a yet unpublished essay, although the reader must always be aware that his starting point is that Fink and Baillieu were criminal fraudsters and all their actions are judged from that point of view.¹¹ Briefly, in July 1893, Theodore Fink's law firm, Fink Best & Hall (still flourishing today as Hall & Wilcox), drew up a petition to the Supreme Court on behalf of the former *Herald* shareholders setting out the course of events and calling for City Newspapers to be placed in receivership. Two days before the petition was to be presented, an extraordinary meeting of the City Newspapers Co. agreed to wind up the company and appointed Baillieu and Andrew Lyall as liquidators. Not long after, Fink attended a board meeting of Victorian Newspaper Co. where, as he recalled in his memoirs (written in the third person):

Mr. Fink ordered the whole Board to go away, and notwithstanding the defiance of the two ringleaders, the great number of the Board wilted, and all retired. Mr. Fink practically physically turned them out and made them abandon the concern without any election or legal steps. The chief weapon he used was very effective—a personal conversation to their assembled Board as to what was going to happen in the courts on a conspiracy charge which he was going to lay.

This was no vain threat. He had Mr. Winter in attendance (they had dismissed Mr. Winter from the Editorship) and he installed him personally there and then in absolute control while they were leaving the room.¹²

It is not known whether Baillieu attended this meeting, but it seems likely. The diminutive Fink would have found a former boxing champion who towered over most of his contemporaries a useful companion on a

mission in which physical intimidation was clearly an important part of the negotiations.

Whatever the accuracy of Fink's account, during 1894 members of the original *Herald* syndicate took over the Victorian Newspaper Co. and gained control of its assets. In October 1894, the Victorian Newspaper and Evening Standard companies were wound up and the Herald & Standard Newspaper Company was formed, with Baillieu a director and substantial shareholder.

As the Victorian economy gradually recovered in the second half of the 1890s, the Herald & Standard Newspaper Co. became highly profitable, paying a dividend of 10 per cent from 1896, rising to 12.5 per cent from 1900. The share price rose steadily from under 5s in April 1895 to over 23s in June 1898. Baillieu's shareholding rose and fell over time as he traded heavily in the company's shares but, on average, he appears to have controlled about 10 per cent of the company's 100,000 shares.¹³ Typical of the man, Baillieu shared his success with his friends. He acquired shares for a London-based associate, James Cram, who wrote to him in 1899: 'I need hardly say that I am well satisfied with what you have done for me in *Heralds* ... I imagine they are about the most solid and satisfactory stock you ever handled yourself. Long may the paper flourish'.¹⁴

From the mid-1890s, Baillieu became one of the first Australian financiers to operate actively in the City of London, raising money for Australian businesses, promoting shares in Australian companies to English investors and taking advantage of arbitrage opportunities. In 1897 he travelled to England for the first time, spending six months in London, where his main focus was on selling shares in Victorian goldmining companies but he also took the opportunity to trade in *Herald* shares. Partly at least due to his success in spruiking the merits of the *Herald's* business, the share price in London rose well above the prevailing Melbourne price. Baillieu took advantage of the arbitrage opportunity, selling 5,000 shares his brother Prince (E.L. Baillieu) had secured in Melbourne at a substantial profit.¹⁵ The interest of English investors in the *Herald* led Baillieu to consider the possibility of selling the whole business in England. He held extensive discussions with potential purchasers but the proposal eventually fell through when agreement failed on some details, notably the demand that preference shares be guaranteed.¹⁶

At the same time as he was looking to sell the *Herald* in London, Baillieu also appears to have been investigating the possibility of the Herald &

Standard buying the *Age* from its powerful but ageing proprietor, David Syme. Syme, who had controlled the *Age* since the death of his brother Ebenezer in 1860, was 70 years old in 1897 and there was increasing speculation about his possible retirement. No evidence has been located about the negotiations but several letters received by Baillieu during 1897 and 1898 show that it was considered a serious proposition. One potential investor wrote in December 1897, ‘I am anxiously waiting to hear ... that you have secured the *Age* Newspaper’ and, several months later, ‘What about the *Age*? I suppose if you think of coming to London again shortly you will nurse this scheme for yourself’.¹⁷ The structure of the proposed takeover of the *Age* is not explained in these letters but it appears to have involved the purchase of the *Age* by the *Herald*, with the finance for the deal coming from English investors, who would acquire a minority interest in the business. However, there is no mention of the negotiations in David Syme’s papers and it is unclear how far they progressed.¹⁸

On Baillieu’s return from England at the end of 1897, the *Herald* published the first major interview with him to appear in any newspaper. While the ostensible theme of the interview was Baillieu’s impressions of business in the City of London, it is obvious that its real purpose was to help rehabilitate his reputation after the battering it had taken in the crash of the early 1890s. The flavour is clear from the introduction and the conclusion:

“But I don’t want to be interviewed” ... On his arrival by the R.M.S. *Australia* last week, Mr. W.L. Baillieu, one of the best known and personally liked of city men, was sought by “The *Herald*”. But for a time he was laughingly uncomplaisant.

“Mine was quite a private trip to the old country,” he said, “my wife wanted a change. I wanted one. We went, we saw, we were impressed, we are back—now, really, that’s the whole story. Good-bye.” And the voyager was off.

We found him again, however ...

“It was your first trip to England, I understand?” ...

“It was.” he said, “As a native of Victoria I went for the first time to the great parent land of the wide-spread British family, and I cannot tell you how much good it has done me, must do any native-born Australian who has a like experience. To say that London is a marvellous place is, I know, to utter a mere platitude, but what can one say? It is a marvellous place. Only to see it is an advantage; to live a few weeks in it is to acquire a liberal education, which, let me tell you, is not to be got elsewhere.”

“What ... impressed you most?”

“The idea of vastness. As it is difficult to get a fair conception of the vastness of the ocean until you have crossed it, so it is difficult for the Australian business man like myself—and I claim only to be a business man, recollect, neither profound politician, philosopher nor moralist—to fully grasp the volume of business done in London, without observing some of its exterior manifestations.”...

“Do our business men resemble the English, or is true that we are ‘Americanised’ out here?”

“Yes, to your first question; no, to your second. Decidedly no. We are not a bit Americanised in my opinion. On the contrary, it seems to me that we have reproduced, with singular fidelity, in our Melbourne business men the type found in the country from which most of us, or our fathers came. I am pleased to know that Britishers in Britain and Britishers here are much the same in pretty well everything.”

“May I mention the jubilee?”

“You may, but please exempt me from elaborating. I saw most that was to be seen, and I was deeply impressed by it all ... I am delighted to get back to my native land, not the least of those which go to make up the mighty Empire to which I feel more than ever it is a pride and privilege to belong.”¹⁹

These statesmanlike utterances seem clearly designed to distance Baillieu from the public image of the brash real estate agent who had side-slipped away from his debts in 1892.

W.L. Baillieu had little interest in the editorial side of the *Herald*, being content to leave that to the editor, Samuel Winter, and to Theodore Fink, who had journalistic aspirations. Baillieu’s role, as in many other companies in which he had an interest, was as a business strategist looking for opportunities to expand the enterprise, although he was never loath to use the *Herald* and other newspapers in the stable to boost his other business interests. One of the earliest examples of this was with his investment in the Victorian black coal industry. From the late 1880s, Baillieu had seen opportunities in black coal given the fact that the Victorian economy was highly dependent on imports from New South Wales, which made it vulnerable to the increasing industrial unrest of the era. The Victorian government attempted to encourage local black coal mining through subsidies and government contracts, and numerous coal companies were founded around Korumburra in the early 1890s. The largest of these was



Believed to be a board meeting of the Herald & Weekly Times Ltd, c.1905.

Theodore Fink far left and W.L. Baillieu third from left

Courtesy: Baillieu Family

the Outtrim, Howitt & British Consolidated Coal Mining Company formed to exploit coal deposits discovered at Outtrim (named for Alfred Outtrim MLA, who was minister for mines at the time) in the hills 10km south of Korumburra in 1892.²⁰ Baillieu was an early investor in the company, organised its restructure and recapitalisation in the mid-1890s and also subdivided and sold most of the land in the Outtrim township.²¹

In January 1897, ‘Wildcat’, the business reporter of the *Bulletin*, commented: ‘Of the half-score Victorian coal-mining companies, only one appears to be doing much good, and that one has a powerful daily “organ” to boom it, and a practical monopoly of the Vic Railway supply’.²² Outtrim was clearly the company referred to. The ‘powerful daily “organ”’ was, of course, the *Herald*, which never missed a chance to report favourably on the Outtrim mine and its prospects.²³ The *Herald* and its stable mates also campaigned strongly for government support for the black-coal industry. While it was realised that the public would never stand for an import duty that would force up the price of New South Wales coal, the papers argued

the case for a bonus or bounty to be paid on Victorian black coal in order to 'prevent what promises to be a valuable industry from languishing'.²⁴

Although the black-coal industry was also championed by David Syme's newspapers, the government could not be induced to do more than direct the Victorian Railways to source some of its coal locally.²⁵ Even with this support, the black-coal industry rapidly declined in the early 1900s. No amount of newspaper support could disguise the reality that the black coal fields were small and of poor quality, with fractured and erratic coal seams. This, together with poisonous industrial relations, meant that the Outtrim mine was never more than marginally profitable. Baillieu eventually gave up and gradually sold down his shareholding in the early 1900s, with the mine closing in 1914.²⁶

While the support of the *Herald* and its associated papers was not enough to turn Outtrim into another Newcastle, Baillieu knew he could always rely on their advocacy for any project he promoted. In 1908, when he bought the Torrumbarry Estate near Echuca and subdivided it for sale, the auction was heavily promoted by all the papers owned by the *Herald & Weekly Times*. The *Weekly Times*, for example, praised the quality of the soil on the estate and commended the vendors for 'offering the land in blocks sufficiently large to enable intending purchasers to carry on a system of mixed farming'. It pointed out that 'the whole of the loamy land is suitable for irrigation, and as a large pumping plant has been erected on the Murray and as some channelling has been constructed, it ought to be an easy matter to provide for requirements in this respect'. The terms of sale, though fairly standard for the time, were described as 'remarkably easy'.²⁷ Similar support was given to all of Baillieu's business ventures, notably the formation of Carlton & United Breweries in 1905, the establishment of Electrolytic Zinc in the First World War and the rationalisation of the Australian tyre industry in 1929.

In 1902, the *Herald & Standard Newspaper Co.* was restructured as the *Herald & Weekly Times Ltd.* The shareholders' list provided for the statutory meeting on 11 July 1902 shows that the Baillieus were the largest shareholders. Of 125,000 ordinary shares in the new company, W.L. held 6,735; his wife Bertha Baillieu 1,683; and his brothers Prince and Norman 7,448, a total of 15,966 shares.²⁸ There is scarcely a mention of the *Herald & Weekly Times* in the correspondence of Baillieu and his brothers between 1900 and 1918, indicating it was a smooth-sailing ship and there were no crises requiring W.L.'s intervention. Circulation of all the papers rose

steadily, as did profits and dividends—by 1912, the annual dividend was an eminently satisfactory 22 per cent. Beyond the occasional use of the papers to promote his other activities, Baillieu simply enjoyed meeting his friend, Theodore Fink, at board meetings and banking regular dividend cheques.

During the First World War, the *Herald* was unstinting in its support for the war effort. Following the views of its board members, the paper was a strong advocate of conscription, supported Billy Hughes and the formation of the Nationalist Party, and condemned the wave of industrial unrest that swept the country after 1916. Significantly, the paper followed Fink's 'excessive and vehement anti-German stance' rather than Baillieu's more moderate personal views. Unlike many community leaders, Baillieu maintained his relationships with German and Austrian friends such as Carl Pinschof and did not join in the savage attacks on anybody unfortunate enough to have a German-sounding name. Baillieu himself came under criticism for the close pre-war links his Collins House mining companies had with German metal traders.²⁹

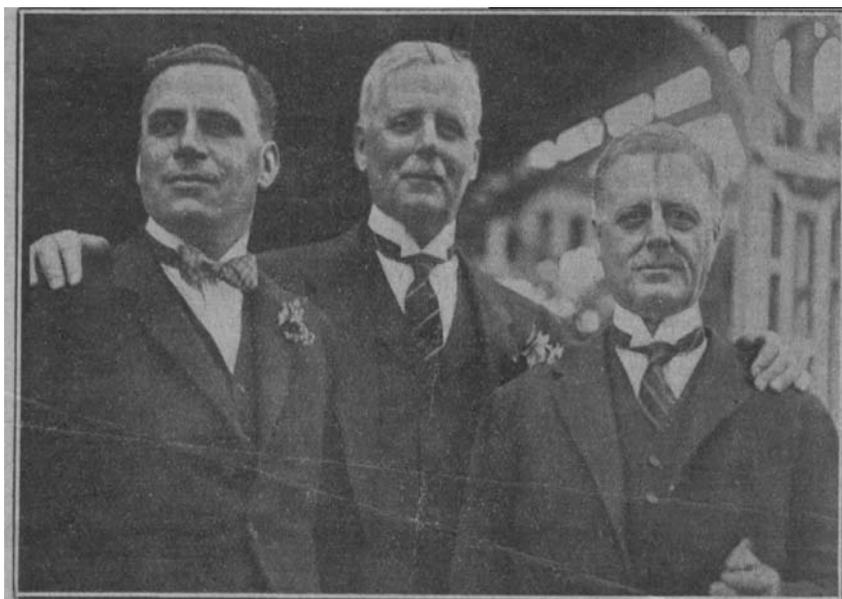
In the decade after the war, Baillieu became far more active in the affairs of the *Herald & Weekly Times* as the company entered into a period of rapid expansion that transformed it from Melbourne's second- or third-ranking newspaper company into Australia's first national media empire. In February 1919, Baillieu wrote to his son, Clive, who was still overseas with the AIF:

We have two very good men attached to the staff of the *Herald* now and the paper is making great strides forward. It is the only paper in Melbourne that stands in a very much better position financially to-day than before the war. "The Argus" and "Age" I know are feeling the pinch, while with us we are advancing all the time.³⁰

However, the crucial appointment for the rise of the *Herald* was that of Keith Murdoch as editor in 1920. Murdoch rose to fame as Australia's leading war correspondent in the First World War and, in 1919, represented the Northcliffe papers at the Versailles peace conference. He was then appointed to accompany the Prince of Wales on his tour of Australia and New Zealand on HMS *Renown*. When Murdoch arrived in Melbourne in May 1920, Baillieu's advocacy helped ensure that he joined the *Herald* rather than stay with Northcliffe or accept an offer to work for Sydney press magnate Hugh Denison.³¹

Baillieu had known Keith Murdoch since the mid-1890s, when Murdoch's father was Presbyterian minister in Camberwell and Keith

attended Fairholme Preparatory School with Clive. During the 1920s, Murdoch and Baillieu became close friends in spite of the large difference in their ages. In addition to their shared business interest in the *Herald & Weekly Times*, they frequently played golf and dined together. Dame Elisabeth Murdoch recalled that Keith was at one time romantically linked with Baillieu's daughter, Claire, and that W.L. considered that he would have made an ideal son-in-law. There were no hard feelings, however, when Murdoch married the 18-year-old Elisabeth Greene in 1927 and Dame Elisabeth remembered that W.L. was 'in fine form' at her wedding.³²



*Keith Murdoch, W.L. Baillieu and E.L. 'Prince' Baillieu at a family wedding,
February 1924*

Courtesy: Baillieu Family

In the years after his appointment, Murdoch applied the lessons he had learnt from Lord Northcliffe to modernise the *Herald's* content and presentation. The resulting increase in circulation justified the investment the board had been planning for some time in a new building with modern, high-speed printing presses and all the latest in newspaper technology. Completed in February 1923 at a cost of £450,000, both the choice of technology and the financing owed something to Baillieu. In 1922, he had

visited the United States, where he had inspected the production plants of several major newspapers. When interviewed by the *New York Times*, he said the purpose of his visit was ‘so that he could compare the plant of the Melbourne *Herald* with what he had heard was the finest newspaper plant in this country’.³³ Soon after his visit, the latest Goss printing presses, as used by many leading American newspapers, were ordered for the *Herald*.³⁴

As Melbourne’s leading financier, one of Baillieu’s primary roles in the companies with which he was involved was to arrange finance for projects like the construction of the new Herald & Weekly Times building and the purchase of its plant. Frequently he obtained cheap funds by arranging for his highly profitable Broken Hill mining companies to make loans to other companies in the Collins House stable at favourable rates of interest. While the evidence is lacking to prove that this occurred in the case of the new *Herald* building, there are several other examples of him arranging for his mining companies to lend money to the *Herald* during the 1920s and it is highly likely that the new building was partially funded in this way.³⁵

During the 1920s, Baillieu and Murdoch were constantly on the lookout for acquisitions for the *Herald* but Fink and his son, Thorold, were often reluctant to support them. While the reasons are not entirely clear, it is likely that this was a reflection of a deeper conflict in the company. Baillieu and Murdoch were natural entrepreneurs to whom growth and expansion were inherently desirable, while Theodore Fink appears to have preferred to remain a big fish in a small pond. The *Herald* was his personal plaything and he had little interest in building a media empire. In spite of Fink’s reluctance, the Herald & Weekly Times expanded rapidly during the 1920s, although first it had to beat off the threat of a serious rival. In the early 1920s, Sydney newspaper proprietor Hugh Denison launched a major assault on the Melbourne newspaper market with two new newspapers, the *Sun News-Pictorial* opening in September 1922 and the *Evening Sun* the following April. He spent lavishly on the venture but, by 1925, both papers were still losing money heavily and he sold the *Sun* to the Herald & Weekly Times while the *Evening Sun* was closed. At an extraordinary general meeting of the Herald & Weekly Times Ltd in September 1925, W.L. described this as ‘one of the most advantageous transactions ever entered into by any company’ as it gave the company a morning newspaper for a small outlay and removed its only competitor in the evening market.³⁶

In 1926, W.L. saw an opportunity to take over the *West Australian*. The family stockbroking firm, E.L. & C. Baillieu, began buying shares but,

when Fink went to Perth to assess the business, he decided that the Herald & Weekly Times should not become involved. Consequently, Baillieu and Murdoch put together a consortium and the *West Australian* was taken over by a syndicate consisting primarily of Baillieu's closest associates in the Collins House group, who set up West Australian Newspapers Ltd. Keith Murdoch did not put any money into the venture but received a substantial number of shares for organising the takeover and managing the new company.³⁷ An interesting result of this transaction was that the University of Western Australia received the massive sum for the time of £425,000 as a beneficiary of the will of John Winthrop Hackett, the proprietor of the *West Australian*, who had died in 1916.³⁸

In 1928 and 1929, a syndicate with a similar composition took over the *Adelaide Register* and the *Adelaide Advertiser* but, on this occasion, the Herald & Weekly Times participated, taking about a 40 per cent shareholding, with W.L. as the next largest shareholder with about 35 per cent and other Collins House associates on the register.³⁹ Two years later, the Herald & Weekly Times bought a controlling interest in the third Adelaide newspaper, the *News*. This interest was eventually sold to Murdoch, and, following his death, his son Rupert used the *Adelaide News* as the foundation of the modern News Corporation.

By the end of the 1920s, the Herald & Weekly Times had Australia's largest and most profitable stable of daily and weekly publications as well as owning Melbourne radio station 3DB.⁴⁰ The company's publications included the *Herald*, the *Sun News-Pictorial*, the *Weekly Times*, the *Sporting Globe*, *Punch*, *Table Talk*, *Home Beautiful*, *Listener-In*, and three Adelaide papers, the *Register*, the *Advertiser* and the *News*, while the *West Australian*, the *Brisbane Courier-Mail* and others were closely linked through the personal holdings of Herald company directors, primarily Baillieu, Fink and Murdoch.⁴¹

The rapid and profitable expansion of the *Herald* during the 1920s led to conflict between Murdoch and Fink, with Baillieu's role proving crucial in the final outcome. Baillieu saw Keith Murdoch as the man best suited to lead the *Herald* into the future but Fink feared that Murdoch's promotion would be at the expense of his son, Thorold. In 1928, with Baillieu's support, Murdoch was appointed managing director, while remaining managing editor. This led to an exchange of letters between Fink and W.L.

Fink's letter dated 14 December 1928 is almost illegible but relates to an understanding on the future of the company. W.L. replied,

Dear Theodore,

I have your letter of the 14th, the reading of which, I think you will agree, is quite a task, and you will be glad to know that I have managed it.

I want to say how much I share your sentiments and hopes, and, like yourself, how glad I am for the position we have reached which brings happiness into our lives, and will add to the material advantages and progress of the great institutions which it has been our pleasure and privilege to build up.

May the good work and good-will long continue.⁴²

Attached to this letter is a memorandum signed by W.L., Murdoch, Theodore Fink and Thorold Fink, extending Murdoch's appointment as managing editor and confirming his appointment as managing director. The memorandum continued:

This memorandum has been signed as embodying the views of the parties that the success of the Company has been the result of the long experience of Mr Theodore Fink and Mr W.L. Baillieu, and that the success and progress of the important concern that the Company has now become has depended upon the mutual understanding and co-operation of themselves and their colleagues on the one hand, and the sympathetic and friendly co-operation between the Chairman and the Board and the Chief Executive Officer of the Company, giving the executive all due authority, while retaining the Directors' control as trustees for the whole of the Company, and in the assurance of all parties that this friendly memorandum expresses the intention of each of them to continue this earnest and friendly co-operation ...

What should be kept prominently in the minds of those who control the Herald as Directors or chief officers is that a great newspaper is not a mere business concern. It has its public side, quite apart from its profit-making side. A journal should be one of the great institutions of the country. The Herald is in a fair way to become this, by preserving, and even extending, its scope and intensifying its influence for the public good ... Above all, while unsparing in its criticism, it should stoutly preach the gospel of hope and faith in Australia.⁴³

The spirit of the agreement did not last long. In 1930, while Fink was overseas, the board 'probably through Baillieu's influence' moved to entrench Murdoch's position. This was Baillieu's last significant action on the board of the Herald & Weekly Times before he resigned as a director in 1931 following the total physical and mental collapse from which he



W.L. Baillieu, Theodore Fink and Keith Murdoch at Sefton, Macedon, possibly during the negotiation of their agreement in December 1928

Courtesy: Baillieu Family

never recovered. The consequence was that, by the time of Baillieu's resignation, Murdoch was in a position from which he was able to gain the upper hand over the Finks during the 1930s.⁴⁴ Without it, the future of the Herald & Weekly Times and of the Murdoch family might have been vastly different. Dame Elisabeth Murdoch recalled that, during the dispute between her husband and the Finks, Keith assured her that it would turn out all right because he had Baillieu's support.⁴⁵ As Baillieu was close friends with both Fink and Murdoch, it is probably safe to assume that his backing of Murdoch was a business decision based on his belief that Murdoch was the right man to lead the company.

W.L. Baillieu's interest in the Herald & Weekly Times was only a relatively minor part of the massive business empire he built up in the early decades of the 20th century. Nonetheless, he was a director of the board for over 30 years, a major shareholder and, through his promotion

of Keith Murdoch and his support for Murdoch's policy of expansion, a key player in the emergence of the Herald & Weekly Times as Australia's leading media empire. For Baillieu, the *Herald* was a brilliant investment, providing long-term income and capital growth, and it also provided a vehicle to promote his other business interests. However, unlike Fink and Murdoch, Baillieu never actively used the *Herald* to promote his personal political views. In strong contrast to many plutocrats, Baillieu did not feel the need to force his views on to the general public. His politics were generally pragmatic and centre of the road and, except on the issues of conscription and wartime strikes, there is no evidence he tried to impose them on the newspapers the company controlled.

NOTES

- 1 For general accounts of W.L. Baillieu and the development of the Collins House group, see Peter Yule, *William Lawrence Baillieu: Founder of Australia's Greatest Business Empire*, Melbourne, Hardie Grant, 2012; John Kennett, 'The Collins House Group', MEd thesis, Monash University, 1980; Peter Richardson, 'Collins House Financiers: W.L. Baillieu, Lionel Robinson, and Francis Govett', in R.T. Appleyard and C.B. Schedvin (eds), *Australian Financiers: Biographical Essays*, Melbourne, Macmillan, 1988; Peter Richardson, 'The Origins and Development of the Collins House Group, 1915–1951', *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. 27, March 1987, pp. 3–39; J.R. Poynter, 'Baillieu, William Lawrence (Willie) (1859–1936)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 7, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1979, pp. 138–45.
- 2 Yule, chap. 2; Michael Cannon, *The Land Boomers: The Complete Illustrated History*, 2nd illustrated edition, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1995, chaps 34 & 35.
- 3 *Table Talk*, 21 September 1888.
- 4 Yule, chap. 2; Cannon, chaps 34 & 35. For details of Baillieu's secret composition, see VPRS 763/P/0000/6 C70B, Public Record Office of Victoria, Melbourne (PROV).
- 5 For an analysis of Baillieu's recovery, see Peter Yule, 'Victorian Gold Mining and the Recovery of the Baillieu Fortune in the 1890s', *Journal of Australasian Mining History*, vol. 9, September 2011, pp. 117–28.
- 6 This company underwent several name changes, including the Herald & Sportsman Newspaper Co. Ltd and the Herald & Standard Newspaper Co. Ltd, before emerging as the Herald & Weekly Times Ltd in 1902.
- 7 Theodore Fink, 'Reminiscences', Fink Papers, 5/2, University of Melbourne Archives (UMA); Don Garden, *Theodore Fink: A Talent for Ubiquity*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1998, pp. 51–4.
- 8 Herald & Sportsman Newspaper Company Ltd file, statement for July 1891, VPRS 932, P0000, unit 101, item 2255, PROV.

- 9 Fink, 'Reminiscences'.
- 10 *Argus*, 22 July and 11 August 1893. The issue of whether Baillieu and Fink should have declared ownership of Herald company shares in their secret compositions made with their creditors in 1892 is still the subject of research and debate. Differing views are presented in Yule, *William Lawrence Baillieu*, pp. 35–6; Garden, pp. 77–80; and Peter Gardner, 'Brief Notes on Some Fraudulent Aspects of the Secret Compositions of William Lawrence Baillieu and Friends 1892', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 80, no. 1, pp. 63–4.
- 11 Peter Gardner, 'Moguls and the Media: The Baillieu/Fink Group and the Herald Saga', essay submitted for the Merrifield Prize, November 2012. I am grateful to Peter Gardner for giving me a copy of this essay.
- 12 Fink, 'Reminiscences'.
- 13 No complete shareholder lists have been found for the Herald & Weekly Times in the 1890s. The estimate is based on numerous snippets of evidence in the Baillieu Allard Papers (BAP), notably files 5/17/2 and 5/19/1, UMA.
- 14 Cram to W.L. Baillieu, 14 February 1899, BAP, 5/61.
- 15 Prince Baillieu to W.L. Baillieu, 22 May 1897, BAP, 5/62.
- 16 Colin J. McCulloch to W.L. Baillieu, 3 June 1898, BAP, 5/56.
- 17 Colin J. McCulloch to W.L. Baillieu, 3 June 1898, 31 December 1897 and 18 February 1898, BAP, 5/56.
- 18 1182/2, David Syme, MS 10602, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria.
- 19 *Herald*, 22 Nov 1897.
- 20 PRO mining company files, Outtrim Coal Mining Co. NL, VPRS 567, P0000, unit 459, item 4792, PROV.
- 21 William Jarvie to W.L. Baillieu, 21 March 1895, BAP, 5/54.
- 22 *Bulletin*, 16 January 1897.
- 23 There are numerous favourable references to the Outtrim mine in the *Herald* throughout 1896 and 1897.
- 24 *Weekly Times*, 5 December 1896.
- 25 For the support of David Syme's papers for the black coal industry, see the *Leader*, 10 April 1897.
- 26 An entertaining and passionate account of the South Gippsland coal fields is in P.D. Gardner, *A Gippsland Union: The Victorian Coal Miners Association, 1893–1915*, Ensay, Ngarak Press, 2003.
- 27 *Weekly Times*, 31 October 1908.
- 28 Defunct companies file, Herald & Weekly Times Ltd., VPRS 932, P0000, unit 172, item 3557, PROV.
- 29 For accounts of the *Herald* during the war, and Fink and Baillieu's personal views, see Garden, chap. 6, and Yule, *William Lawrence Baillieu*, chaps 18–20.

- 30 W.L. Baillieu to Clive Baillieu, 13 February 1919, Baillieu Family Papers (BFP), 26/45/17, UMA.
- 31 R.M. Younger, *Keith Murdoch: Founder of a Media Empire*, Sydney, Harper Collins, 2003, pp. 92–3.
- 32 Interview with Dame Elisabeth Murdoch, 7 March 2009.
- 33 *New York Times*, 11 June 1922.
- 34 Younger, p. 129.
- 35 Chairman's Letter Book, 1927, letter dated April 1927, North Broken Hill Papers, 1/22/4, UMA.
- 36 Younger, p. 153.
- 37 Garden, p. 220; Younger, p. 157; 'Western Australian Newspapers', Colin Fraser Papers, 1/94/26, UMA.
- 38 See Alexander Collins, "'A Veritable Augustus': The Life of John Winthrop Hackett, Newspaper Proprietor, Politician and Philanthropist, 1848–1916', PhD thesis, Murdoch University, 2007, esp. p. 351.
- 39 Garden, p. 220.
- 40 Garden, p. 159.
- 41 See Garden, pp. 217–23; Younger, chap. 12.
- 42 Baillieu to Fink, 19 December 1928, 26/23/18, BFP.
- 43 Baillieu to Fink, 19 December 1928, 26/23/18, BFP.
- 44 The clash between Fink and Murdoch and Baillieu's role is discussed in Garden, chap. 7, esp. pp. 226–31, and Younger, pp. 157–8. Garden's analysis is more complete and better grounded in the primary sources.
- 45 Interview with Dame Elisabeth Murdoch, 7 March 2009.

PROMOTION OF ‘USEFUL KNOWLEDGE’: THE *ARGUS* AND SCIENCE IN 1850S COLONIAL VICTORIA

Amanda Lourie

Abstract

*The Argus newspaper was a supporter and promoter of science as vital to the progress and prosperity of the colony of Victoria. In its support for science, the newspaper facilitated the development of scientific societies and promoted individual scientists such as William Blandowski and Baron Ferdinand von Mueller. This article will initially discuss the ‘Development of Resources’ articles that appeared in the Argus over several months in 1854. It will then examine the paper’s broader support for science in the colony of Victoria.**

IN THE YEAR 1854, the *Argus* published a series of articles under the heading ‘Development of Resources’. These articles followed an earlier series on capital and labour and underscored a concern for continued prosperity and progress for the colony in the wake of the tumultuous changes brought on by the gold rush. The articles were an attempt to engage public interest and to influence and inform the government. Published in the months from April to August, they incorporated the period of Lieutenant

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Governor Charles La Trobe's departure from the colony of Victoria (May 1854) and the arrival of Governor Sir Charles Hotham (June 1854).¹

Throughout this series, calls were made for investment in technology and utilitarian scientific knowledge, and the need for formation of scientific societies was also broached. In this, the *Argus* was tapping into the broader imperial *Zeitgeist* of middle-class interest in science in the mid-19th century.² Rising literacy rates and an accessibility to scientific discourse saw a burgeoning public intrigue with the possibilities science seemed to open up for social improvement. There was excitement throughout the Empire about the 1851 Great Exhibition taking place in London, and a public lauding of men of science, such as Alexander von Humboldt, Sir Joseph Banks and, closer to home, Sir Thomas Mitchell and Ludwig Leichhardt. In 1854 Melbourne, a city that 'was without adequate water, power supplies, drainage and sewerage facilities; road and railway development was only just beginning; even the winning and processing of gold was still often very rudimentary', the desire for the 'useful' knowledge of science was high.³ Indeed, it was in this decade that science became firmly ensconced within the colony of Victoria, both institutionally and in terms of its association in the public mind with the progress of the colony.

This article will examine the role of the *Argus* in promoting science and men of science within the colony of Victoria in the 1850s. It will analyse the perceived importance of science within the series of articles, 'Development of Resources', and look more broadly at the paper's role in promoting science throughout the decade.

1850s Melbourne

The city of Melbourne in the 1850s was changing from the functional but basic collection of buildings erected in the early years of settlement to one in which edifices of grandeur and permanence featured more prominently. While the 1840s had seen the erection of some impressive structures such as the Benevolent Asylum in North Melbourne and the Melbourne Mechanics' Institute in Collins Street, post-separation confidence, buoyed further by the 'fame and fortune' bred by the gold rush, saw a rapid expansion of grand public edifices.⁴ These included the Public Library, the University of Melbourne, Parliament House and the Wesley Church in Lonsdale Street. There was also the glass and iron tribute to London's Crystal Palace in the form of the Exhibition Buildings in William Street. Journalist Richard Twopeny noted there was 'a belief in the future' of the city at this time,

in part represented by the developing physical resemblances to ‘the Old Country’.⁵

Within the city itself, permanency and grandeur in buildings were contrasted with the ‘city of mud’, macadamising of roads having only just commenced. For its contemporaries Melbourne was a masculine, muddy, smelly and dangerous society.⁶ The expanding population (between the years 1851 and 1861 Melbourne’s population more than quadrupled) was ‘eminently adventurous and enterprising’. They were largely literate and included ‘talented architects, builders, sanitary engineers and public administrators’ who were to become instrumental in the future development of Melbourne.⁷ Although, in the 1850s, lack of gas lighting made the streets and laneways dangerous to inhabit after dark, and deep gutters, prone to swift, rising water during rain, resulted in a number of drownings,⁸ the new reservoir of talented citizens of Melbourne and the colony of Victoria supplied the necessary energy and expertise to redress these (and other) problems.

The men engaging in this work brought to it an appreciation of and commitment to science as a means to classify, categorise and control the rural as well as the urban spaces of colonial Victoria. Science would provide a means to further emphasise independence in this newly separated colony. Identification of Victorian flora, fauna, geology and geography would delineate it from the colony of New South Wales.⁹ Technology derived from scientific knowledge would aid agriculture, assist in resolving labour crises and provide public amenities such as sewerage and clean drinking water. Societies devoted to the discussion of science would provide forums for scientific discourse and provide avenues for the dissemination of scientific knowledge throughout the colony. Science appealed to many of the literate, educated men of the colony, to the government and to institutions such as the *Argus* newspaper.

The promise of science underpinned 1850s governmental support for the Geological Survey, a government botanist, a government palaeontologist, a government zoologist and a museum of natural history. Men of science, whose names still resound within Victoria, began their scientific careers in the colony through such government employment. They included Baron Ferdinand von Mueller (botanist), Sir Frederick McCoy (palaeontologist), William Blandowski (zoologist) and Alfred Selwyn (head of the Geological Survey).¹⁰

Selwyn and Mueller were appointed to their government positions by Governor Charles La Trobe, a man intrigued by the potential of science. La Trobe 'married science and the state' through initiating such government funding. He filled the positions he created with men with whom he developed personal relationships, seeking them out for intellectual and cultural stimulation.¹¹ However, in May 1854, La Trobe left the colony. His successor, Sir Charles Hotham, arrived in June 1854 to an economic crisis. He quickly undertook cuts to funding of government services to reduce debt, including areas of science. Funding was heavily reduced or entirely removed from the Botanical Gardens and the Museum of Natural History. Whilst attending the ceremonies for the laying of the foundation stones of the University of Melbourne and the State Library in July 1854, Hotham observed '[t]his country requires science for the development of its resources', but his muddled financial reforms seriously reduced government support for and engagement with science. He refused funding or government support to an expeditionary committee formed within the Philosophical Society of Victoria (PSV), claiming that the exploits of independent explorers and previous geological surveys were sufficient for the colony's need to determine its natural resources. He wanted utilitarian science; however, he did not want it funded by the government. For Hotham, balancing the budget took priority.¹²

Governor Sir Henry Barkly, who succeeded Hotham from 1856, demonstrated renewed faith in science through personal engagement with the scientific society. On occasion, he attended meetings of the Philosophical Institute of Victoria (PIV), and, in 1860, he was made president of its successor, the Royal Society of Victoria (RSV), royal assent having been conferred resulting in the name change late in 1859. He implored society members to entice men of science to the colony through 'making a scientific career in the colony attractive to outsiders'. He also called for the 'pursuit of serious scientific enquiry' and the dispersal of the resulting information to those in the colony who would benefit from it. In the period of newly responsible government, Barkly may not have greatly influenced funding of science; however, his personal engagement with science was obviously appreciated by the members of the RSV in their unanimous support for his presidency.¹³

Community support for science came through public avenues such as the *Argus* newspaper, the formation of scientific societies and community attendance at public lectures and events such as the 1854 Melbourne

Exhibition. Historians Ian Inkster and Jan Todd have noted that, between 1858 and 1859, Mueller reported 200,000 visitors to the Melbourne Botanical Gardens. In the same period, approximately 32,000 visitors attended the museum.¹⁴ Public lectures at the Melbourne Mechanics' Institute saw varying attendances, dependent on the weather, the presenter, time of the lecture or public interest. The lectures at the Institute by Dr John Macadam on chemistry and physics were extremely well attended, resulting in his addresses being repeated.¹⁵ Blandowski's ethnological lecture regarding Aboriginal people also saw a full lecture hall.¹⁶ Lectures on mesmerism and electro-biology, phrenology (and the debunking of it) and broader scientific subjects encompassing themes such as geology, exploration and gold were all reported as numerous attended, crowds filling the hall on occasion long before the advertised start.¹⁷ Whilst some contemporaries complained of the temptations of gold, money and vice upon the public, the city did nevertheless possess an intellectual élite as well as a broad cross-section of the community interested in and wanting to engage in scientific discourse.¹⁸

The *Argus* newspaper reported widely on matters scientific. It regularly advertised forthcoming lectures, exhibitions, society meetings and attendances at the museum. It also published scientific reports.¹⁹ Historian Alan Atkinson observed colonial Victorians were voracious purchasers of newspapers, buying more newspapers than people in America, Britain or other colonial capitals.²⁰ Papers such as the *Argus* were read by men and women in a variety of classes, being cheap and affordable. The *Argus*, in the early 1850s, became the highest circulating paper in the colony of Victoria.²¹ Ann Clarke noted the then proprietor of the *Argus*, Edward Wilson, saw the 'role of the press as a medium for the expression of public opinion'.²² Greater circulation made the *Argus* influential within the colonial community. The series, 'Development of Resources', was a means to sway and engage the public and to exert pressure on the government.

Wilson was well known for his interest in science, especially in acclimatisation of species. He was a concurrent member of both the Victorian Institute for the Advancement of Science (VIAS) and the PSV.²³ Wilson also presented papers to the PIV on the introduction of the British song bird to Australia and of the Murray River cod to the Yarra River.²⁴ He was instrumental in the foundation of the Acclimatisation Society of Victoria, as well as other such societies within Australia and abroad.²⁵ Thus, the *Argus*'s public linking of science and colonial prosperity through

the 'Development of Resources' articles corresponded with Wilson's personal interest and valuing of science. In 1856, Wilson passed editorial responsibility to George Higinbotham. As John Hurst has observed, Wilson (as proprietor) allowed editors of the paper a 'free hand'. Higinbotham was a member of the VIAS and later the PIV but was less active in practical scientific pursuits within the societies than Wilson.²⁶ However, Higinbotham's *Argus* continued to bring scientific news to the public's attention.

Development of Resources

The publication of the series, 'Development of Resources', commenced as the long awaited changeover of governors was to occur. The *Argus* had run a vehement campaign against La Trobe. This had culminated in the repeated publication of a mock advertisement, 'Wanted a Governor: Apply to the People of Victoria', in the first half of 1853. Antagonistic towards La Trobe and scathing in his criticism of the squatters' control of access to land and political power, Wilson had used his paper to stir public opinion.²⁷ La Trobe's valuing of science and provision of government support for its development did little to change the *Argus*'s view of the governor.

The 'Development of Resources' series included themes of land use, government and political power. However, the vitriol that had been present in 1853 was now lessened and practical solutions were proffered. Whilst some of the articles urged increased public engagement with the political process, many focused on utilitarian themes, examining transport, agricultural and labour concerns. The overriding emphasis was on measures to ensure continued progress and prosperity for the colony of Victoria, utilising the opportunity of the gold rush whilst simultaneously planning for its end.

The *Argus* articles viewed science as a means to assist the development and application of colonial resources. The emphasis was on 'useful knowledge'.²⁸ Examples of the role of science in the growth and success of the British Empire were cited. The Royal Society was highlighted as the 'true parent of England's supremacy in manufactures, commerce, wealth, and power'. The Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland advanced 'scientific agriculture' internationally.²⁹ The enterprise of private individuals and companies within Great Britain 'acting patriotically for the public good' was admired.³⁰ British parliamentary reform resulting in more political power for the people and subsequent projects reforming conditions

for the working classes were discussed.³¹ The idealisation and promotion of empire within the articles was more than a patriotic stance. Historian George Stocking noted that, by the 1830s, the highpoint of civilisation was believed to be the British Empire and its centre, Britain. The Industrial Revolution, free trade, representative government, and middle-class values and standards of living were synonymous with notions of civilisation.³² Replicating and adding to such examples of civilisation, and therefore the British Empire, would ensure the progress of the colony of Victoria to the highest standards. Science was a vital component of this, as it had been in the success of the British Empire and the accomplishments of its subjects.

The first article in the series was triumphant in tone, welcoming the recent prosperity within the colony of Victoria and arguing it was largely due to the 'energies of British freemen [which] could not be repressed'. The article broached political reform (the 'free and representative constitution'), land reform (the 'death-blow to the land monopoly') and the importance of 'those sciences and arts which give men the power over nature'.³³ As an introductory piece for the series, this article explicitly linked science to the progress of the colony. The premise for the series was outlined as a platform to provide the governor with 'sound advice' on fiscal policy in order to ensure continued prosperity for the 'nation' of Victoria. By this means, the *Argus* was promoting public debate and simultaneously endeavouring to influence the government.

As the articles in the 'Development of Resources' series continued, the necessity of cementing Victoria's role within the British Empire was emphasised. The fact that much of the content was utilitarian in focus befitted a new colony. Historian of science Roy MacLeod has observed that colonial science (that is, science practised in the colonies) was by nature utilitarian, a prerequisite to necessary development in industry and transport and communication networks.³⁴ Although MacLeod also noted that colonial science could be 'highly theoretical and highly dispositive', it was, he argued, primarily 'functional' with a strong emphasis on facilitating economic growth.³⁵ Throughout the 'Development of Resources' articles, this emphasis on utilitarian science was evident. Thus, private development needed to be encouraged, including the enticement of productive labourers to the colony for work and dissuading them from leaving their employ to fossick for gold. As the most practicable form of transport, railways were viewed as a necessity. Reduction of the surfeit of imports with an aim towards greater self-sufficiency was promoted too, and encouragement and

support for agriculture, including the requirement for people to migrate to the country to undertake farming, was discussed.³⁶ Indeed, the *Argus* suggested 'the motto, the watchword, the guiding and ruling principle of action, both nationally and individually' of the colony of Victoria be 'Development of Resources' for both public and private enterprises.³⁷

It is of interest that the article on agriculture and climate appeared the day after the first of a series of articles written by Sigismund Wekey was published under the *nom de plume*, 'Hungarian'. The series was titled 'The Advantages of the Cultivation of the Vine in Australia' and appeared periodically in April and May 1854. Wekey persuasively argued for the development of a wine industry within the colony of Victoria, underscoring his economic arguments with the insight that the colony had a Mediterranean climate. This climate, different from that of Britain, made Victoria suitable for the growing of grapes.³⁸ Wilson also argued this point strongly in relation to any discussion of agriculture within the 'Development of Resources' series. He promoted a change from familiar British farming practice to the cultivation of Mediterranean crops, such as oranges, mulberries, dates, vines, olives and madder root. This last crop, madder root (*Rubia tinctorum*), was from Holland and produced a deep red dye. It was the plant Wilson had presented as a specimen at the inaugural 'Conversazione' of the VIAS, the specimen having been grown in the colony.³⁹ Whilst the relationship between Wilson and Wekey is unclear, the juxtaposition of these articles tantalisingly points towards a familiarity between them. Wekey was instrumental in organising the PSV later in 1854, advertising his intentions through letters to the editor in the *Argus*.⁴⁰ Wilson and Wekey may have known each other, discussed the interests they held in common, and utilised the *Argus* to promote their own agendas regarding science and scientific associations. Whatever the case, the successful development of the PSV and the continued (and later in the 1850s increased) government support for science indicates a broader community and institutional belief in the necessity of science for the betterment of the colony of Victoria.

Why was science so important in the 'Development of Resources'? The *Argus* argued that the role of science was to 'give men power over nature'. This was especially important in a new colony 'where labor [*sic*] [was] deficient, and the development of latent resources [was] the grand object of the settler'.⁴¹ In this 'wild' colony, with pockets of land deemed to be unexplored, undeveloped and uninhabited (by non-Aboriginal people),

science would facilitate the civilising process. Here a return to Stocking's discussion of civilisation is of use. Stocking noted that, along with the equating of civilisation with the British Empire's accomplishments, the civilising process was believed to be the triumph of humans over Nature. Where religious faith aided in the triumph over the primal nature of man, science aided in control over Nature.⁴² Science would thus ensure the success of the colony and its position within the civilised bosom of the British Empire. It was a racialised understanding of science and civilisation, though that was not recognised in the articles or by most contemporaries.

Science, understood in this way, aided the British Empire to attain its mid-19th century success through 'the association of enquiring and enterprising men'.⁴³ The *Argus* articles noted an 'intimate connection ... between science and the development of resources' aided by the formation of various societies.⁴⁴ Societies provided a sense of fraternity, attractive to those members of society looking to meet with like-minded fellows. Certainly, in gold-rush colonial Victoria, the size of the population enabled societies to be ongoing, feasible concerns. Societies were also avenues for intellectual discussion, differentiating them from clubs that had a more social emphasis.⁴⁵ Scientific associations facilitated the development and the proliferation of scientific knowledge. Indeed, the *Argus* itself benefitted from scientific innovation when it took receipt of the Applegath Patent Victoria Printing Machine in March 1854 (although it took until July that year to be fully functioning). This machine vastly increased both the speed and the volume of newspaper production. In turn, this assisted the dispersal of information from the paper through the community because its producers were able to respond to increased circulation demands. Applegath printers had been exhibited at the 1851 Great Exhibition in London and their inventor hailed for his engineering and inventing skills in the printing industry. The *Argus* reported Applegath himself had designed its machine especially for the paper, adding 'Victoria' to its name in honour of the colony.⁴⁶

The *Argus* readily promoted the formation of local scientific societies. The population that arrived in Victoria during the gold rush, as identified by historian of science Rod Home, consisted of many with interest and knowledge in science.⁴⁷ The *Argus* appealed to this literate, well-educated immigrant population through the 'Development of Resources' articles, especially in the call for scientific associations.⁴⁸ The diversity of the immigrants' backgrounds was viewed as beneficial to the colony and to

any prospective colonial scientific societies. The *Argus* commented on the potential such colonists could bring to the colony of Victoria:

[w]e have always thought that one of the chief causes of the superior intelligence pervading our Australian communities, and of their rapid progress, is the congregation of men from so many different countries. In almost every operation of Australian life, there are associated men from various districts in Great Britain and Ireland, from the Continent, from America, or from distant colonies. Each of these has probably been accustomed to different modes or plans, and each of course proposes his own. Thus arises discussion and comparison, and in the end the cheapest, the quickest, or the most efficient plan is discovered and adopted.⁴⁹

The *Argus* pointed out that any scientific societies developed would require '*sincere, zealous, and persevering*' men to 'accelerate' the 'future advancement of this colony'.⁵⁰ The British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS) and the Royal Society were provided as examples of scientific associations 'formed by the right men, and on the right principles'.⁵¹ A replica Royal Society could determine 'the natural features of the country, its soils, its various climates, its mountains, rivers, lakes, and the proportion in each district of arable, pastoral, and unavailable land'. Indeed, the *Argus* idealised the role of the Royal Society, commenting that 'we consider the formation of a Royal Society 500 years ago in England would ... have shortened by that extent the reign of darkness in science, and lengthened that of development and industrial progress.'⁵² A replica Royal Society would, it was hoped, have as valuable an impact on colonial Victoria.

A colonial society modelled on the relatively new BAAS was also proposed. The 'Development of Resources' articles noted such a society could have 'sections for statistics, for agriculture, for horticulture, for manufactures, and for mineralogy'.⁵³ There is no mention of one of the primary aims of the BAAS, that of being inclusive of provincial centres, particularly through the holding of provincial meetings. Did the *Argus* imagine this second proposed society would hold meetings in places such as Geelong and Ballarat? If nothing else, the idea of two scientific societies forming in the city of Melbourne was indicative of the confidence, energy and hope coursing through gold-rush Melbourne. That the societies proposed represented replicas of British societies speaks to MacLeod's observation that science was 'among the most durable and enduring' of 'English imperial institutions'.⁵⁴ It also demonstrates the desire to replicate

the 'best' of the Empire to ensure progress. The *Argus*, particularly under the early editorship of Wilson, was seen as radical and anti-government in its support of democracy and people power. Yet it was able to promote those élite institutions it saw as effecting positive change on the colony of Victoria. The 'Development of Resources' articles recognised that simply transferring scientific knowledge from Britain would not be adequate to the colony's needs. Whilst this was appropriate for some areas, such as railways, specific information about Victoria was required for more extensive development. The climate, in particular, was singled out as requiring investigation, as noted previously.

In broaching the need for the development of local scientific societies, these articles captured the *Zeitgeist*. In this 'year of magnificent ideas', founding members of the PSV William Blandowski and Frederick Collier Christy sent a letter to the editor of the *Argus* in direct response to the 'Development of Resources' articles. The two men wrote they would 'feel the greatest pleasure in giving all the support in our power to the formation of a Society for the promotion of so important an object'.⁵⁵ Another letter sent to the editor on this topic also lauded the articles. Signed 'your obedient servant', the author commented, 'I beg to inform you that myself and several friends are willing to aid in the good work ... I feel satisfied that there are many in this colony who honestly desire the moral and physical advancement of their adopted country'.⁵⁶ Were these letters genuine representations of colonial enthusiasm? Or were they placed by Wilson to strengthen his call for scientific societies? Blandowski had been involved previously in the initial phases of the failed Geological Society.⁵⁷ He had thus demonstrated an interest in scientific societies. His support would appear to have been genuine. Christy was an engineer and had written a number of letters to the *Argus* in 1853 and 1854 in connection with the Canal and Docks Company with which he was involved.⁵⁸ Thus, he was not averse to corresponding with the paper's editor upon topics of interest to himself and on which he had some expertise. Again, Christy's interest appears genuine. Wilson could have placed the anonymous letter. Whatever the case, the formation of two scientific societies soon after these articles and letters were published indicated a more general desire within sections of the Melbourne community for such societies.

As noted, two scientific societies were formed in Melbourne during 1854, responding to the call of the 'Development of Resources' articles: the PSV and the VIAS. The founding of two scientific societies within the

colony, within the same year, demonstrated a keen desire to engage with science. The societies modelled themselves on different British scientific societies: the PSV followed the model of the Royal Society and the VIAS modelled itself on the BAAS. Some colonists, such as Mueller, became members of both societies. Historian Colin Finney attributed the formation of two societies to personal animosity between their respective honorary secretaries. Rather than work together, they each formed a society.⁵⁹ However, the belief in and zeal for science within the community indicated the existence of two such societies was feasible within colonial Victoria. Certainly the 'Development of Resources' articles in the *Argus* supported the possibility of two scientific societies, aligning as they did with the Royal Society and the BAAS. In line with their differing societal models, there were differences in their proposed spheres of interest. The PSV had a natural history focus and was aligned to the newly opened Museum of Natural History. The VIAS emphasised utilitarian science, concentrating on development of local resources, reinforced by the formation of sections for members to join and focus their interests and research. These included sanitary economy, engineering and political economy.⁶⁰

The societies amalgamated in July 1855, to form the PIV. The Royal Charter was bestowed on the society in 1859 when it was renamed the Royal Society of Victoria. Thus was the first successfully continuing scientific society established within colonial Victoria.⁶¹ It answered the need for scientific knowledge in 1850s colonial Victoria and the desire for discourse among a zealous group of gentlemen wanting to engage in the promotion and application of science within the colony. The *Argus*, through the 'Development of Resources' articles, had facilitated the early societies' formation.

Support for Science within the *Argus*

The *Argus* demonstrated sustained interest in science and men of science throughout the 1850s. It also provided support for the newly formed scientific societies, not only in printing advertisements of their upcoming meetings but also in commentary upon the meetings within the paper's 'Domestic Intelligence' columns. In so doing, the newspaper featured reminders about forthcoming meetings, summarised minutes of previous gatherings, editorialised about presented papers and noted interesting facts or stimulating debates held.⁶² That Wilson was a member of both societies

undoubtedly facilitated this reportage as he was the primary writer and the editor of the paper until 1856.

The importance and value attributed to science can be seen in the editorial that discussed the forthcoming initial meeting of the VIAS. Concerned for the future success of the society, it recommended the official patronage of the soon-to-arrive Governor Hotham. This would facilitate governmental support both for the society and for the advancement of science within the colony, which would, in turn, ensure the success of the society. This formal linking of government with science was judged to be important, the editorial envisioning the scientific society as ‘the grand intellectual, as Government is the grand political, organ for promoting the progress of the colony’.⁶³

The *Argus* was also supportive of individual men of science. It is unclear whether Wilson had particularly close relationships with the men the paper championed; however, his membership of the scientific societies ensured he knew them from society meetings. Whilst individual attendance at society meetings was not recorded, in the VIAS, PSV and PIV proceedings Wilson is recorded as providing specimens for societal collections on three occasions.⁶⁴ It is presumed he attended at least these meetings.⁶⁵

One man who particularly benefited from positive press within the *Argus* was William Blandowski. A Prussian, Blandowski came to Melbourne in 1853 from the gold fields. He had arrived in the colony of South Australia in 1849, spending time exploring around Robe and Mount Gambier and attempting to gain government employment.⁶⁶ Blandowski quickly became important within the colony of Victoria in the 1850s, being appointed curator of the Museum of Natural History and government zoologist. He undertook three expeditions in Victoria, between the years 1854 and 1857, producing a number of specimens for the Museum of Natural History and papers presented to the scientific societies. Blandowski was thus a repository of scientific knowledge about the colony, and the *Argus* recognised his zeal for science. This zeal was underpinned by a sound scientific methodology and a love of nature. He was exactly the sort of man the *Argus* was calling for in the ‘Development of Resources’ articles.

The *Argus* gave Blandowski the nickname ‘Mr Natural History’ and praised him as ‘the presiding genius’ of the Museum of Natural History.⁶⁷ The papers he presented at the Philosophical Society of Victoria and the Philosophical Institute of Victoria were reported in the *Argus* and frequently described as ‘very interesting’.⁶⁸ An especially well-received public lecture

at the Mechanics' Institute, titled 'Superstitions, Customs and Burials of the Aborigines', was promoted and reported by the *Argus*. In its editorial of 22 October 1856, the *Argus* noted '[t]here are few men better qualified to impart the fullest and most accurate information on the subject ... than Mr Blandowski'.⁶⁹

Even when discussing issues other than science, the *Argus* often cited Blandowski as a reference, given his stature within the broader community as a result of his scientific expertise.⁷⁰ The *Argus* was not alone in its admiration for Blandowski. He provides an early example of what is now known as celebrity endorsement for example in being used as a referee to advertise Monsieur Proeschel's Commercial and Agricultural Map of Victoria.⁷¹ In the 1854 Melbourne Exhibition, Blandowski's presentation of mineral and natural history samples from the Museum of Natural History's collection won a silver medal. These specimens were subsequently sent to the 1855 Paris Exhibition as part of colonial Victoria's display.⁷² On returning from his 1856–1857 Murray–Darling Rivers expedition, Blandowski was acclaimed with a celebratory dinner at the Criterion Hotel by Philosophical Institute of Victoria members. PIV vice-president Professor Wilson toasted the guest, observing there was 'no one present who was not acquainted with the zeal shown by [Blandowski] in exploring the resources of the country'. The existence of the Museum of Natural History, Wilson noted, 'was almost entirely due to the labors and contributions of M. Blandowski, and he [Wilson] believed that nearly nine-tenths of the specimens had been collected by him [Blandowski]'.⁷³ In the view of the *Argus*, Blandowski represented an ideal man of science for the colony. He was an expert in the natural history of the colony and disseminated a great deal of information to the public, so that those who wished could convert it into 'useful knowledge'. And, because Blandowski was a government employee, the government also had ready access to his knowledge, ensuring it could be utilised for the progress of the colony.

Blandowski was not the only man of science upon whom the *Argus* commented. The government botanist and later Botanical Gardens director, Ferdinand von Mueller, was also championed. He was the 'public favourite' according to the paper.⁷⁴ In reviewing the botanical display curated by Mueller in the 1854 Melbourne Exhibition, the *Argus* observed that it was 'arranged with the scientific precision by which this eminent naturalist is distinguished'.⁷⁵ In its regular summary on the state of the colony of Victoria, the paper reported for the month of March in 1855 that Mueller

was 'a gentleman whose scientific acquirements are of the highest order'.⁷⁶ In July 1856, he was further extolled as 'one of the most excellent men and devoted slaves of science that ever lived'.⁷⁷ In the opinion of the *Argus*, Mueller was an exemplary man of science, devoted to his profession and, as a government employee, serving the progress of the colony.

Government Geologist Selwyn was not championed in the same manner as Blandowski and Mueller. At times, the *Argus* questioned his geological findings, particularly regarding auriferous lands and the extent and viability of the coal fields at Cape Patterson. However, the newspaper recognised the importance of his role for the government and the public. Indeed, some of the complaints regarding his findings were directed towards the delays in information being disseminated to the broader public. Selwyn himself was recognised as providing 'good service' in his role.⁷⁸

The *Argus* depicted science as a 'higher calling'. The paper noted men of science were those most likely to be undervalued and to have gained the least personally from their work, whilst providing the most value to society through their discoveries and knowledge.⁷⁹ The veracity of this statement was reinforced during the 1855 government spending cuts, instigated by Hotham. Hurst noted the *Argus* became more sympathetic towards the government after the Eureka Stockade and thus was positive towards Hotham in its editorials.⁸⁰ However, when the government spending cuts were announced, the *Argus* roundly criticised the cuts to science and to the positions of the leading men of science, Blandowski, Selwyn and Mueller. The loss of funding was the 'death-blow given to our infantile scientific establishments'. The *Argus* noted the 'peculiar' importance of scientific research, observing 'knowledge is power, and advancement, and prosperity to the masses'. From this perspective, the paper viewed it as 'rather extraordinary that ... those connected with science should have been the most ruthlessly dealt with'.⁸¹ The *Argus* fought for science, particularly for government-sponsored science, with language that showed its strength of conviction and challenged the government to find alternative areas for its austerity measures. The paper believed in the need for science and government to be linked, reflecting its faith in the importance of science for the progress and future prosperity of the colony.

Science was highly valued within the Victorian community in the 1850s. Despite the distractions of gold, wealth, rises in costs, and the wide availability of pubs to celebrate or drown one's sorrows, sections of the community sought serious engagement with scientific knowledge and

discourse. The multi-ethnic and educational background of a significant number of community members was viewed as an opportunity to garner many kinds of scientific knowledge in order to facilitate progress and to guide the colony to prosperity. The *Argus* played a role in directing this process through its 'Development of Resources' articles and continued support for the scientific societies that arose (at least in part) from these articles. The paper's angry response to government cuts in science funding underscored its belief in the necessity of government-sponsored science. The *Argus* also supported individual efforts of men of science such as Blandowski and Mueller, men who embodied the scientific effort the *Argus* had called for in its articles. It can thus be said to have played a significant role in the promotion of 'useful knowledge', which was a hallmark of Melbourne's expansion and reputation for advancement in the second half of the 19th century.

NOTES

- 1 'Development of Resources', series of articles appearing in the *Argus*, 19 April 1854, p. 4; 20 April 1854, p. 4; 21 April 1854, p. 4; 22 April 1854, p. 4; 26 April 1854, p. 4; 29 April 1854, p. 4; 2 May 1854, p. 4; 3 May 1854, p. 4; 6 May 1854, p. 4; 10 May 1854, p. 4; 13 May 1854, p. 4; 18 May 1854, p. 4; 2 June 1854, p. 4; 28 June 1854, p. 4; 11 August 1854, p. 4; 23 August 1854, p. 4.
- 2 Jack Meadows, *The Victorian Scientist: The Growth of a Profession*, London, The British Library, 2004, p. 87; Lynn Barber, *The Heyday of Natural History: 1820–1870*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1980, pp. 13–14.
- 3 M.E. Hoare, 'Learned Societies in Australia: The Foundation Years in Victoria, 1850–1860', *Records of the Australian Academy of Science*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1967, pp. 8, 26.
- 4 Graeme Davison, 'Goldrush Melbourne', in *Reader: The Australian City: Unit A, Marvellous Melbourne: A Study of Nineteenth-century Urban Growth*, Melbourne, Deakin University, 1990, p. 120.
- 5 R.E.N. Twopeny, 'A Walk Around Melbourne', in *Reader: The Australian City: Unit A*, pp. 112, 117.
- 6 Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria 1851–1861*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1977, p. 235; William Kelly, *Life in Victoria: 1853 and 1858*, vol. 1, Kilmore, Lowden Publishing Co., 1977, pp. 58–9; William Kelly, *Life in Victoria: 1853 and 1858*, vol. 2, Kilmore, Lowden Publishing Co., 1977, pp. 84–5; Andrew Brown-May, *Melbourne Street Life*, Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1998, pp. 32, 60, 72–3.
- 7 Davison, p. 125; Twopeny, p. 117.
- 8 Brown-May, pp. 32, 113; Kelly, *Victoria*, vol. 1, pp. 48–9, 129.

- 9 Both John Gould and George Waterhouse had published their respective collections of birds of Australia and mammals of the world in the 1840s; thus distribution did not reflect the colony of Victoria. Roslyn Russell, *The Business of Nature: John Gould and Australia*, Canberra, National Library of Australia, 2011, pp. 37, 39, 41, 42, 50; A.H. Chisholm, 'Gould, John (1804–1881)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/gould-john-2113/text2667>, accessed 26 August 2011; G.R. Waterhouse, *A Natural History of the Mammalia*, vol. 1, London, Hippolyte Bailliere, 1846; G.R. Waterhouse, *A Natural History of the Mammalia*, vol. 2, London, Hippolyte Bailliere, 1848.
- 10 Colin Finney, *Paradise Revealed: Natural History in Nineteenth-century Australia*, Melbourne, Museum of Victoria, 1993, pp. 72, 75, 133; R.T.M. Pescott, *Collections of a Century: The History of the First Hundred Years of the National Museum of Victoria*, Melbourne, National Museum of Victoria, 1954, p. 9; Jill Eastwood, 'La Trobe, Charles Joseph (1801–1875)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/la-trobe-charles-joseph-2334/text3039>, accessed 8 October 2011; B.A. Knox, 'Barkly, Sir Henry (1815–1898)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/barkly-sir-henry-2936/text4251>, accessed 8 October 2011; Hoare, pp. 7, 18.
- 11 Dianne Reilly Drury, *La Trobe: The Making of a Governor*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2006, pp. 173, 175; Alan Atkinson, *The Europeans in Australia: A History*, vol. 2, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 267.
- 12 'Mind vs Matter', *Argus*, 20 February 1855, p. 4; 'The University and the Public Library', *Argus*, 4 July 1854, p. 5; Serle, pp. 160, 203; Hoare, p. 16.
- 13 Sir Henry Barkly, 'Inaugural Address of the President, His Excellency Sir Henry Barkly', in John Macadam (ed.), *Transactions of the Royal Society of Victoria*, vol. v, Melbourne, Mason & Firth, 1860, pp. 1, 4, 16; Hoare, p. 18; Knox, 'Philosophical Institute of Victoria', *Argus*, 7 August 1857, p. 5; 'Philosophical Institute of Victoria', *Argus*, 1 October 1857, p. 6; 'Philosophical Institute', *Argus*, 11 November 1858, p. 7; 'Philosophical Institute of Victoria', *Argus*, 17 November 1859, p. 5.
- 14 Ian Inkster & Jan Todd, 'Support for the Scientific Enterprise, 1850–1900', in R.W. Home (ed.), *Australian Science in the Making*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 107.
- 15 'Mechanics' Institution: Dr Macadam's Lecture', *Argus*, 8 April 1856, p. 5; 'Domestic Intelligence', *Argus*, 19 May 1856, p. 5.
- 16 'Superstitions, Customs, and Burials of the Aborigines', *Argus*, 25 October 1856, pp. 4–5.
- 17 'Domestic Intelligence', *Argus*, 31 August 1850, p. 2; 'Lecture on Mesmerism', *Argus*, 18 October 1850, p. 4; 'Domestic Intelligence', *Argus*, 30 July 1852, p. 3; 'Electrobiology', *Argus*, 24 March 1853, p. 9; 'Lecture on Phrenology', *Argus*, 29 May 1856, p. 4; 'Domestic Intelligence', *Argus*, 10 June 1856, p. 5; 'Lecture on Gold', *Argus*, 28 August 1858, p. 5; 'Submarine Telegraphs', *Argus*, 13 December 1859, p. 7.
- 18 For examples of commentaries regarding the colony of Victoria, see: 'Colonus' (Sir William A'Beckett), *Does the Discovery of Gold in Victoria, Viewed in Relation to Its Moral and Social Effects, as Hitherto Developed, Deserve to be Considered a National*

Blessing, or a National Curse?, Melbourne, Benjamin Lucas, 1852; William Wilson Dobie, *Recollections of a Visit to Port Phillip, Australia, in 1852–1855*, Glasgow, Thomas Murray & Son, 1856, p. 43.

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- 21 John Hurst, 'Edward Wilson, Journalist and Editor', in Muriel Porter (ed.), *The Argus: The Life and Death of a Great Melbourne Newspaper*, Melbourne, RMIT Publishing, 2003, pp. 24–9; Ann Clarke, 'Advertising, Rising Circulation and Steam Printing: The Argus in the Early 1850s', *BSANZ Bulletin*, vol. 19, no. 4, 1995, p. 256.
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- 25 Michael A. Osborne, 'Acclimatizing the World: A History of the Paradigmatic Colonial Science', *Osiris*, vol. 15, 2000, p. 149.
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- 27 There was also an advertisement calling for a colonial secretary, Wilson being dissatisfied also with John Foster. A representative sample of the dates the advertisement was published includes: *Argus*, 18 January 1853, p. 6; 23 February 1853, p. 2; 5 March 1853, p. 2; 9 April 1853, p. 2; 16 May 1853, p. 2; 4 June 1853, p. 2; see also Serle, pp. 142, 143.
- 28 'Development of Resources', *Argus*, 26 April 1854, p. 4.
- 29 'Development of Resources', *Argus*, 26 April 1854, p. 4.
- 30 'Development of Resources', *Argus*, 21 April 1854, p. 4.
- 31 'Development of Resources', *Argus*, 20 April 1854, p. 4.
- 32 George W. Stocking Jr, *Victorian Anthropology*, New York, The Free Press, 1987, pp. 35–6.
- 33 'Development of Resources', *Argus*, 19 April 1854, p. 4.

- 34 Roy MacLeod, 'On Visiting the "Moving Metropolis": Reflections on the Architecture of Imperial Science', *Historical Records of Australian Science*, vol. 5, no. 3, 1980, p. 9.
- 35 MacLeod, pp. 2, 7, 9–10.
- 36 'Development of Resources' articles, *Argus*, 26 April 1854, p. 4; 29 April 1854, p. 4; 2 May 1854, p. 4.
- 37 'Development of Resources', *Argus*, 2 June 1854, p. 4.
- 38 Wekey later expanded upon his original articles, publishing a booklet titled *The Land: Importance of Its Culture to the General Prosperity of Victoria* later in 1854. This time he identified himself as the author. He also included a prospectus of the recently formed Victoria Vineyard and Fruit Garden Company, of which he was a provisional director. See series of articles titled 'The Advantages of the Cultivation of the Vine in Australia', *Argus*, 21 April 1854, p. 5; 22 April 1854, p. 5; 6 May 1854, p. 5; 20 May 1854, p. 3; 24 May 1854, p. 5.
- 39 Bill Laws, *Fifty Plants that Changed the Course of History*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 2011, p. 117; 'Inaugural Conversazione', 22 September 1854, *Transactions and Proceedings of the Victorian Institute for the Advancement of Science*, p. x.
- 40 'The Melbourne Philosophical and Literary Association', *Argus*, 2 June 1854, p. 5.
- 41 'Development of Resources', *Argus*, 19 April 1854, p. 4.
- 42 Stocking, p. 36.
- 43 'Development of Resources', *Argus*, 26 April 1854, p. 4; 2 May 1854, p. 4.
- 44 'Development of Resources', 26 April 1854, p. 4.
- 45 Meadows, p. 77.
- 46 Applegath was, with his partner Edward Cowper, the designer and developer of numerous printing presses, each facilitating faster printing times. Applegath took out eighteen patents in his lifetime, although he was bankrupted twice. He also developed a printing press that would minimise the risk of forgery. See: 'New Printing Machinery for the *Argus*', *Argus*, 13 March 1854, p. 5; Anita McConnell, 'Applegath, Augustus (1788–1871)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/ezproxy-f.deakin.edu.au/view/article/37121>, accessed 4 February 2013; Clarke, p. 262.
- 47 Serle, p. 371; R.W. Home, 'Introduction', in Home (ed.), p. xii.
- 48 'Development of Resources' articles, *Argus*, 26 April 1854, p. 4; 29 April 1854, p. 4; 2 May 1854, p. 4; 3 May 1854, p. 4; 28 June 1854, p. 4; 23 August 1854, p. 4.
- 49 'Development of Resources', *Argus*, 28 June 1854, p. 4.
- 50 'Development of Resources', *Argus*, 29 April 1854, p. 4.
- 51 'Development of Resources', *Argus*, 2 May 1854, p. 4.
- 52 'Development of Resources', *Argus*, 29 April 1854, p. 4.
- 53 'Development of Resources', *Argus*, 29 April 1854, p. 4.
- 54 MacLeod, p. 2.
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- Victorian Philosophical and Literary Society, Royal Society of Victoria Minutes, vol. 1, 1854, Royal Society of Victoria Collection, MS11663, State Library of Victoria.
- 56 'Development of Resources: To the Editor of *The Argus*', *Argus*, 11 May 1854, p. 5.
- 57 'Geological Society', *Argus*, 4 October 1852, p. 6.
- 58 'Canal & Docks', *Argus*, 30 August 1853, p. 5; 'Dock Accommodation', *Argus*, 2 September 1853, p. 5; 'Canal & Dock Company', *Argus*, 17 February 1854, p. 4; 'Communication with the Bay', *Argus*, 28 February 1854, p. 5; 'Docks', *Argus*, 28 April 1854, p. 5.
- 59 Finney, p. 82.
- 60 R.T.M. Pescott, 'The Royal Society of Victoria from then, 1854 to now, 1959', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Victoria*, vol. 73, 1961, pp. 3, 4, 6; Hoare, p. 11.
- 61 Serle, p. 191; Pescott, pp. 2, 5; Hoare, pp. 10–11.
- 62 For example: 'Victorian Institute', *Argus*, 11 June 1855, p. 6; 'Domestic Intelligence', *Argus*, 7 April 1855, p. 5; 'New Advertisement', *Argus*, 4 November 1854, p. 8; 'Philosophical Institute of Victoria', *Argus*, 26 September 1857, p. 5; 'Domestic Intelligence', *Argus*, 6 March 1855, p. 5; 'Monthly Meeting of the Philosophical Society', *Argus*, 10 January 1855, p. 5; 'Philosophical Institute of Victoria', *Argus*, 14 April 1857, p. 6.
- 63 'The National Institute of Victoria', *Argus*, 15 June 1854, p. 4.
- 64 For the inaugural *Conversazione* of the VIAS, Wilson presented a statuette of 'Dorothea', a stereoscope, madder of colonial growth, glass of colonial manufacture, minerals and a microscope. Objects were explained and illustrated during the *conversazione* by their exhibitors. In December 1854, Wilson presented a collection of crystals of gypsum from the Saltwater River (now the Maribyrnong River) to the PSV. In October 1855, Wilson presented the merged and renamed PIV with a specimen of a white opossum (presumably taxidermied, although this is not mentioned). 'Inaugural *Conversazione*', p. x; 'Monthly Meeting', 12 December 1854, *Transactions of the Philosophical Society of Victoria*, p. viii; 'Monthly Meeting', 23 October 1855, in Macadam (ed.), *Transactions*, vol. 1, p. xv.
- 65 The minutes would acknowledge when someone not present was presenting a specimen, as another would present it on that member's behalf.
- 66 Thomas A. Darragh, 'William Blandowski: A Frustrated Life', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Victoria*, vol. 121, no. 1, 2009, pp. 22, 23, 26, 27, 31.
- 67 'The Museum of Natural History', *Argus*, 24 April 1855, p. 4.
- 68 'Domestic Intelligence', *Argus*, 25 October 1854, p. 6.
- 69 'Philosophical Society', *Argus*, 11 April 1855, p. 5; 'The Melbourne Philosophical Society', *Argus*, 9 May 1855, p. 5; 'Philosophical Institute', *Argus*, 24 September 1856, p. 4; 'Domestic Intelligence', *Argus*, 22 October 1856, p. 5; 'Philosophical Institute of Victoria', *Argus*, 3 September 1857, p. 5.
- 70 For example: 'The Hospital Bazaar', *Argus*, 22 November 1855, p. 5; 'The Departed', *Argus*, 22 March 1856, p. 6; 'Where Are the "Ninety"?', *Argus*, 23 May 1856, p. 4.
- 71 'Commercial and Agricultural Map of Victoria', *Argus*, 11 April 1856, p. 5.

- 72 'Victorian Exhibition, Melbourne 1854', *Argus*, 28 February 1855, p. 8; Darragh, p. 35; *Official Catalogue of the Melbourne Exhibition 1854, in Connexion with the Paris Exhibition, 1855*, Melbourne, F. Sinnett & Company, 1854, pp. 7–9, 23; 'The Paris Exhibition', *Argus*, 7 February 1855, p. 6.
- 73 'Complimentary Dinner to M. Blandowski', *Argus*, 4 September 1857, p. 7.
- 74 'Professor Neumeyer's Proposal', *Argus*, 18 June 1857, p. 4.
- 75 'The Exhibition', *Argus*, 25 October 1854, p. 5.
- 76 'Colony of Victoria', *Argus*, 10 March 1855, p. 5.
- 77 'The University and the Museum', *Argus*, 29 July 1856, p. 4.
- 78 'Auriferous Lands', *Argus*, 14 February 1854, p. 4; 'Colony of Victoria', *Argus*, 10 March 1855, p. 5.
- 79 'Professor Neumeyer's Proposal', *Argus*, 18 June 1857, p. 4.
- 80 Hurst.
- 81 'Mind vs Matter', 20 February 1855, p. 4; 'A Preventive Check', *Argus*, 22 February 1855, p. 4.

THE ARGUS AND MISS SUTHERLAND

Sharron Lane

Abstract

*This article is a study of Melbourne's most successful child rescue advocate, Miss Selina Sutherland, focusing particularly on her relationship with the media in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It argues that Miss Sutherland was able to harness public support and significant funding for her cause by developing close relationships with key members of the print media, including investigative journalist John Stanley James (the Vagabond) and the editors of the Argus.**

IN FEBRUARY 1884, an article entitled 'Neglected Children' appeared in the *Argus* newspaper.¹ It contained details of 'an association whose good, beneficial, and philanthropic work is known only to comparatively a few, on account of the quiet and unostentatious way in which its operations are conducted'. Miss Selina Sutherland was presented as the driving force behind this work. Sutherland was born in Culgower, Sutherlandshire, Scotland. Her father, Bagrie Sutherland, has been described as a crofter in various biographical publications but the 1861 Scottish Census listed him as a farm worker on the Sutherland Estate and Selina, at the age of 21, as a dairy maid.² In 1864, she followed her older sister Margaret to New Zealand, where she lived and worked on her brother-in-law's farm. While in the Masterton region of New Zealand, she taught herself nursing and almost single-handedly raised the necessary capital for the founding

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of the Masterton Hospital.³ She arrived in Melbourne in 1880 and, after a brief period working as a nurse, was employed by Scots' Church as its lady missionary.⁴ Under Sutherland's leadership, the church's Neglected Children's Aid Society moved into the area of child rescue, and it was in this context, seeking to fund a receiving home, that it turned to the press for support. The 1884 *Argus* article marks the beginning of a career that saw Miss Sutherland recognised as Melbourne's pre-eminent child welfare expert.

During the 19th century, print media throughout the British Empire was an important facilitator of public opinion. The invention of the telegraph in 1844 had given newspapers almost immediate access to international stories and events.⁵ Newspapers were positioning themselves as society's educators and their journalists were establishing themselves as legitimate social and political commentators.⁶ Journalism was not yet a distinctive profession, articles often being written by so called 'gentleman journalists', but these men had the power to influence the general public. In colonial Victoria in 1876, John Stanley James established himself as a journalist of influence, penning his articles on the social life of outsiders under the pseudonym, the 'Vagabond'.⁷ British historian David Brown has studied the relationship that developed between politicians and journalists in the Victorian era, commenting: 'Politicians continued to recognize the importance of securing newspaper support and many actively solicited, or if possible commanded, press support and endorsement'. This type of 'mid-Victorian media manipulation', he argues, 'was conducted very much between individuals', concluding that 'the mid-century metropolitan journalist and newspaper were much more the agents of the educated elite public and politicians than contemporary rhetoric allowed'.⁸ Among those seeking to influence the press were reformers and advocates of many kinds, not just politicians and men of money.

This article will examine the way in which Miss Sutherland used her relationship with the press to advance her career. In order to understand how she came to develop this talent, it examines her earlier—and far less successful—experiences with the press in New Zealand, where she lived from 1865 to early 1881. Determined not to repeat this experience, Sutherland set about cultivating influential and loyal relationships with such key members of the press as the editorial staff of the *Argus* and John Stanley James. These relationships enabled her to manage her public image and hence to gain the support she needed for her new career in child rescue.

Selina Sutherland's first philanthropic role was as a fund-raiser and nurse in New Zealand from 1865 to 1880.⁹ Articles that started to appear in local newspapers from 1876 suggest that she was seeking to promote her profile in the southern part of the North Island where she lived and worked. On 27 May 1876, the *Wanganui Chronicle* enthusiastically reported she had 'delivered a lecture to young ladies' at Turakina regarding hygienic child-rearing methods.¹⁰ The correspondent was effusive in his praise, stating that 'he had heard lectures in his time but none to equal Miss Sutherland'. On 23 June 1877, another article about Miss Sutherland appeared in Wellington's *Evening Post*, a local liberal-leaning paper.¹¹ The article, which was reproduced in the *Wanganui Chronicle* on 3 July 1877, was supportive of Miss Sutherland's philanthropic plans, describing her as 'a lady whose name is intimately associated with every benevolent movement in the district' and announcing her decision to travel to Dunedin to study at the hospital 'by her own costs'.¹² Given Miss Sutherland's later relationships with members of the press, it is not unrealistic to suggest that she was the source of this information.

However, she was soon to suffer the indignity of negative press coverage when a series of allegations were made against her by staff at the Wellington Hospital, where she served as matron from some time in 1878 to the end of 1880.¹³ In August 1880, she was accused of various indiscretions and was called to account for her actions by the Wellington City Council, which managed the hospital.¹⁴ Some of the accusations levelled against Miss Sutherland were salacious. She was accused of hosting drinking parties in her rooms and of sharing a bed with a female patient for several hours, though she was reportedly clothed. The initial outcome of the hospital dispute was reported in the *Evening Post* and also in the *Hawkes Bay Herald* in September 1880.¹⁵ Miss Sutherland was exonerated, although members of the council found that the hospital was not being efficiently managed. Sutherland's accusers lost their jobs but she was allowed to remain.

It was not long before another dispute erupted at the hospital.¹⁶ This time the council instituted a private hearing—much to the disgust of the local press, which was forced to find other means of investigation. Newspapers reported that Miss Sutherland stood charged with the theft of linen, essentially mismanagement, but the real charges may have been more serious. In his history of the Masterton Hospital, C.J. Carle alleges that Sutherland had operated illegally on an old man after the hospital doctor had decided against performing the operation.¹⁷ Again she was exonerated

but the series of disputes that had played out in the local papers led to the council losing faith in her ability to manage the hospital and she was asked to tender her resignation. Her career, and more importantly her reputation, was all but destroyed and, after sending one further letter to the council in March 1881, which the *Evening Post* reported as being laughed at, she left New Zealand for Melbourne.¹⁸ She had, perhaps, learnt a painful lesson that made her more determined than ever to manage her own print profile. Her actions in the ensuing years suggest she met with a great deal of success.

Sutherland's Melbourne career began with the city's premier Presbyterian centre, Scots' Church in Collins Street. It was here that she began her child rescue work, drawing on a model that came to prominence first in London and then elsewhere throughout Britain and the colonies. Key figures, such as London's Reverend Thomas Bowman Stevenson (1838–1912) and Dr Thomas Barnardo (1854–1905), personified a mission-style movement seeking to remove children from the perceived evil influences of the street and slums; they positioned their work as 'evangelical outreach to the inner cities, feared lost to Christianity in the wake of the rapid urbanisation which accompanied the Industrial Revolution'.¹⁹

The literature Barnardo and his fellow child rescue advocates used to justify their methods was in the genre of melodrama.²⁰ Children were represented in biblical terms as 'lost' like the little sheep in the parable of Jesus.²¹ Child rescue literature was often embellished with emotive and haunting pictures aimed to elicit a sympathetic response among members of the public being called upon to provide funds to support the 'rescue' cause. Most of the English child rescue groups used their existing connections within the evangelical community to recruit supporters. However, for the work to flourish, it was essential for the leaders of these societies to have a highly visible personal profile. According to Gillian Wagner, Barnardo was forced to publicise his work by 'advertising claims of his institutions with the Christian public through writings, speeches and photographs to an extent never before attempted by one man'.²² In this sense, the movement relied greatly on the personalities of its founders, and much more so than other philanthropic enterprises of the time.

The London-based child rescue movement was dominated by male leadership but other philanthropic enterprises during this era were managed by women. Throughout the 19th century, in all parts of the British Empire, middle and upper class women became part of a broad movement seeking to improve conditions for poor urban-based families, particularly women

and children. Some of these women developed a high profile as part of their advocacy role. Mary Carpenter (1807–1877), for example, was a prominent educational reformer involved in the ragged school movement and wrote prolifically to advertise her views on the plight of the poor.²³ Child migration advocates also needed to rely on their personal profile to raise funds. Maria Rye (1829–1903) and Annie MacPherson (1827–1882) headed two of the largest child migration organisations that transported children from England to Canada throughout the same period.²⁴ Although they did receive assistance from government, they shared with their fellow child rescuers the need to justify their methods and thus employed similar imagery and melodramatic narratives of lost children in evil surroundings to elicit financial and moral support for their cause.

In her early years in Melbourne, following the scandal that had ended her New Zealand nursing career, Sutherland avoided the media spotlight. By the time the first article concerning her work appeared in the *Argus*, she had moved from broad missionary activities to focus on the plight of supposed ‘neglected’ children. Funds were needed, the article argued, to provide a house where the children could be received while waiting for foster homes in the country. Rather than emphasising the role of her employer, the Scots’ Church Society, the article focused on the activities of Sutherland as if she alone were responsible for the rescue work. It commended her accomplishments, stating that ‘through Miss Sutherland’s instrumentality 82 children have been rescued from the haunts of immorality and vice’.²⁵ The members of the society’s committee of management all remained anonymous, described simply as ‘the ladies who assist her’.²⁶ This emphasis on Sutherland, with her nameless co-workers in supporting roles, was to increase over the ensuing ten years. Articles appeared regularly in the *Argus* during the second half of the 1880s and increased during the early part of the 1890s. A report of the society’s monthly home committee meetings was also published from 1885 onwards but these reports ceased when Miss Sutherland left the organisation in 1893.

By early 1884, Miss Sutherland had obtained the personal support of an influential member of Melbourne’s press, John Stanley James.²⁷ He became a great devotee of her efforts, praising particularly her commitment to a non-denominational approach to the provision of assistance to neglected children, an approach he also strongly promoted.²⁸ Styling himself an investigative journalist, James often arrived incognito to report on various philanthropic activities that took place across Melbourne. With Miss

Sutherland, however, rather than investigate and critique her work, he offered unconditional support. His two-part article entitled 'Story of a Street Arab', published in December 1885, boosted Sutherland's career and her claim to expertise. Evoking familiar narratives of child rescue, it cast Miss Sutherland as the fearless heroine visiting and delivering the children from the graphically described 'slums' of Melbourne. Drawing on a well-established trope, the first part of the article set out the evils of city life, which were then contrasted with the safety of the country in part two.²⁹ Ever the pragmatist, Miss Sutherland was initially motivated by the opportunity the newspaper articles provided to raise funds. However, she also recognised the advantage of having the influential support of the *Vagabond* in positioning her in the public's mind as a welfare 'expert'. James's personal support over the next twelve years gave Sutherland a powerful ally in the press and, when his funeral was held in 1896, she sent a wreath with a note reading 'with deep regret from the little ones in the Home'.³⁰

The *Vagabond* was not the only member of the press with whom Miss Sutherland made a point of developing a relationship. The author of an unusually candid article published in the *Argus* in October 1893 commented that she 'occasionally comes in to discuss philanthropic subjects with the sub editors'. The purpose of these visits, he explained, was 'to endeavour generally to sow in this sterile soil some seeds of reform'.³¹ Through cultivating such associations, Sutherland ensured her opinion was sought by those in power on matters relating to child and infant welfare, and the *Argus* was pleased to report the results of her intervention. She was so successful in this role that she convinced Alfred Deakin to amend the 1887 Neglected Children's Act to authorise philanthropic child rescuers to apprehend children they believed were neglected.³² As a reward for her lobbying, she was the first individual to be licensed under the act, receiving her authority in August 1888.³³ Not even Dr Barnardo had been able to persuade parliament to give child rescuers such power.

Sutherland clung to this expert role in the years that followed. At times she found herself at odds with various committees set in place to oversee her work and, twice in this period, was forced to sever her connection; yet, despite these difficulties, she maintained her reputation. In 1893, she moved from working with the Scots' Church to form the broader Presbyterian Neglected Children's Aid Society, hoping to generate more funds and support for her cause. This new society was short lived; soon

after, with the assistance of Mr Brett, the then chief secretary of Victoria responsible for neglected children, members of the Presbyterian Synod, notably including the minister of Scots' Church, the Reverend Marshall, began to question Miss Sutherland's methods.³⁴

One point of contention at this time was Sutherland's reluctance to take automatic legal guardianship of children coming into her care. Ironically, having lobbied for the clause in the 1887 Neglected Children's Act that allowed her to rescue and assume guardianship of children, Sutherland was now reluctant to use such powers. The 1890s depression had seen a rise in what she saw as the 'deserving poor', parents who only needed temporary placements for their children, and she refused to use her powers under the Act to sever their guardianship rights. The synod did not agree, so Sutherland moved the dispute into the press, using a public address at Buninyong, reported in the *Argus*, to accuse two members of the church of receiving rent from houses used for 'immoral purposes'.³⁵ The implication was that, with such backgrounds, they were ill-equipped to question her authority.

In October 1894, Miss Sutherland and her entire ladies committee resigned to found a third organisation, the Victorian Neglected Children's Aid Society. Despite her disputes with first the Scots' Church in 1893 and then the Presbyterian Church in 1894, Sutherland managed not simply to consolidate or transfer her reputation but to build on it, establishing an even broader, non-denominational organisation and further enhancing her influence on child welfare. Through her leading role in this new organisation, she came to be recognised as Victoria's most significant individual worker in the area of child rescue.

It was on the basis of this reputation that Miss Sutherland agreed to be interviewed in London's *Daily News* during a trip to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 1897.³⁶ The newspaper reported that Miss Sutherland, 'who had done good work in Victoria in connection with the Children's Aid Society ... had come to see if the Old World had anything to teach the New'. She had 'for some weeks been visiting all parts of London and seeing all sorts and conditions of people'. Her conclusions were damning, concluding '[London] had nothing to teach the colonies; you are far behind them'. Her strongly articulated views represented an act of a woman who was at once an expert in self-promotion and a believer in her own welfare expertise. Her melodramatic description of the lack of hope for the poor of London was incendiary. The article, which was commented

on in two other British papers, the *Liverpool Mercury* and *Reynold's Newspaper*,³⁷ must have been a matter of gratification to Sutherland, who kept a report of it from a Melbourne newspaper in her personal Bible until her death in 1909.³⁸ She was proud of having achieved an international reputation. Such an interview in the city at the epicentre of the Empire consolidated her status as an 'expert' in child welfare.

Her success at home, however, remained dependent on the loyal support of the *Argus*. The coverage she received in other Melbourne newspapers was less enthusiastic. The *Age* reported Miss Sutherland's achievements less often and more modestly than did the *Argus*. Its reporters recorded her participation in meetings but did not indulge in personal praise.³⁹ While the *Age* recognised Miss Sutherland's profile, she does not appear to have been able to develop the close personal relationships she sustained with the editorial staff of the *Argus*. This was to cost her dearly when, in May 1908, towards the end of her life, she fell into dispute with the ladies committee of the Victorian Neglected Children's Aid Society. The government inquiry in response to the crisis was reported across Australia.⁴⁰ Once again, Miss Sutherland had become known nation wide for all the wrong reasons. The *Advertiser* in South Australia and the *Barrier Miner* of Broken Hill produced several articles; the *Northern Star* in Lismore, New South Wales, the *Mercury* in Hobart, several West Australian papers and the *Examiner* in Launceston all reported on the outcome of the inquiry. Miss Sutherland received some positive press support in the New Zealand papers⁴¹ and the *Argus* remained loyal, summarising the allegations against Miss Sutherland but reporting in full all the glowing character references given by the many witnesses called in her defence.⁴² Reinforcing this support, it recorded progress on the development of her final organisation, Sutherland Homes for Children, funded by a large private donation. In contrast, the *Age* reported the allegations in full, paying little attention to contrary testimony.⁴³

There is no doubt that Miss Sutherland's relationship with, and the loyalty she received from, *Argus* staff enabled her to successfully establish her final organisation after the disaster of the inquiry in 1908.⁴⁴ At the age of 69, she did not have a great deal of time to rebuild her reputation. She used her contacts at the *Argus* to assist her to establish her new children's home by promoting all her various meetings as she began fund-raising again in 1908.⁴⁵ Although she was in the last year of her life, she was able to galvanise support that strongly influenced the way in which she

was remembered. This process was reinforced by the reputation she had successfully cultivated and shaped over the previous decades. Three of the four organisations of which she was the founder survive today, the first two in Kildonan, the others incorporated into Oz Child and Berry Street. That each of these organisations acknowledges her as a founder is testament to her powerful legacy.

NOTES

- 1 ‘Neglected Children’, *Argus*, 9 February 1884.
- 2 In the Scottish Census of 1861, Selina’s brother was listed as a ‘Shepherd’, which also indicates the family were estate workers. See www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/, retrieved 27 June 2011.
- 3 C.J. Carle, *Masterton Hospital 1879–1979*, Masterton, Centennial Book Committee, Wairarapa Hospital, 1979, p. 13.
- 4 Ruth Hoban, ‘Sulina Sutherland Murray MacDonald (1839–1909)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/sutherland-sulina-murray-macdonald-4674/text7727>. Initially named ‘Sutherland Sutherland’ in the parish records of her birth, she was eventually named ‘Selina’ by her family but seems to have changed the spelling of her name some time while working in Melbourne.
- 5 Tom Standage and Elizabeth Preston, ‘The Victorian Internet’, *Muse*, vol. 13, no. 9, 2009, pp. 16–22.
- 6 David Brown, ‘Morally Transforming the World or Spinning a Line? Politicians and the Newspaper Press in Mid Nineteenth-century Britain’, *Historical Research*, vol. 83, no. 220, 2010, p. 321.
- 7 Richard White, ‘Australian Journalists, Travel Writing and China: James Hingston, the “Vagabond” and G.E. Morrison’, *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2008, p. 240. Also John Barnes, ‘John Stanley James (1843–1896)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/james-john-stanley-3848/text6113>.
- 8 Brown, pp. 322–4.
- 9 Hoban.
- 10 ‘Local and General News’, *Wanganui Chronicle*, 27 May 1876.
- 11 ‘Local and General’, *Evening Post*, 23 June 1877. Also see website for details of both papers’ history at: www.paperspast.natlib.govt.nz.
- 12 ‘Local and General News’, *Wanganui Chronicle*, 3 July 1877.
- 13 C.J. Carle states in his history of Masterton Hospital that the Wellington hospital archives note that Miss Sutherland was referred to as matron of the Wellington hospital in 1878, while other sources, such as the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, state that she was matron from 1879 (see Hoban).

- 14 Details were provided in the following daily articles: 'The Hospital Inquiry', *Evening Post*, 27 August 1880; 'The Hospital Inquiry: Yesterday's Proceedings', *Evening Post*, 28 August 1880; 'The Hospital Inquiry: The House Surgeon's Evidence', *Evening Post*, 3 September 1880.
- 15 Unknown, *Hawkes Bay Herald*, 8 September 1880.
- 16 In November 1880, a second inquiry took place. It was again reported in the press. See: 'City Council', *Evening Post*, 26 November 1880.
- 17 Carle, p. 14.
- 18 'The Railway Returns', *Evening Post*, 25 March 1881.
- 19 Shurlee Swain, 'Sweet Childhood Lost: Idealised Images of Childhood in the British Child Rescue Literature', *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2009, p. 199.
- 20 For an in-depth analysis of the discourse of child rescue advocates, see Margot Hillel & Shurlee Swain, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire: Child Rescue Discourse, England, Canada and Australia 1850–1915*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2010.
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- 22 Gillian Wagner, 'Introduction', in Valerie Lloyd (comp.), *The Camera and Dr. Barnardo* (Catalogue of an exhibition held at the National Portrait Gallery, London, July to December 1974), London, National Portrait Gallery, 1974, p. 3.
- 23 For examples of her own works, see Joseph Estlin Carpenter & Mary Carpenter, *The Life and Work of Mary Carpenter*, London, Macmillan Co., 1879; and Mary Carpenter, *Juvenile Delinquents, their Condition and Treatment*, London, W. & F.G. Cash, 1853.
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- 25 'Neglected Children', *Argus*, 9 February 1884.
- 26 'Neglected Children', *Argus*, 9 February 1884.
- 27 John Stanley James, 'Letter to the Editor', *Argus*, 3 March 1884.
- 28 For example, see John Stanley James, 'Letter to the Editor', *Argus*, 3 March 1884; 'The Story of a Street Arab Volume I', *Argus*, 1 December 1885; 'The Story of a Street Arab Volume II', *Argus*, 8 December 1885.
- 29 For an analysis of child rescue discourses, see Hillel & Swain.
- 30 John Stanley James, *The Vagabond Papers*, ed. Michael Cannon, 2nd edn, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1969, p. 14. By this stage, she was referring to the home associated with the Victorian Neglected Children's Aid Society, which she had founded in 1895.
- 31 'Miss Sutherland: A Philanthropic Study', *Argus*, 5 October 1893, p. 5.
- 32 Elizabeth J. Mellor, *Stepping Stones: The Development of Early Childhood Services in Australia*, Sydney, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990, especially chapter 2, 'Child Rescue: Institutional Care and Boarding Out'.
- 33 This original licence remains in the Kildonan UnitingCare archive.
- 34 Reverend John Thomson, *Rescue of Neglected and Destitute Children: A Defence of Miss Sutherland and Rev. Alexander Stewart in Answer to Rev. Alexander Marshall*,

Rev. Dr. John L. Rentoul and Others: With an Explanation of the Rescue Work, the Right Methods, and the Actual Situation, Melbourne, Stillwell and Co. Printers, 1894.

- 35 'Miss Sutherland and the Presbyterian Assembly: A Speech at Buninyong', *Argus*, 11 May 1894.
- 36 'As Others See Us: A Victorian View of London: A City of Destruction', *Daily News*, 14 July 1897.
- 37 'This Morning's News in Brief', *Liverpool Mercury*, 15 July 1897; 'Notes and Gossip', *Reynold's Newspaper*, 18 July 1897.
- 38 Miss Sutherland's Bible (Melbourne), Berry Street Archives, Richmond. Only a section of this report was found, though it seems to have come from the *Herald* newspaper.
- 39 'Miss Sutherland's Mission', *Age*, 11 September 1897. For example, 'The Scots' Church Social Improvement Society: Annual Meeting', *Age*, 3 June 1887; and 'Today's Issue', *Age*, 27 November 1895.
- 40 Details of the inquiry can be located in all the papers listed above in September and October 1908 using the Trove digitised papers data base, National Library of Australia, at <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspapers>.
- 41 For example, see 'Women in Print', *Evening Post*, 19 November 1908; and 'Local and General', *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 20 November 1908.
- 42 See Unknown, 'Miss Sutherland: Investigation of Charges. Evidence Taken', *Argus*, 26 September 1908.
- 43 See 'Miss Sutherland: Children's Home Imbroglio. The Evidence Opened', *Age*, 26 September 1908; 'Miss Sutherland: Children's Home Imbroglio', *Age*, 29 September 1908; 'Miss Sutherland's Home: The Special Inquiry Vice-President's Evidence', *Age*, 7 October 1908.
- 44 See 'Rally for Miss Sutherland', *Argus*, 26 June 1908, when 1,000 people rallied to Miss Sutherland's cause after the initial dispute with the Victorian Neglected Children's Aid Society.
- 45 Her death was reported in newspapers in Australia and New Zealand. For example, see: 'Death of the Children's Friend', *Ashburton Guardian*, 9 October 1909; 'Death of the Children's Friend', *Colonist*, 9 October 1909.

THE *BENDIGO ADVERTISER*: HISTORICAL NOTES

Carol Holsworth

THE *BENDIGO ADVERTISER*, FOUNDED IN 1853 to serve the population of the goldmining settlement of Sandhurst (renamed Bendigo 1891), still exists today but has undergone many changes since its inception. These included a move to tabloid form and a change in name from the *Bendigo Advertiser* to just the *Advertiser* but, as of 3 April 2010, the paper reverted to its original title, the *Bendigo Advertiser*. It is not as well respected or widely read as it was in the late 19th century when it was considered the second-most important newspaper in Victoria. Its circulation is now much smaller and it is no longer managed as a local business or under local control, being part of the Fairfax stable. The names associated with its heyday are those of Angus Mackay (1824–1886), R.R. Haverfield (1819–1899) and George Mackay (1861–1948) (Angus's son and an early historian of Bendigo).

Old pioneers recounted years afterwards the days in late 1853 when Angus Mackay, dressed in typical digger garb, could often be seen frying a mutton chop on a little fire by his tent door. Mackay had arrived in Bendigo as the *Argus* correspondent, which gave him an exceptional opportunity to observe several early attempts to establish a local newspaper. The first *Bendigo Advertiser and Sandhurst Commercial Courier*, printed on 9 December 1853 under the ownership of R.R. Haverfield and A.M. Lloyd, was a single double-sided tabloid sheet, which sold for 6d. It was identified in the corner of the masthead as 'Number 1, Volume 1'. Only 500 copies were printed by Cook and Sherbon at Bendigo Flat. The complete printing plant required for the new paper to undertake its own production arrived

in March 1854, and, on the 21st of that month, the first four-page edition was printed.

The *Bendigo Advertiser* became a twice-weekly publication with its editorial office at View Point, right in the heart of the diggings. Unfortunately, the paper ran into financial difficulties and, on 16 May 1855, the new owners, Angus Mackay, J.J. Casey (1831–1913) and James Henderson, took control. They kept the same masthead and initially the same number of pages and format but recorded the edition as ‘Volume II, Number 1’. A few months later, in October 1855, the *Bendigo Advertiser* moved to larger premises on Pall Mall, which enabled a tri-weekly paper to be published—on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Within a year of taking over the paper, the three local investors and managers had expanded their staff and printing premises to enable them to issue a daily newspaper, the first issue appearing in April 1856. In 1861, with the readership continuing to expand, they moved again, this time to Hargreave Street.

Henry Hopwood (1813–1869), founder of the township of Echuca could see what a well-run newspaper was doing for Sandhurst business and citizens, so, in 1863, he approached the proprietors of the *Bendigo Advertiser* to start up an Echuca newspaper. The partners had just established the *McIvor Times* at Heathcote but found it was not the right match for the *Bendigo Advertiser*, so they sold it in order to take up Hopwood’s suggestion, which proved to be a more successful venture. The *Riverine Herald* started as a weekly paper in July 1863 under the editorship of R.R. Haverfield in Sandhurst, with the printing and formatting all taking place in the *Bendigo Advertiser* premises. The *Riverine Herald*, like its stablemate, developed a reputation for dependable reporting and endorsed the same responsible editorial policy that Angus Mackay continued to guarantee in Sandhurst.

The format of the *Riverine Herald* was very similar to that of the *Bendigo Advertiser*, and much of the Victorian news from Melbourne was co-shared between the ‘Tiser’ and the ‘Riv’. Haverfield, a part owner of the new paper, continued as editor with the backing of Mackay & Co. and quickly also opened an Echuca *Riverine Herald* office for local printing of advertising bills, posters and circulars. By November 1864, the new planned train service to connect the Murray River traffic with Melbourne encouraged the *Riverine Herald* to be published twice a week, for the new trains were able to provide quicker transportation and communication between the Echuca and Sandhurst newspaper offices.

With the withdrawal of Mackay's original partners, James Henderson and then J.J. Casey, in 1867, Mr David Stuart of Sandhurst joined Mackay as co-owner of the *Advertiser*. Mackay generally shaped the editorial direction of the newspaper until he entered parliament in 1868. With the growing prosperity of Sandhurst from the mining years, the *Advertiser* soon became a very profitable business. More readers were attracted by an increase in the size of the newspaper's printed sheets, and in the number of pages per issue, as well as by the many special supplements added at no extra cost. In 1865, the price of the paper was 3d but, in 1871, it was reduced to 2d. In 1882, when it was further reduced to 1d, it was considered a very good buy, given the number of uses the pages could be put to after it was read by whole families and their friends. In 1870, Haverfield shifted from the *Riverine Herald* to the position of senior editor of the *Bendigo Advertiser* until he died in 1889. His successor was the junior editor, George Mackay, who thereafter took full control.



In these early decades, the first page of the *Bendigo Advertiser*, like other contemporary newspapers, consisted of classified advertisements, but its second page featured an editorial and also contained many small paragraphs describing events in Bendigo and reporting on social activities as well as a lot of fascinating gossip. However, it seldom aired any details about the Mackay family or problems at the newspaper. A letter written on 25 January 1872 from Mackay & Co. preserved in the Bendigo Regional Archives Centre gives us some indication of the type of business problems the owners encountered that were not written up in their newspaper. The lack of water needed for the boilers to produce steam for the *Advertiser*'s printing operations had caused the whole operation to close down. The letter clearly stated if it happened again Mackay and Co would 'take proceedings against the City Council'.

Angus Mackay brought prominence to Bendigo and the *Bendigo Advertiser* by his own hard work as editor and investor, together with the efforts of the team of men he hired as managers, editors and journalists. These employees became part of his family and, over the years, they also

helped to train his three sons, Robert Donald, George and Angus, in the newspaper's production from the ground up.

Angus Mackay's death notice in the *Bendigo Advertiser* in July 1886—just two short lines—was noticeably brief, for someone as prominent as the owner of the newspaper: 'DEATH—On the 5th July, at his residence McLaren Street, ANGUS MACKAY aged 62 years'. The *Bendigo Advertiser's* family notices were always directly above the editorial, which on this sad day was headed 'TO HIS MEMORY'. His newspaper did not close down; the staff all knew the daily *Advertiser* newspaper must be produced. Mackay's standards had to be retained but his photograph in the front office was hung with black bunting, and six special employees from the *Bendigo Advertiser* office were chosen to carry Mackay's coffin out of his residence on the corner of McLaren and Mundy Streets.

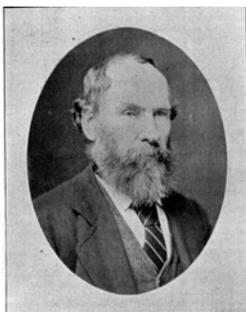


Photo by THE LATE BROS. ANGUS MACKAY. J. W. Smith.
*W.B. Kimberley (comp.),
 Bendigo and Vicinity,
 Melbourne, F.W. Niven
 & Co., 1895*

After the Presbyterian service held at the Mackay home, the No. 1 Fire Brigade led the funeral procession to the Sandhurst Cemetery, followed by officials from the Miner's Association and St Andrew's Society. Then came the family mourning coaches, followed by half a dozen carriages containing the employees of the *Bendigo Advertiser*. Mayors, councillors and other local officials were held back behind the newspaper employees, which may have been seen as an affront by these worthy dignitaries, but the prominent front position given the employees showed how important they were to the Mackay family. In fact, many were such long-term employees that Angus had often welcomed them into his home.

All would acknowledge that Mackay as the colony's minister for mines had been successful in guaranteeing a supply of water to Sandhurst from the Malmsbury reservoir. The *Bendigo Advertiser* in November 1877 had highlighted Mr Mackay opening the sluice-gates that allowed the water from the Coliban into the Bendigo Reservoir, but this water was for the particular benefit of mining operations. Possibly the *Bendigo Advertiser's* boiler-room steamer also received a good supply of water but the public did not. Many residents of Bendigo continued to suffer from typhoid fever into the early 1900s, as had Angus Mackay himself, but most died not being able to afford the best private doctors and nurses. W.D.C. Denovan, as Sandhurst city clerk, nevertheless, later remembered Angus Mackay as a hard and stubborn fighter for justice and reform during the turbulent early 50s and 60s. 'The effect upon him of his fellows' hardship and miseries was such that in after years, when in endeavouring to reduce the miners' hours of labor, he would often declaim against long hours as brutalising in their effects upon men.'

Mr David Stuart had predeceased Mackay in 1874 but his family retained his financial interest in the paper until after Angus's death. Mackay's sons, Robert, George and Angus Jnr, acquired the remaining interest and conducted the *Advertiser*, the *Weekly Advertiser* and the *Riverine Herald* on behalf of the family. On 12 August 1886, son George Mackay, as editor of the *Bendigo Advertiser* and on behalf of Mackay & Co., sent the Sandhurst Council a photograph of his late father as a memento of his connections with the city. It no longer seems to exist, however, and there is no record of its fate at the hands of the council.

George titled himself as just a plain 'journalist' in 1891 when Mackay & Co. of Bendigo published his book, *The History of Bendigo*. In his preface, George stated that he had spent the past four years carefully examining various records but drew chiefly from the files of the *Bendigo Advertiser*:

The work of compiling it was undertaken in consequence of repeated complaints by old Bendigonians that there was no reliable account of a district which had contributed so much to the prosperity of the colony; and whatever demerits the volume may possess in other respects, its accuracy can at least be guaranteed.

In 1892, Angus Mackay Jnr visited England and purchased a newly invented Lancashire printing machine manufactured by Coulthard & Sons. This machine, was accompanied to Bendigo by the manufacturer's employee who was required to superintend its erection, and, by August



*George Mackay
Bendigo*

George Mackay
Courtesy: James Lerk Collection

1893, it was in operation and able to print, cut and fold the daily *Advertiser* from a continuous ream at the rate of 4,000 perfect copies per hour. It was now possible for an earlier delivery of the 'Tiser'. In 1898, the first linotype machine was installed, thus doing away with some of the hand compositors and, by 1902, five more were in operation. In 1903, after extension of the premises, a Payne Wharfdale machine was installed, which was capable of printing the recently enlarged, eight-page Saturday edition. Then two Dexter folders were purchased, which helped the paper cope with the increase in the number of subscribers and allowed Mackay & Co. to enlarge to eight pages the previous six-page Monday and Wednesday editions.

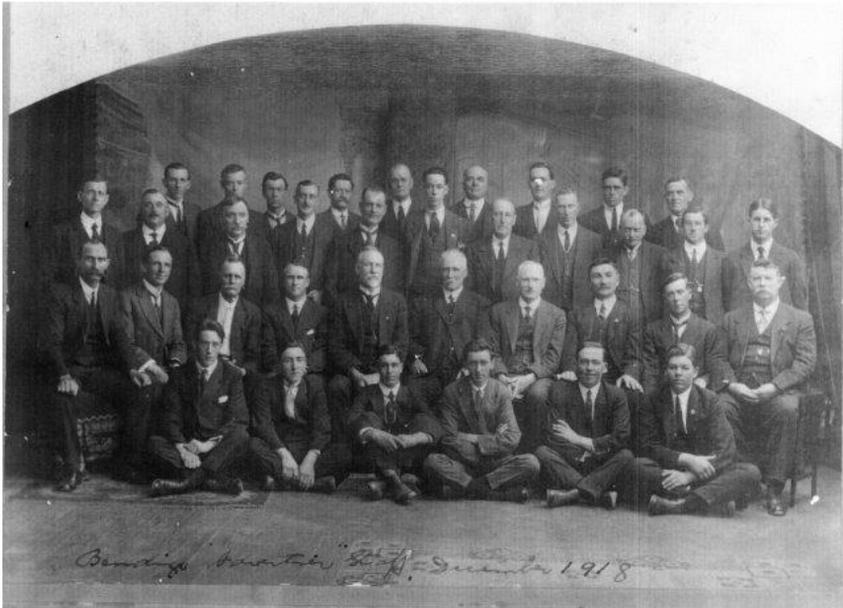
In 1895, George Mackay changed the format of his *Weekly Advertiser*, which summarised the most noteworthy news in the past week and republished special articles from the *Bendigo Advertiser*. It was much prized by people in the surrounding district who could not receive a daily

paper delivered to their door. Mackay now refashioned it into the first illustrated country paper in Victoria and the first number of the resulting *Bendigonian* appeared on 18 April. It was a very social paper with news from a wider district but full of much-prized wonderful illustrations and photographs, which even to this day are respected records of the past. On 9 December 1903, the *Bendigo Advertiser* celebrated its jubilee with a facsimile of the first issue, 9 December 1853. In July 1913, the *Riverine Herald* published its jubilee issue and gave particular praise to Angus Mackay for realising that Echuca warranted a newspaper of its own. Robert D. Mackay, together with his partner R.G. Foyster, were now the managers of the *Riverine Herald* and the Mackay connection with Echuca and the 'Riv' continued until 1948.

On the 30 November 1918, the opposition newspaper, the *Bendigo Independent*, appeared for the last time as a separate newspaper; after that date, it was incorporated into the *Bendigo Advertiser*. The newspaper's masthead was changed for the first time in the history of the Mackay family's two generations of involvement. The company, Bendigo Independent Proprietary Ltd, had bought out Mackay & Co's interest in the *Advertiser* and the *Bendigonian*. Under the masthead of the next issue of the *Advertiser* (2 December 1918) were the following words in much smaller print: 'with which is incorporated *The Bendigo Independent*'. The editorial on this day was titled 'OURSELVES'. The tone and words used suggest it was written by the *Independent's* editor. The company hoped:

by the concentration of effort and the judicious expenditure of capital to make improvements which will fully compensate for any loss of the individuality ... The staff will include the majority of the members of the staff of the *Independent* together with a number of those previously employed on the *Advertiser* ... From a business standpoint the *Advertiser* now occupies the position of the leading provincial paper in Australia, as the combination makes the circulation the largest of any paper outside of the metropolitan cities. Advertisers will thus secure the maximum of publicity with a minimum of expenditure ...

In the *Bendigonian* of 19 December 1918, it was reported that the Australian Journalists Association had met in Bendigo. A resolution expressed regret at the impending departure from Bendigo of Messrs R.H. Richmond, Herbert Richmond and J.M. Ludlow, members of the literary staff of the *Bendigo Advertiser*, and wished them well. A letter was also to be sent to Mackay & Co. voicing the appreciation of the branch at the



Bendigo Advertiser staff, December 1918

Courtesy: James Lerk Collection

manner in which the staff had been treated, both prior to and at the time of the amalgamation of the *Advertiser* and the *Independent*. The Mackay men as usual, following the tradition of their father, Angus, had been fair and honest to their last days of business and had shown great appreciation of their staff.

Since the Mackay involvement in 1855, 19,749 issues had been produced under the same masthead. In their final month of operations, the Mackays organised a group photograph of their staff by Bartlett Bros on 19 December. A copy of this photo was presented to each of the last 36 men who had worked for them. On 31 December, with the new masthead accepted by the public, the involvement of the Mackay brothers ended.

On 6 January 1919, the employees held a special function to thank the former proprietors for their fairness and integrity over the years. Civic dignitaries also paid tribute and thanks to George, Robert and Angus with a function held at the Shamrock Hotel on 18 July 1919. It does seem anomalous that neither Robert nor George was ever included in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. For 36 years, the three sons had

written, compiled, edited and managed this outstanding country newspaper. The Mackay family had given 63 years to the pioneering of newspapers in North Central Victoria, overcoming many challenges but ultimately providing a firm foundation for the newspaper's ongoing publication.

There are few memorials in Bendigo today to Angus Mackay except the large Bendigo Cemetery memorial stone and a small street named after him. Mackay Street is on the east side of the railway track to Echuca, just south of the cattle saleyards. It appears to have been an area developed for workers' housing. But, regardless of the location, Mackay Street lies parallel to three other streets in this subdivision named after three other notable men, Lansell, Phillip and Casey. In 1892, Robert, George and Angus Mackay Jnr donated to the Bendigo Art Gallery Tennyson Coles's watercolour portrait of their father, *The Hon Angus Mackay MP*, but there is no knowledge of when or if it was ever put on display. There are few signs of recognition of the contribution of Angus's three sons, although all are buried in the Bendigo Cemetery. We believe there was an avenue of poplars planted in memory of pioneers of the district somewhere down near Kangaroo Flat and that some Mackay relatives had plaques there, but these and the trees are long gone.

The Bendigo Historical Society has almost no material on the Mackay family because, not having had a home in the past, the society has been unable to accept donations for many years and, unfortunately, much of what has been acquired since the late 1970s is still stored in a large number of boxes and awaits cataloguing by volunteers. Angus's grandson, Donald Mackay of Queensland, and great grandson, Geoff Mackay of Melbourne, have been unable to add more than what has already been published.

Will the *Bendigo Advertiser* be remembered and valued in the future as a major Victorian paper? In 1919, on change of ownership, considerable changes were made to the newspaper's format and style, and these are very recognisable by researchers today. In 1925, the new owners made further drastic changes by moving into the former old Lyceum building. This was the paper's fifth home. The present owners do not live in Bendigo, many employees when they arrive have no knowledge of the history of Bendigo and certainly have never read George Mackay's book. They often consider their time here in Bendigo as a stepping stone to something bigger and better somewhere else.

NOTE ON SOURCES

Most information for this article was found in the *Bendigo Advertiser* using the National Library of Australia's digital data base, TROVE. Other primary sources include: works held in the Bendigo Art Gallery Collection; Mackay & Co., letter to Sandhurst Council, 16–31 Jan 1872, VPRS 16936, Public Record Office Victoria; George Mackay, letter to Sandhurst Council, 12 August 1886, BRAC Box 24, Bendigo Regional Archives Centre; George Mackay, *History of Bendigo*, Bendigo, Mackay & Co., Melbourne, Fergusson & Mitchell, 1891; and W.B. Kimberly, *Bendigo and Vicinity*, Melbourne, F.W. Niven & Co., 1895. More recent sources include: James Lerk, 'Discover Bendigo', *Bendigo Weekly* newspaper, 15 December 2000, 29 December 2000, 12 January 2001; Susan Priestley, *Echuca: A Centenary History*, Brisbane, Jacaranda, 1965; S.M. Ingham, 'Mackay, Angus (1824–1886)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mackay-angus-4105/text6561>; Rita Hull, *Origins of Bendigo Street Names. Book 2*, Bendigo, Rita Hull and Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies Inc., c. 2007.

INTRODUCTION: FIFTY YEARS SINCE ‘BRIGHTON’

Andrew Lemon
RHSV President

FIFTY YEARS AGO LAST YEAR, Melbourne University Press published a substantial hard-cover book, *A History of Brighton*, by Weston Bate. The influence of that book on the writing of local history in Victoria and its place in Australian historiography is made evident in the articles that follow. The RHSV was proud to present a two-day conference in November 2012 to celebrate that achievement. Weston and Janice Bate were guests of honour throughout.

Peter Hiscock, former director of the highly successful Sovereign Hill open-air museum at Ballarat, officially opened the exhibition, ‘Celebrating Fifty Years of Local History in Victoria’, at the RHSV headquarters in A’Beckett Street, Melbourne, on Friday 16 November. He noted the important role Weston’s work on Ballarat played in setting the standards at Sovereign Hill, and Weston’s own great contribution to fostering the local history movement in this state. The Brighton Historical Society generously lent the RHSV several unique items from its collection for the exhibition. A capacity crowd in our speakers’ room then heard Professor Graeme Davison deliver the RHSV’s Augustus Wolskel Memorial Lecture on ‘Fifty Years of Victorian Local History’—an outstanding paper that we are privileged to publish here.

The next day, a sequence of papers and panels took us from a further review of the contribution of Weston Bate’s career as historian through to the practice of local history in the present and on to possibilities for the future. In the pages that follow, we now publish the papers, some of them



Janice Bate, Graeme Davison and Weston Bate at the Royal Historical Society of Victoria

edited transcripts, that reflect most closely on Weston's work and its impact. Professor Richard Broome chaired a panel discussion that included papers by Associate Professor Don Gibb, Dr John Lack, Dr Charles Fahey and former RHSV president Susan Priestley. Also published here is a survey of the progress of the Victorian Community History Awards by Carole Woods, herself an expert on Victorian local history who has been closely involved with the awards since their inception.

The conference as a whole was marked by the uniformly excellent quality of the papers. Several are not published here as they depended heavily on illustration or audio-visual presentation. These were the papers by Dr Rosalie Triolo on effective teaching of Australian History; by Professor Janet McCalman, giving a progress report on her exciting collaborative 'Founders and Survivors' project tracing the lives of convicts transported to Van Diemen's Land, and their descendants; by Keith White on producing low-budget, high-quality multimedia presentations of local history; and by Darren Peacock on ways of using new information technology, including interactive websites, to make local history more popular and accessible.

In the evening, hosted by Shane Carmody, director of development at the State Library of Victoria, the RHSV held a ‘black tie or bow tie’ celebratory dinner at the historic Savage Club. The evening was smoothly compered by historian Michael Cathcart, presenter of Books and Arts Daily on ABC Radio National. Michael spoke warmly of Weston as family friend, mentor and inspiration as a historian. Kay Craddock Antiquarian Bookseller generously made available for a fund-raising auction a small number of rare publications relating to Weston’s fields of expertise, including a first edition of *A History of Brighton*. Among distinguished guests at the dinner was Alison Forbes, who designed the original 1962 edition. Also present were councillors and former councillors of the cities of Brighton and of Ballarat and several members of the family of Weston and Janice Bate. It was a chance for the RHSV, on behalf of everyone involved in history in Victoria, to say thank you to a fine historian and great contributor to the prosperity of this Society.

The Augustus Wolsel Lecture

Augustus Wolskel (1867–1949) was a technical chemist, founder and general manager of the Phosphate Co-operative Company of Australia until 1938, vice president of the Chamber of Mines and a fellow of the Royal Australian Chemical Institute.

He also happened to be keen on history and joined the Historical Society of Victoria as a member in 1921. He became a council member in 1926, and vice president in 1931. For four of the war years (1939–42) he was president of the RHSV. He lived at Gellibrand Street, Kew. When he died in December 1949, apparently without immediate family, he left a £3,000 bequest fund whose beneficiaries were the Economics Institute, the Royal Australian Chemical Institute and the RHSV. The three bodies received a distribution on rotation every six years. He also left £10,000 directly to the Medical Society for a study of food and its relationship to healthy living.

The terms of the bequest were imprecise. When it came to history it was suggested that the funds be used ‘for the purpose of awarding sextennially a prize or prizes for the best essay or essays upon such subjects as the change in the economic and/or political positions of the masses of the peoples as shown by the history of the State of Victoria.’ He was reportedly interested in what he described as ‘the varying ratios between money, wealth and population as causes of depression’.

I do not know if any such essay prize was awarded by this Society. The Chemical Institute did have a prize for a while. I don't know what happened to the Economics Institute. Since the 1960s, successive councils of the RHSV have interpreted the terms of the bequest broadly by conducting a featured lecture by a prominent historian. A 1980s policy statement by the RHSV says: 'The terms of his bequest to us specified that it be used for educational purposes and some years ago Council decided that the best way of implementing his wishes was to use the income to establish a series of lectures in conjunction with our Biennial Conference'.

Although the funds were received six-yearly, the RHSV lectures were indeed generally conducted at two-year intervals. Lecturers have included Manning Clark (the inaugural lecturer in 1967), Russell Ward, Michael Roe, Senator Douglas McClelland, Mr Justice Rae Else-Mitchell, Geoffrey Blainey, Ken Inglis, Geoffrey Bolton, Eric Willmot, Peter Milner, Bill Russell, Richard Broome, David Merritt and Patricia Grimshaw.

A short obituary to Augustus Wolskel appeared in the *Victorian Historical Journal* in 1950, and there are a few notes on file, but the RHSV may be disregarding its best ideals by not delving more deeply into the life and background of this benefactor. Manning Clark said in his own inimitable way of Augustus Wolskel, 'It was not my good fortune to know him, but I gather that, like his friend Bernard O'Dowd, he cared passionately about Australia—that he was sustained by the great dream that millennial Eden might one day dwell here'.

Whatever his great dreams, Wolskel had a practical bent. He is on record as having written to the *Argus* during the Second World War, on 23 May 1943, commenting on a correspondent who urged 'some official record of all those who have given long and notable service to the State'. He correctly noted that this covered a very large field. 'The Historical Society, which has been strengthening itself for the purpose of further dealing with the growing mass of historical matters, is in a accord with this suggestion. All that can be done reasonably during the war period is to preserve documents etc., for future historical reference.' It proves to be a never-ending enterprise.

The RHSV last year received a small sum from the Wolskel Fund and our council decided that we would again conduct a Wolskel Lecture to coincide with our next major conference. The trustees have recently concluded that the capital fund is no longer robust enough to maintain the original objects but the Society will continue to receive some benefit from the fund and will

maintain the tradition of an Augustus Wolskel Lecture. Not least, it may encourage others to leave lasting bequests. Whether or not Mr Wolskel's fund was ever used exactly as he imagined, it has certainly helped sustain high quality historical lecturing at the RHSV.

FIFTY YEARS ON

Weston Bate

*Fifty years!
Remember how it felt
To have the new born
Safely in your hands?
So fresh, so beautiful,
And all the aching gone;
The fear a long gestation
Had engendered.
At last the designer's midwife skill
Brought peace of mind.*

*The father, I remember, was a spirit,
The emancipation of Brighton's
Place and people.*

*No more struggle for a word,
Or theme, or chapter head;
Pin down a person;
Wonder what had made
That simple cottage so evocative.
Walk on the beach or pier
And find the onion skins of time
Peel back to Captain Cole,
Watching his men stack up
A wagonload of seaweed for the farm,
To make its soft sand fruitful.*

*All Brighton in a book,
Bursting its bindings to the shouts
Of those who would
Have pilloried Bent for being bold,
Making their fortunes, as he made
His own.
Bold as bronze is now,
Larger than life he stood.
And then St Kilda colours made him live again.*

*Now, with that lord of subdivision, watch
A long procession fill our special place.
They charge the eager fountains of my mind
Dendy and Were, a'Beckett, Higinbotham,
Hampton and Carpenter among the migrant stream;
Thomson of Kamesburgh, fronting on North Road,
Town Clerk Taylor, Stamp the thoughtful Mayor,
Strange councillor Sidaway, a serial mountebank,
Life-giving artists, Grainger and Gordon, Richardson, Baskerville,
And hundreds dead, who lie unmarked
Among St Andrew's scattered tombs.*

*I hear them chorus, 'We were only names
Until you took your pen
And made us sing'.
I bow, and proudly lift my head.*

*Oh, blessed history.
From my journeying,
You recreate the flavour, pulse
And strength of where we've been,
And how and why.
Yet still so much to say—*

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FIFTY YEARS OF VICTORIAN LOCAL HISTORY

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‘**W**HERE BUT IN HIS IMMEDIATE LOCALITY can the ordinary man best comprehend the world and make it his own?’ The question is Weston Bate’s, in the preface to *A History of Brighton*, the landmark book that inaugurated the half-century of distinguished service to Victorian local history we honour tonight. The question was rhetorical, of course, posed as ‘a reproof to those who would belittle both the interest and significance of local history’. Local history, Weston contended, was a window on the world, not a retreat from it. It required the same qualities of imagination, analytical rigour and literary flair as national or international history. By connecting people to the places where they lived, it had a unique humanising and democratising function. ‘The imaginative level of local history can thus be popular in the best sense’, he declared.¹ As a credo for the local historian, Weston’s words could hardly be bettered.

By the time he wrote them, Weston had been working on Brighton for more than a decade, somehow fitting the research in between his duties as a history master at the Brighton and Melbourne Grammar Schools. He had come back from the war, where he flew Lancasters with the RAAF, and enrolled as a history student at Melbourne University, studying Australian history under the young Manning Clark, alongside Ken Inglis, John Mulvaney, Ian Turner, Geoffrey Blainey and several other luminaries of the Australian historical profession. When he began *Brighton*, he was

a bachelor; by the time he published the book, he was husband of Janice and father of a growing family. Like many local historians, he began as an amateur, in the original and best sense of the word—someone who pursued his task for love, rather than simply for money—but he had already acquired the rigour and high intellectual ambition that went with Max Crawford's Melbourne School of History. Many of Crawford's students followed him to Oxford but some bright ones, including Weston Bate and Geoffrey Blainey, remained in Australia seeking to bring something of Crawford's professional standards and synoptic view of history to the local scene.

Weston may not have been the first advocate for this new kind of local history. A few years earlier, the young Geoffrey Blainey, who had just published his brilliant first book, *The Peaks of Lyell*—a history of a mining company that is also in part the history of a distinctive region, the northwest coast of Tasmania—had denounced what he called the scissors-and-paste approach to local history. 'Scissors-and-paste' was a phrase he borrowed from the philosopher, R.G. Collingwood, whose book, *The Idea of History*, was a standard text in Max Crawford's honours subject, 'Theory and Method of History'. 'The scissors-and-paste technique has ruined a sackload of Australian local histories', Blainey declared:

Our practitioner usually has to write as quickly as possible. Therefore he searches, not so much for evidence, as for ready-made history in books, old newspapers, journals, reports or diaries: for large extracts which he copies straight into his notebook and from there into the final manuscript ... he paves his history with slabs which other writers have constructed. He is like a pavement-maker whose sole aim is to cover the distance. He worries little if the contractor who supplies the materials delivers cracked slabs; he doesn't bother to fill awkward gaps with a mosaic of smaller stones; he doesn't care if his path has weak foundations.

Blainey, who was bravely forging a career as an independent professional historian, had his sights on the penny-pinching town councils and hack journalists who supposed that good history could be written, as Dr Spooner would say, 'on the smell of a shoestring'. 'The writing of living, accurate history is no sinecure', he added. 'The best single recipe for writing history is hard work.'²²

As Bate and Blainey must have known, not everything in previous writing on Victorian local history was contemptible. The great colonial historians, like Ballarat's W.B. Withers, chronicled a story of social and municipal progress that fortified and unified their communities. By the

standards of university-trained historians, they sometimes seemed ‘diffuse’, ‘anecdotal’, ‘impressionistic’ and ‘miscellaneous’. Their books were sometimes the work of plain men and women who lacked literary artifice. ‘No pretence has been made at literary style or effect’, confessed the writers of *The Land of the Lyrebird*, the wonderful collection of memoirs of South Gippsland pioneers published by the Korumburra Council at the end of the Great War.³ Like Bert Facey, they wrote with a modesty, vividness and directness that are worth any amount of literary sophistication.

Yet Blainey was right: good local history usually requires hard work. Nobody knew this better than Weston Bate. It had taken him only three years to research the first twenty years of Brighton’s history for his master’s thesis but a further nine, working hard part-time, to cover the rest of the 19th century. He had attempted not merely to piece together a coherent narrative, making sure that the stones in the pavement were properly joined, but to reconstruct Brighton society from the bottom up. As readers of the book will recall, Weston graphically illustrates the transformation of the fringe farming and seaside settlement into an emergent suburb by mapping the entries in the 1857 and 1887 rate books. These maps provide the matrix within which he sets his multi-layered account of Brighton’s social and political development. This painstaking process of reconstruction was the basis of his approach here and, as we will see, in other works.

Blainey had taken aim at the practitioners of scissors-and-paste history, the antiquarians and journalists, but, by the time Brighton appeared, a new form of defective local history had appeared—that of the carpet-bagging academic. In a caustic review of Professor Frank Crowley’s *Westralian Suburb*, a history of South Perth, Weston attacked the assumption that local history could be written from the outside in, by simply transposing generalisations drawn from national history onto the local scene. Weston explained, in a metaphor I recall him often using in the classroom:

Good historians build icebergs. Only a fraction of their labour appears above the surface. Below in several layers, lies the process of construction. Or look at it another way. Imagine the historian building a structure in the shape of a pyramid. To raise the lower half he quarries and scoops, in the light of his training, from here and there in the general territory of his inquiry, raising an imposing mass of evidence, organised to the best of his ability into notes and filed by categories but revealing little, if any, final pattern ... The play of the sources on his mind engenders the inductive process and leads to hypothesis and testing, the usefulness of which depends equally on his imagination and

on the quality and quantity of the evidence he has gathered. He raises possible structures and asks that they please him logically and aesthetically, and that they are consistent with his knowledge of general history.⁴

I can vouch for the truth of this account of Weston's method. Early in 1962, shortly before *A History of Brighton* was published, I met him for the first time in the Senior Common Room at Melbourne Grammar. I was a fourth-year student about to begin an honours thesis, a study of society and politics in late 19th-century Richmond. My supervisor, Allan Martin, had suggested I approach him. I recall Weston showing me a box of his notes, on the 6 x 4 inch cards bearing his large, clear schoolmaster's handwriting, and discussing my plan to use rate books to analyse the class structure of an emergent industrial working-class suburb. In the following months, I put his principles into practice sitting in a corner of the Richmond Town Hall offices as I transcribed entries from dusty rate books obligingly extracted from a vault by two rather bemused clerks, while listening through the wall to the conversations of Jimmy Loughnan, last of John Wren's political henchmen, in the council's so-called 'Welfare Office'.

A History of Brighton set a new standard for Victorian local historians. Geoffrey Blainey hailed it as 'perhaps the most illuminating and careful slice of suburban history so far written in Australia'.⁵ In the following decades, a new cohort of university-trained historians, many well known to this Society, like Susan Priestley, Don Garden, Carole Woods, Andrew Lemon and Peter Yule, followed in Weston's path. If, as I believe, Victoria led the rest of Australia in the development of scholarly yet popular local history, it was largely through Weston's influence.

By the time we met again, as colleagues at the University of Melbourne, Weston had exchanged school teaching for academic history, and embarked on his *magnum opus*, a history of Ballarat. The change was perhaps less abrupt than it might seem, for the practice of local history or, as we were beginning to describe our work, 'urban history' remained very much a collaborative endeavour closely linked to our role as teachers. Interestingly, it was Geoffrey Blainey, in that article on scissors-and-paste, who had emphasised the value of cooperative endeavour in local history. 'There is no reason why a number of people should not share, under the aegis of a general editor, the task of research or even the writing of a town history', he suggested. But it was Weston Bate, the syndicate miner, not Blainey, the lone prospector, who realised the potential for collaborative local and urban history as a method of undergraduate teaching and graduate research.

The classes in which he invited his students to share the excitement of interpreting the Eureka Rebellion in 1850s Ballarat became a highlight of the Melbourne University honours course in the late 1960s.⁶

Lucky City, published in 1978, the same year as my own *Marvellous Melbourne*, exemplified the kind of deeply researched, multi-layered, nuanced local history that Weston had been pursuing for years. His method, it seems to me, was rather less inductive or ‘empiricist’ (to use a then-fashionable epithet) than he sometimes made it sound. In writing about Eureka, for example, he ventured onto ground already cross-furrowed by rival interpretations. In a chapter entitled ‘Centre Stage’, he first set the scene, considering the complex web of circumstances—economic, geological, ethnic and political—that excited tensions among the miners along the Eureka Lead. He carefully dissected the theories of previous historians, who viewed the motives of the rebels through Marxist, economic-liberal or social democratic lenses, before turning his gaze upon a hitherto neglected factor in the equation, the ‘inept, nepotistic, authoritarian and militaristic Goldfields Commission’. Eureka exploded, Weston argues, not because of the heroic virtues of the rebels so much as the monumental defects of their rulers.

The traditions of the open-ended free enterprise society of nineteenth century Britain had been held in check by an extraordinary long-lived, ad hoc excrescence from the days of Australia’s pastoral ascendancy (and England’s eighteenth century), but finally the sweating, clay-covered diggers, the wily storekeepers, the idealistic newspapermen, the chartists, republicans and rabid Irish combined in this year of swift maturing first to expose the Goldfields Commission’s complete inadequacy and then to goad it into suicide.⁷

This was a sophisticated form of local history in which contextualisation, the careful reconstruction of events from the bottom up and within their local setting, guided the process of interpretation.

Excavating the local context of an event of national significance was a powerful demonstration of how ordinary people made sense of their world, and, in later years, Weston would apply it to a range of other historical problems. In a brief illuminating sketch, he showed how the exploits of the Kelly Gang could be understood as the response to the dead-end prospects of young men growing up a backward region.⁸ In the early 1970s, Weston and I shared a fourth year honours course in urban history at the University of Melbourne, in which we began to explore a range of other topics. One year we took our students to Sydney, where we walked the streets of

Pymont and Balmain, visited the Mitchell Library, and reconstructed the social context of the great maritime strike of 1890. Along the way, I began to collect material on the social experience of the *Bulletin* writers in Sydney's boarding-house district—the basis of my 1978 revisionist article on Russel Ward's *The Australian Legend*, 'Sydney and the Bush'. Another year, we took advantage of an invitation to contribute to an environmental study of the Westernport region occasioned by the Victorian government's plans to make a deep-water port, a first foray into what we would later call public history.⁹ An increasing number of our students were the children of postwar immigrants. Their history, we began to realise, was not the Anglo-centric version we had learned ourselves, so, leaning partly on the work of pioneer American sociologists, we turned our attention to the impact of postwar migration on the history of Melbourne, connecting the shapes on the ground with the testimony of the migrants themselves. Local history was morphing into a broader kind of theoretically informed urban history, but what gave it coherence was Weston's sense of the importance of local context, his willingness to experiment, and his infectious enthusiasm for history as a shared enterprise, an experience in which the journey was as important as the arrival.

Lucky City was also a bridge between old-fashioned print-based local history and something we began to call 'living history'. In Chapter Six, 'Main Street Heyday', Weston offers the reader a tour along what he describes as 'perhaps the most boisterous mile and half of road that has ever existed in Australia'.¹⁰ If you scan the footnotes, you can see how Weston carefully built up his picture from municipal records, newspapers, old plans, prints and rate books (of course!). By the time the book appeared, Weston's work had already influenced the decision of the founders of Sovereign Hill to focus the museum on the 1850s and to make a reconstructed and 'animated' Main Street one of its attractions. While it was not a literal reproduction of his text—you couldn't really invite international tourists to a street that, according to Weston, was as smelly as an Asian market, as lawless as the Wild West and as seamy as the backstreets of Naples—Weston nevertheless played an important role, along with his friend and later director of Sovereign Hill, Peter Hiscock, in making Main Street a central feature of the most authentic, as well as the most popular, of Australia's living history museums.

In the 1960s and 70s, Weston had pioneered forms of local history that became increasingly influential in the following decades. The local

past was becoming both more tangible, through the growing influence of heritage and local history museums, and more closely connected to personal experience, especially through family and oral history. A decade or so ago, in *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, I distinguished what I called ‘preservationist history’ and ‘community history’ from the pioneer history and ‘professional history’ that preceded it.¹¹ The 1970s had been a boom decade for local history, with most of Victoria’s two hundred or so local history societies being formed over that decade. I suspect that Weston, the state’s chief evangelist for local history, has visited a good proportion of them over the following decades. The local history boom, like its partner, the family history boom, was a symptom of our ambivalence towards the profound changes our society was going through. In celebrating their community past, locals sought to hold at bay the metropolitan, state and national forces that increasingly shaped their destiny. Historical walking tours were often coupled with protest marches, and heritage studies with submissions and petitions. Often, as Tom Griffiths showed in his sensitive study of historical memory in Beechworth, it was the newcomers, not the oldies, who were at the forefront of defending a past that they had only recently made their own. The people who fought to save Beechworth’s old buildings were sometimes the same people who had already fought the battle to save Carlton’s.¹² Theirs were efforts not to reconstruct the past as an exercise in critical history so much as to reinhabit the past, to make it their own.

Local history was once another name for municipal history. The historian was hired by the local council, wrote to mark an anniversary, and published under official auspices with the municipal crest on the cover and the names and photographs of former mayors and current councillors either prominently at the front, or more modestly at the back, as in Weston’s *Brighton*. The history itself was usually a chronicle of civic progress, organised around such conventional landmarks as the arrival of the first European settlers, the first subdivisions, the opening of the first church and schoolhouse, the election of the first council and the steadily rising indices of population, economic development and social improvement. Its geographical bounds were those of the municipality, even though many locals in metropolitan Melbourne would have been hard put to identify what city they belonged to, at least until their rate notice arrived. The history, critics sometimes suggested, was designed as much to endow the civic fathers with a reassuring sense of continuity and progress as to trace

the history of a real community. Sometimes, when the municipality was bounded by sea or parkland, or had grown from a village nucleus, the historian could argue—as Weston did for Brighton and John Lack did for Footscray—that the community and the municipality were coterminous, but, as metropolitan and global forces grew stronger, it became harder to make the argument. And, when the Kennett government embarked on its program of wholesale amalgamations in the 1990s, the link between municipal and community history became even more attenuated. Newly amalgamated councils had to set about re-writing their histories: this was good news for professional historians but it was a formidable intellectual challenge to show how previously separate, and sometimes feuding, municipalities shared a common history.¹³

Community histories were often spontaneous manifestations of the communities themselves, produced without official sponsorship and no longer limited by municipal expectations. Janet McCalman's *Struggletown* and *Journeyings*, for example, challenged the traditional preoccupation with 19th-century origins and forged new links between the documented and remembered pasts.¹⁴ It connected shapes on the ground with mental maps. It opened windows into people's private, as well as public, lives. Two ideas—class and generation—guided McCalman's historical vision. *Struggletown* is about the Melbourne working class and the efforts of the generation who grew up after the Great War and endured the 1930s depression to achieve a measure of respectability. *Journeyings* is about the Melbourne middle class, the boys and girls who rode the number 69 tram to its leading private schools, including the Scotch College that educated the young Weston Bate, and about their anxious struggle with the aspirations and stern moralities they learned there. These are local histories only in the limited sense of grounding their action symbolically within a recognisable territory, but their implications reach well beyond the local. One of their remarkable qualities—something they share with Weston's work—is to offer a kind of affirmation to the generation whose story they tell.

Yet in affirming one generation, the local historian can often seem to leave its successors bereft. Like the authors of many other recent local histories, McCalman ends her *Struggletown* with a lament for the disappearance of the 'old Australian working class and its communal culture'. In the 1950s and 60s, as the respectable working class moved out to the suburbs—as her own family did—something was lost. 'Richmond', she writes, 'seemed finished, irredeemably lost and beyond salvation'.¹⁵

John Lack, a Footscray local who later moved to Brighton, ends his splendid *History of Footscray* on a similar nostalgic note. By the late 1980s, the suburb was experiencing an ‘identity crisis’ as one long-revered local institution after another— Footscray Institute of Technology (FIT), Forge’s department store, the local newspaper, and the Footscray Football Club—succumbed to metropolitan forces. ‘Footscray’, he concludes, ‘was becoming less a place where one lived physically, than a staging post through which thousands of migrants, locally mobile and from overseas, had moved; more an idea or a state of mind’.¹⁶

Between the lines of many recent local histories I detect a feeling of loss and regret, a dirge for the loss of the primeval forests, the displacement of indigenous peoples, the passing of the pioneer generation. For a long while I think we were deaf to this melancholy strain in the past of our communities; but, in recent years, sensitised perhaps by the environmental movement and the dawning understanding of what colonisation meant for Aborigines, historians have become more alert to what has been lost as well as gained in the process of white settlement.¹⁷ Peter Read, who began as a historian of Aboriginal communities in southern New South Wales, especially the Wiradjuri, charted the tragic process of child removal, coining in the process the now famous phrase ‘The Stolen Generation’. Later, he wrote *Returning to Nothing*, a study of the analogous experiences of loss and displacement experienced by European Australians uprooted from places they inhabited and loved by everything from dams to freeways.¹⁸ Meredith Fletcher’s *Digging Up People for Coal* is another study in the same vein, the story of the removal and relocation of the people of Yallourn.¹⁹ These new local histories are perhaps histories for our own times, reflecting our own experiences of mobility and discontinuity, our more fragile sense of attachment to place.

Such doleful themes prompt some observers to wonder whether global forces have rendered local history redundant or, even worse, into a nostalgic escape from reality, empty gestures rather like the sepia reproductions of old photographs on the walls of your local McDonald’s. Ideas of community were important to Weston Bate’s conception of local history. He titled a central chapter of his *Brighton*, with a nod to Thornton Wilder’s famous play, ‘Our Town’. *Lucky City* celebrates Ballarat’s shared traditions of British-inspired liberal democracy. These were community histories as much as local histories. In the conclusion to his revised 1983 revision of *Brighton*, Weston confronted ‘the suggestion of some historians [I think

I might have been one of them] that the process of metropolitan growth in the 20th century ... so erodes the identity of individual suburbs that it is not possible to write their separate histories effectively'. Brighton, he replies, had inherited 'the social attitudes and experiences of generations' and the vigour with which younger generations defended its heritage of foreshore against day-trippers and rampaging cyclists was testimony to 'the locality's fierce sense of its own identity'.²⁰

It is hard not to sympathise with the local historian valiantly defending the autonomy of his town or suburb against the encroachment of a bigger, crueller world. That the larger world was indeed encroaching is something Weston does not deny. For example, *Lucky City* contains an intriguing table showing the increasing focus of Ballarat newspaper editorials on national and international events.²¹ And the city's resistance to the 'centralism' of Melbourne is a major theme of his second volume, *Life after Gold*.²² In 1978, Weston had taken up an appointment as foundation professor of Australian Studies at Deakin, a university with a charter to serve Victoria's regions, especially through off-campus courses. The appointment spurred him to focus more broadly on the nature and historical development of regionalism, and the courses he developed there were among the first to challenge the centralising tendencies, not just of the universities, but of Australian historiography.

Yet, to acknowledge the advance of metropolitan forces, and our experiences of displacement and loss, was not to gainsay the continuing significance of locality or community. Historians and sociologists have been profoundly influenced by the idea, first proposed by the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, that modern societies are a process of more or less inevitable change from *Gemeinschaft* (community) to *Gesellschaft* (association), from warm, cosy intimate social relationships to cool, remote, impersonal ones. As *Gesellschaft* waxes, so *Gemeinschaft* wanes. To use the jargon, it was a zero-sum game.²³

Tönnies has cast a long shadow over our thinking about the history of modern communities. But I am not sure that he has always been a reliable guide. I wonder, for example, whether we should think of whole societies as being on such an irreversible trajectory. Community does not necessarily wane in proportion to the growth of larger, more impersonal forces; on the contrary, as the recent burgeoning of genealogical and historical societies shows, it sometimes grows stronger precisely in order to counteract those forces. Community is not just in the eye of the beholder, but neither is it

visible to everyone, since it exists in the space between individuals rather than in the head of any one of them. It is a product of history, as much as society or geography. 'Community can be defined better as an experience than as a place', says American historian Thomas Bender. 'As simply as possible, community is where community happens.'²⁴ Perhaps we can go a step further. Community, it might even be said, is as much a product of history-making, of situating ourselves in relation to the past, as it is an object of impartial historical inquiry. We find community in the past as we are alerted to its significance in the present.

Community often remains latent until it is threatened. As Weston reminded us, the diggers of Ballarat became conscious of their shared identity only when they were threatened by an unjust tax and a corrupt goldfields administration. A hundred years or so later, inner city neighbourhoods became political communities when they opposed unwelcome slum clearance schemes and urban freeways. In 1970, one of Weston's Scotch College contemporaries, the historian Hugh Stretton, addressed the newly formed North Adelaide Society, formed to resist a road-widening scheme in that historic neighbourhood. 'I have often thought it would be a good policy for a city to have a portable six lane highway, and point it, as a threat, at neighbourhood after neighbourhood', he suggested: 'You only have to point it at them for 6 months and the neighbourhood is politically organised, socially aware; they know each other like they never did before'.²⁵ If the portable freeway were to be brought to Victoria, Kate Prinsley should follow it around, for as soon as the communities it threatened became socially aware, they would usually become historically aware too.²⁶

I have often found myself pondering the concept of community in my own recent work. In *Car Wars*, I investigated the response of Melbourne's inner suburbs to the threat posed by the 1969 Melbourne Transportation Plan. One of the first moves of the residents associations formed to resist urban renewal and the freeway plan was to investigate, write and celebrate the history and heritage of their 'historic' suburbs. At the first provisional committee meeting of the Carlton Association in 1969, university archivist Frank Strahan called for a history of the area to be written, citing 'the American example of responsibility towards the historic heritage'.²⁷ A History Group was formed to document everything from buildings and street signs to bluestone gutters and ornamental cast-iron. It held walking tours and a history festival to celebrate the suburb's colourful past. The

focus of the activity often seemed to be more on the physical fabric than the social features of the area, which was actually changing rapidly as old Australians and more recent European migrants gave place to the university-educated professionals who were the backbone of the association. For the Carltonians, history was as much a way of constituting community, and of making the place their own, as it was a means of discovering community in the past.

Here, as elsewhere, the relationship between community and locality was often a tenuous one. Sometimes, as Weston illustrated in his book on Melbourne's lanes, communities could still be found at the micro-level of the street rather than at the level of the municipality.²⁸ Suburbs were no longer (if they ever had been) face-to-face communities of the kind idealised by social anthropologists. Meanwhile, communities of a different kind could sometimes stretch across many places, even across the seas.

Recently, in partnership with my colleague Kate Murphy, I completed a history of Monash University entitled *University Unlimited*. Monash, as it often boasts, is Australia's most international university with six campuses in Victoria and a further four in Europe, Africa and Asia. When it began in the early 1960s, Monash and Clayton were almost synonymous. Its founders aspired to create an academic community in the spirit of John Henry Newman's famous book, *The Idea of a University*. It would not be a kind of academic factory, but 'an alma mater knowing her children one by one'. The first-comers to the new campus at Clayton recall the strong bonds forged between staff and students as they braved the dust and mud. Weston, who made the transition from schoolteacher to academic via an appointment at Monash in the 1960s, will remember those pioneering days. Monash's first vice-chancellor, Louis Matheson, wrestled with the problems of how a new, fast-growing university could maintain a sense of cohesion. He fostered institutions like the university newspaper, *Monash Reporter*, and an inter-faith religious centre designed to provide a symbolic centre to the university. The sense of community that was being lost as his university grew bigger could still be found in its constituent parts, he believed.²⁹ Brenda Niall recalls the lively sense of community among members of the English Department. 'Geographical isolation was important', she writes. 'Outer suburban Monash had no diversions to compare with Melbourne University's Carlton environs. We had no cafes, restaurants or cinemas, and only one rather dreary staff club. Thrown on our own resources for

companionship and entertainment we formed friendships which are still strong today.³⁰

By the 1980s, when I arrived at Monash, those links were still strong, but, soon, with the new managerialism of the Dawkins era and a series of mergers that more than doubled the university's size within less than a decade, old-timers began to lament the decline of collegiality and community. Former colleges with their own strong local traditions resisted their absorption into what they saw as a corporate monolith. Early in the 21st century, Monash aspired to become a truly global university with campuses on every continent except Antarctica. Talk of a 'Monash community' sounded like so much empty rhetoric. Yet, ten years ago last month, when a deranged student turned a gun on his instructor and fellow students, killing two and seriously injuring several others, news of the incident elicited messages of concern and sympathy from Monash students and alumni all over the world. 'All the Monash community will be in our thoughts and prayers today', a 1970 science graduate promised. 'I think of Monash as my second home', confessed another. In choosing words like 'community', 'home', 'family' and 'alma mater', they were affirming that the university was something more than the sum of its increasingly diverse and far-flung parts. In a memorial service a few days later, Vice-Chancellor Peter Darvall used similar language. 'When you join Monash', he declared, 'you join the Monash family. And when a tragic event like this occurs, the family rallies'. Community, he seemed to be suggesting, was something latent, even in the large, impersonal multiversity that Monash had become.³¹ In writing the history of Monash, conserving its institutional memory, reminding present members of the university of the collegial ideals of their predecessors, perhaps we were saying something similar. So I was pleased that the judges of the RHSV's recent community history awards did not disqualify our book on the grounds that a 'university unlimited' could not also be, in some sense, a community.

Local historians in the 1970s and 1980s were preoccupied with the question of community but, in the 1990s, I detect a subtle shift towards a new theme, that of belonging. Local history was once written around a master narrative, which John Hirst memorably called 'the pioneer legend'. The pioneer legend was a story about how Europeans came to possess the land, how they settled it, made homes and farms, and built towns and cities.³² But it was a conquest that often left the conquerors feeling dissatisfied. They had fought the black, and blazed the track. They had inherited—or,

at any rate, taken—the land. But while the land now belonged to them, did they belong to the land? Colonial Australians often felt that they lacked the ancestral associations that they had felt in England or Scotland, where they seemed to be surrounded everywhere by the evidence of a deep past in the form of ruined castles and ancient churches, Roman roads and Saxon villages. Emotionally they felt as though they were in exile. Occasionally they compared themselves with the Aborigines, who still enjoyed such a deep ancestral connection to the land, although in the colonial period few Europeans understood just how long and deep the connection was.³³

One Australian who felt this way was a young public schoolmaster named Manning Clark. In 1943, he was living in a kind of intellectual exile as a secondary teacher at Geelong Grammar. He and his wife, Dymphna, had recently returned from Europe where their studies had been cut short by the outbreak of war. Without his expected Oxford degree, Clark's future was uncertain. He knew he did not want to be in England but he was not sure that he wanted to be in Australia either. A liberal-minded headmaster, J.R. Darling, had hired Clark in the reasonable expectation that he would offer challenging ideas to his pupils. In his history of Geelong Grammar, *Light Blue Down Under*, Weston presents a vivid picture of the charismatic 28-year-old:

Passionately agnostic, with a quizzical look, a throaty warble to his voice and his pyjamas often showing under his clothes, [he] had [intellectual] brilliance and something extra—a mind that seemed always to be grappling with mysteries and setting issues at GGS within global perspectives and the time frame of civilisation itself.³⁴

As we now know from his diaries and from Mark McKenna's acclaimed biography, Clark's years at Corio were a time of great unsettlement and anguish.³⁵ In the midst of it, he wrote an interesting essay, his first published work, for the literary magazine *Meanjin*. Surprisingly perhaps, for a man whose head was in the clouds more often than his feet were on the ground, it touches on our theme, the intertwined questions of locality and community. 'Civilised life with us is *artificial*', Clark begins.

We must ask the dreadful question: do we belong here? I do not mean to imply that the country belongs to the Aborigines, or that our sense of guilt is due to the crime our ancestors committed against these strange members of society. But the myth of mateyness is not enough. Do we need a prophet to preach a new myth, or a sage to convince us to accept things as they are?³⁶

Here we hear the future bearded prophet making his literary debut, posing the question that now resounds ever more strongly as we begin to recognise the long Aboriginal past, even within our cities, and our own short and tenuous connection with the land: ‘Do we belong here?’

This is the question that now rises to the surface in several interesting recent Australian histories. Until quite recently, most Australian local histories gave at most token respect to the Aborigines. They usually appeared in the first chapter, along with an account of the local geology, geography and flora, and perhaps some explanation of local Aboriginal place-names, before making an abrupt exit, with only cursory attention paid to the conflicts with the European newcomers that preceded it. Local historians, it must be admitted, were among the main perpetrators of what W.E.H. Stanner famously called ‘the Great Australian Silence’.³⁷ In recent years, the silence has been broken, as historians have begun not just to tell the story of Aboriginal dispossession—the great contribution of Henry Reynolds and his followers—but to reconstruct the society and environment that the settlers destroyed.

The work of historians like Grace Karskens, James Boyce, Penny Edmonds and Bill Gammage brings the story of Aboriginal Australia back from the frontier into the very heart of our capital cities.³⁸ In his recent prize-winning book, *The Biggest Estate on Earth*, Gammage shows that the land the Europeans settled, so far from being a *terra nullius*, was the product of a careful process of land management in which the Aborigines’ primary tool was the regular, systematic use of fire. The landscapes the Europeans hailed as laid out ‘like parks’ for sheep pastures were not made so by Providence but by the Aborigines who had tended them in this way for many thousands of years. Karskens shows that Sydney, the first point of entry, was for a generation a ‘soft colony’ where Aborigines and settlers shared territory, cohabiting and intermingling until disease and competition for land drove them apart. The sites most coveted by Europeans, near water or higher ground, were often those most prized by Aborigines and hence a site of conflict. ‘Modern suburbs were built over battlefields’, she writes.³⁹ Edmonds, Boyce and Gammage tell a similar story about the occupation of the city on which we now stand. When Batman built his house on the hill that later bore his name, just a couple of hundred metres from here, his choice had already been shaped by the Aborigines. It ‘looked so green and fresh that ... I thought it was cultivated ground’, John Lancey observed.⁴⁰

This is a perspective that changes our whole approach to local, as well as national, history. In fact, by inviting us to imagine the landscape as the Aborigines saw it, it is also subtly changing our sense of time and space. While it deepens our sense of time, it alerts us to the spiritual significance of particular places. In the introduction her book, *The Colony*, Karskens ponders why ‘the “local” so often run[s] a poor third to “national” and “state” in both history and heritage assessment, when it is often the local, the familiar, the visceral, the intimate, that matters most to city and suburban people’.⁴¹ By alerting Sydneysiders to the deep past and often tragic history hidden in their glorious landscape of rock, sand and water, she opens a door to an enriched sense of belonging. In the conclusion of *The Greatest Estate*, Gammage makes a similar point. European settlers, he argues, interrupted a long successful history of Aboriginal land management: ‘Knowledge of how to sustain Australia, of how to be Australian, vanished with barely a whisper of regret’. The implication is clear: that until European Australians recover something of the same understanding of their land, they will not be truly at home in it. ‘We have a continent to learn’, he concludes: ‘If we are to survive, let alone feel at home, we must begin to understand our country. If we succeed, one day we might become Australians’.⁴²

Does the Aboriginal sense of belonging, grounded in deep time and an intimate relationship with the land, put all other forms of attachment into the shade, or does it—as I prefer to believe—deepen our appreciation of the many ways in which we, Whitefellas as well as Black, also depend on each other and our country? Sometimes I exchange my car for a bicycle in order to try and reconnect with country. On sunny days, I follow the cycle path that winds along the Yarra, Melbourne’s ancient river, from the city towards the hills. Here and there along the route, city officials have thoughtfully erected signs reminding passers-by of the historical associations of particular landmarks and views. Near Richmond, I pass an ancient tree carved in pre-European times by the local Aborigines. I cross the Merri Creek just above Dight’s Falls, the highest point reached by Charles Grimes in 1803. Further on, where the river winds under the brow of a lovely hill, I approach the old village of Heidelberg, named in 1839 by a pioneering settler nostalgic for the famous German university town. Now, at the points where the famous Heidelberg School painters erected their easels, I can stop and compare the scene before me with the iconic images of Roberts, Streeton and McCubbin. Further on, Banyule, the Gothic homestead erected by the overlander Joseph Hawdon, looks

down on a billabong where the Wurundjeri people gathered to fish from time immemorial. Nearing Eltham, I pass the swimming hole where my father and his fellow Boy Scouts used to swim after pulling their trek cart all the way from Essendon. As I cycle, my sense of connection to that lovely country is strengthened, deepened, renewed. Only when we integrate black and white perspectives on the local past, blending their stories, will we truly belong.

‘Where but in his immediate locality can the ordinary man best comprehend the world and make it his own?’ Weston had asked in 1962. A decade later, he would not have got away with the gendered language, but his question remained, as it does still, a stimulus to fruitful reflection. The 50 years since he wrote have seen a mighty burgeoning of Victorian local history. Not only have the numbers of local histories and local historians multiplied but their quality, thanks not least to Weston’s influence, has also improved out of sight. Victorian local history is not just researched and published, but increasingly conserved, performed, re-enacted, celebrated, googled and downloaded. The traditions of local history writing that Weston inherited have been more deeply interrogated, extended, revised and matured. The shift that I have followed in this talk, from the narratives of municipal progress to the broader kinds of social history that Weston championed in the 1960s and 70s, and from the subtle explorations of the relationship between memory and community in the 1980s to our present preoccupations with questions of displacement, dispossession and belonging, is perhaps only one of several ways of reading that always vigorous, enriching historical conversation. Weston is one of those rare individuals endowed with the elixir of youth and, through that fruitful half-century since the publication of *Brighton*, Victorian local history has been constantly inspired and energised by his enthusiastic, creative and almost ubiquitous presence. I am grateful to the Society for the invitation to speak on this notable occasion and to offer a small tribute to a wise mentor, inspiring teacher, admired fellow historian, and dear friend.

NOTES

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- 2 Geoffrey Blainey, ‘Scissors and Paste in Local History’, *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, vol. 6, no. 23, 1954, pp. 339–40, 344.

- 3 South Gippsland Pioneers' Association, *Land of the Lyrebird: A Story of Early Settlement in the Great Forest of South Gippsland*, Korrumburra, Shire of Korrumburra, 1972, first published 1920, p. xi.
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- 5 Geoffrey Blainery, Review of *A History of Brighton*, *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, vol. 11, no. 41, October 1963, pp. 133–4.
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- 7 Weston Bate, *Lucky City: The First Generation at Ballarat: 1851–1901*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1978, p. 54.
- 8 Weston Bate, 'Kelly and His Times', in Colin Cave (ed.), *Ned Kelly Man and Myth*, Sydney, Cassell Australia, 1968, pp. 40–62.
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- 10 Bate, *Lucky City*, p. 96.
- 11 Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 2000, pp. 197–220.
- 12 Tom Griffiths, *Beechworth: An Australian Country Town and Its Past*, Melbourne, Greenhouse Publications, 1987, pp.95–104.
- 13 See, for example, Lesley Alves, *Suburban Heartland: A History of the City of Whitehorse*, Melbourne, Utber & Patullo Publishing, 2010, which builds on previous histories of the constituent histories of Box Hill by Andrew Lemon and Nunawading by Diane Sydenham.
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- 15 McCalman, *Struggletown*, p. 296.
- 16 John Lack, *A History of Footscray*, Melbourne, Hargreen Publishing 1991, p. 406.
- 17 On this theme, I have gained from the work of Helen Doyle, 'Australia Infelix: Making History in an Unsettled Country', PhD thesis, Monash University 2005.
- 18 Peter Read, *Returning to Nothing: The Meaning of Lost Places*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- 19 Meredith Fletcher, *Digging Up People for Coal: A History of Yallourn*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2002.
- 20 Bate, *Brighton*, second edition 1983, pp. 403ff. Compare the discussion of local suburban histories involving Weston and some of his followers in Graeme Davison, Tony Dingle & Seamus O'Hanlon (eds), *The Cream Brick Frontier: Histories of Australian Suburbia*, Melbourne, Monash Publications in History, Monash University, 1995, pp. 154–67.

- 21 Bate, *Lucky City*, p. 234.
- 22 Weston Bate, *Life after Gold: Twentieth Century Ballarat*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1993, esp. chapter 2.
- 23 Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Association*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955 (originally published as *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, 1887).
- 24 Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978, p. 6.
- 25 ‘Amalgam of Extracts from Hugh Stretton’s Talks to the First General Meetings of the Adelaide Residents’ Society [*sic*] and the Residents’ Association of Dulwich Rose Park and Toorak Gardens’, Adelaide, State Library of South Australia, n.d., p. 1. Compare Graeme Davison, Renate Howe & David Nichols, *Trendyville: The Battle for Australia’s Inner Cities*, Melbourne, Monash University Publishing, 2013, chapter 7.
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- 29 Graeme Davison & Kate Murphy, *University Unlimited: The Monash Story*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 2012, especially chapter 3.
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- 31 Davison & Murphy, pp. 297–301.
- 32 John Hirst, ‘The Pioneer Legend’, *Historical Studies*, vol. 18, no. 71, October 1978, pp. 316–37.
- 33 Compare Graeme Davison, ‘Victorian Genesis: Founding Histories’, *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 80, no. 2, November 2009, pp. 191–213.
- 34 Weston Bate, *Light Blue Down Under: The History of Geelong Grammar School*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 213.
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- 36 Manning Clark, ‘A Letter to Tom Collins’, *Meanjin*, no. 2, 1943, in Manning Clark, *Occasional Writings and Speeches*, Melbourne, Fontana Collins, 1980, p. 93. Compare, Graeme Davison, ‘Rethinking the Australian Legend’, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 43, no. 3, September 2012, pp. 429–51.
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40 Gammage, p. 263.

41 Karskens, p. 18.

42 Gammage, p. 323.

PANEL

**THE SHOCK OF THE 1960s—THE INFLUENCE OF
PROFESSOR WESTON BATE ON THE WRITING OF LOCAL
HISTORY**

CHAIR

Richard Broome

PANEL MEMBERS

John Lack, Don Gibb, Charles Fahey, Susan Priestley

THE MAKING OF *BRIGHTON*

Richard Broome

WESTON BATE'S *A HISTORY OF BRIGHTON* was first published in 1962 by Melbourne University Press, and issued in a second edition in 1983. I want to explore how Weston came to do *Brighton* and what went into its making.

We often do not ask our parents enough about their early life and catch or remember snippets once told. The same happens with work colleagues, of whom Weston was my first, 38 years ago. So what I am about to say is new to me and I hope to you as well.

Weston Arthur Bate was born in 1924 in Surrey Hills, Melbourne, in the first flush of spring—which I assume is one source of his enormous energy. His mother, Mary Olive Akers, was an American by birth, and his father, Ernest, an Englishman. Weston went to pre-school in the Ormiston Girls School—which no doubt explains his sensitive side—and then onto the Surrey Hills State School for three years before going to Scotch College.

The boy who became a historian and interested in people was influenced by his open-hearted mother, who had an egalitarian manner with others. This interest in people was developed by engaging with them in his locale, particularly Hamilton Street, Mont Albert, a small strip-shopping centre. It contained two greengrocers, two butcher shops and not much else. But there was community there: people in the one place; people in association in the one place—doing things such as gossiping and shopping; *and* people in association with the sense of being part of a community that frequented Hamilton Street. Weston's sense of belonging to this place—and the idea of place—was cemented when he worked in one of those shops as a lad, weighing out and patting butter, ladling sugar and chatting all the while with customers, a cheery boy no doubt, wrapped in a cocoon of community.

At Scotch College, it was a little different. Scotch was a competitive school and Weston's engineer father had high expectations for his boy in maths and science. Ernest Bate thought that his son, although good at sport, was not serious enough at his studies and his efforts were not stellar enough. Weston left Scotch College with some relief and welcomed his enlistment in the RAAF, despite the world being at war. After training, he spent two years in England and was stimulated by the challenge of flying.

Like other servicemen, he also tasted a wider world. While in England, he met his father's family and his view of his rather stern father mellowed when set in this family context.

Many of his English relations were teachers and Weston returned to Australia bent on following that profession. With the help of the returned servicemen's tertiary scholarships, Weston enrolled in combined English and history at the University of Melbourne. The brigadier who signed him in wondered why he did not enrol in something useful. Within just one year, he was captured by history. Weston recalled he was particularly captivated by the move from primary evidence to generalisation, and back, to test it with more evidence. It seemed more logical than English literary studies. He thrilled to studies in ancient history with John O'Brien and European history with Max Crawford and Kathleen Fitzpatrick. He graduated from Melbourne University in 1948 impatient to teach. In 1949, he taught a grade 6 class at Brighton Grammar each morning and did teacher training each afternoon at Mercer House.

At this time events collided. It was planned that the long-term town clerk of Brighton, J.H. Taylor, would in his retirement revamp and update J.B. Cooper's unpublished manuscript history of Brighton, written in 1925. The task proved beyond Taylor, so John Stamp of the Brighton Council sought a bright and cheap option—a postgraduate student who would work on the history for free! He rang Melbourne University's History Department and was told by Max Crawford that there might be just such a bright candidate, and indeed he was currently in Brighton. Crawford viewed local history as trapped in antiquarianism and no doubt thought this was a chance to give it more mettle. Further enquiries led Stamp to Philip Wilson, headmaster of Brighton Grammar, who said, 'this person is indeed here and on my staff'. It was of course Weston.

So Brighton began as an MA in 1950. Weston was given half time on it by the school, teaching in the morning and researching each afternoon. Crawford and Kathleen Fitzpatrick kept a distant eye, so it was up to Weston. How was he to get at community and people and place? And how was he to finish it working half time? His flying training had given him skills. It dawned on Weston that making maps was in fact mapping community. Community could be mapped from information in the rate books—the fingerprint of a local community—together with the census and directories. The camera he employed made those maps three-dimensional. The names and details in the rate books put flesh on bones. It was painstaking work—

but rewarding. To manage the newspapers, Weston took a slice approach, looking closely at every ten years.

The MA covered the first twenty years of Brighton's history and, on its completion, Weston lectured at Melbourne University in 1952 and 1953 before becoming a master at Brighton Grammar from 1954, where he stayed for the next eight years. The making of the book, *A History of Brighton*, published in 1962, was undertaken very part time, while Weston furiously researched the next hundred years of Brighton's history, while he taught furiously, while he married Janice Wilson in 1955 and while he furiously helped create and rear the first four of their six children. Obviously *Brighton* is partly a tribute to Janice's furious hard work as well.

Part of the making of *Brighton* is the writing of *Brighton*. What first strikes the reader is the sense of excitement Weston generates about the exceptionalism of the place. There is the intrigue of Dendy's removal from Britain, the uniqueness of his take-up of the special survey, the tremendous risk-taking Dendy engages in, the dismay and confusion of the colonists and their administration about how to respond to this done deal (threat, opportunity or both?). There is the fortuitous implication for Brighton's location of the five-mile rule for special surveys beyond town limits, and the early neglect of the land south of the Yarra, which left it ripe for the taking. The survey occupied a fine stretch of land exactly on the border of the five-mile North Road and the sea, just missing the dismal flood lands of Elsternwick!

The second element is the creation of place, which goes back to the imprinting of Hamilton Street on Weston's mind. The geology and soils of Brighton feature first: its red Sandringham sands, the wind-drifted covering of grey sands, pocked by alluvial material and decayed matter, all on a base of porous gravels. Melbourne, out of which Brighton sprang, was 'a checkerboard town [that] had been surveyed but the streets were meandering tracks, stump-ridden and dusty ... It was small town, full of gossip' (p. 19). Brighton, once surveyed by H.B. Foot, became a mould whose pattern was never effaced, but its paddocks and allotments were modified as Weston describes it, 'by pushing small streets like puzzled worms through paddocks which have shrunk to smaller and stranger shapes. Only once, however, in a hundred years has a protest been scarred right across the pattern itself—when the railway was put through' (p. 34). The idea of place is also visually revealed in many fine maps throughout.

The third element is the poetry of the book. Weston has been writing poetry since his RAAF days, an endeavour still practised today in his recent book of poems, *Haphazard Quilt: Poems of the Mornington Peninsula*, which are love odes to the Peninsula. This poetic sense of language infuses Brighton, adding to its richness. Henry Dendy ‘impressed his contemporaries in Australia as being strangely a dreamer, the kind of idealist who may nourish, quite unsuspected, for years, ambitions of the strongest kind’ (p. 10). Of the territory and its first surveyor, he writes:

It was then simply part of the parish of Moorabbin in the county of Bourke, and his axe blazed its authority on selected trees in order to mark out a rectangle of eight square miles, spread like a giant net four miles in from the sea and two miles across, holding in its mesh ... “honeysuckle etc.” country gently undulating (p. 30).

The track to Point Nepean was already there at Brighton’s foundation, imprinted on the land and the settlers’ consciousness. Weston writes of this track with a future glance: ‘dividing their locality in half, as only a main highway with its alien stream of traffic can divide’ (p. 32).

A History of Brighton was a landmark for all of us, which is why we are today discussing its making. It helped spawn the Brighton Historical Society and the local history movement. It inspired Austin McCallum, a Ballarat librarian, to hold a conference, ‘Local History and the Library’, in 1963. Over the next two years, there were conferences on writing local history and on local history and local government.

Brighton was also a landmark in the making of Weston. Without *Brighton* there would be no *Lucky City*, Weston’s first volume of Ballarat’s golden years. *Brighton* gave him the skills and confidence to do other local history. The book, and his teaching at Brighton and Melbourne Grammar schools, forged his return to Melbourne University in 1965, where he wrote *Lucky City* and stayed until becoming professor of Australian studies at Deakin University in 1978. He retired in 1989.

When I spoke to Weston, the long-time poet, and asked him the meaning of *Brighton* to his life, he referred to American Robert Frost’s 1916 poem, ‘The Road Not Taken’. Frost speaks of choices in life, the pathways we take that shape all things to follow; but often the implications of these choices are not viewed clearly at the time. The choice to do an MA on Brighton in 1950, a choice made in his callow youth, was not a knowing choice, for Weston had no knowledge of what might become of this decision. It was like any historical event, a moment, an action of whose outcomes we can

have only hopes and fantasies. But that historical choice, once made, sets in train a series of other moments and actions that amount to a direction. To do *Brighton* was a moment of choice that had immense implications for Weston Bate—excellent ones as it transpired—as it set the trajectory of his fortunate life. In part it also shaped local history, as practised in this region at least. We must now turn to those wider implications.

THE IMPACT OF *A HISTORY OF BRIGHTON* ON *A HISTORY OF FOOTSCRAY*

John Lack

EARLIER THIS WEEK, I sat in my garden at Middle Brighton—you can't get any more middle than Middle Brighton—with the hum of earth-moving equipment and the grind of a serried rank of concrete mixers wafting over the trees: the earth-movers engaged on one site, gouging another six-car basement and cinema complex. No new home in Brighton today is complete without at least a six-car basement and a cinema complex. The concrete mixers were pouring what I figured would have been enough cement to have constructed a small factory in the Footscray of my boyhood, and trucks seemed to be delivering enough steel mesh and girders to have built a skyscraper—as they are indeed building them now in Footscray.

As I say, I sat in my garden luxuriating in the pleasure of re-reading *A History of Brighton*, Weston's revised edition of 1983. This pleasure was interrupted, unfortunately, by a family crisis that saw me summoned post-haste to central Victoria, to the old gold-town Victoria that Weston has written so brilliantly about—not only Ballarat, but in his sketches of the whole configuration of gold-town Victoria. These were the gold towns that had attracted my great grandparents to Victoria in the 1850s. After a sojourn of two generations in working-class industrial Melbourne, my family is now scattered. They are virtually refugees from industrial working-class Melbourne: their world of Footscray de-industrialised, and

ethnically varied, by a bewildering series of changes in the 80s and 90s. They have retired to the old gold towns of central Victoria.

The planned recollection in tranquility on which I was planning to spend two days had to be crushed into a few moments of thinking. I wanted to reflect on how the boy from Footscray became a householder at Brighton and how my understanding of Brighton was illuminated by Weston's work—and how my effort to become a historian was shaped by that book.

In 1968, after a year of living with my wife Sue and her mother in Port Melbourne, we decided to buy a home. The only stipulation that Sue had was that the house should be near the beach. I gritted my teeth—I loathe the seaside—and so it was Sue who found a little advertisement in the paper saying 'Private Sale 31 Hanby Street Brighton', and off we toddled one evening. The house had simply to be located somewhere between Altona and Monash University, because I was teaching at Altona and I had resumed my honours history studies at Monash after something of a debacle in Max Crawford's history school at the University of Melbourne in the early 60s.

I had never set foot in Brighton and had hardly any idea where Brighton was. We inspected the house at night, and there we were bargaining—feebly, given that we had no money really, most of it had to be borrowed—with a dear couple who took pity on us and who decided they would accept 5 or 10 per cent less than was really warranted because they wanted to prevent a neighbour from replacing their home with units. Now, until you read Weston's book, you are not going to understand that impulse. Many of us associate Brighton with the tough world of the market, with people with dollar signs on their eyeballs. There is another side, the side that wanted to protect its amenity as a low-rise, low-density garden suburb, and we happened to chance upon a couple who felt that way.

So there we were in a modest but reasonably attractive home in an unfamiliar neighbourhood and in a totally strange suburb. We had bought it at night. The first thing my father said when he came to see it was, 'Ah, you've bought in the dip'. We were proud that this was probably one of the last houses built in Hanby Street—and so it was. It had been built on a creek bed. I hadn't read Weston's maps carefully enough. And, in those really wet winters in the early 70s, with two young children, 31 Hanby Street was quite a trial.

What better guide could one have than Weston's *History of Brighton* to make sense of one's new world? How do you make sense of this slab of country, thoroughly suburbanised, between North and South Road, with

Centre Road bisecting, and extending to east Boundary Road? It's easy—when you have the expert to explain how it all happened.

More importantly for me, I had been struggling to formulate my approach to a history of my own native suburb. Of what possible relevance could Brighton be to someone approaching a history of Footscray? I mean, the suburbs are poles apart, absolute poles apart, in geography, in the nature of the homes, in the nature of the society. Poor old despised Footscray, as we felt it was, and much-vaunted Brighton, as we discovered it.

I had admired *A History of Brighton* from the moment it was published. I recognised it as a major achievement in the writing of local history. But I admired it for its ideas—I had no real interest in the suburb. What I loved about the book, and still admire about it, was the breadth of ideas and the depth of research. I realised instinctively that a local history, if it was going in any degree to match what Weston had achieved, had to be built on really solid research. The other thing I gradually realised was that one should never be embarrassed by the years it took to write a history. Weston I'm sure won't mind my referring to this. There were occasions when he was writing his history of Ballarat, when a colleague would say, 'What's going on? When is this book going to appear?' And I thought to myself, 'You have no conception of what writing a local history or a history of a major regional city actually takes'. With a *national* history you already have templates; you have histories, you have a historiography. When you are attempting a local or a regional history, you often have only the most schematic beginnings. And I realised, too, that a thesis, be it an MA, Weston's MA on Brighton or my PhD on 40 years of Footscray's history, could be just a first step. If you were going to commit yourself to a full-scale narrative history—and I still believe there is a role for the single-author full-scale narrative history—then you are facing a long effort.

The other thing I took from Weston's book was that there are certain inescapable themes that you have to come to grips with if you are writing a local history. Basically you are grappling with the issues of community and class—notoriously difficult, easily over-theorised, something that Weston avoided because he always took you back to the richness of the record, and the richness of the people and their engagement with one another in local societies.

Another thing I learnt: often as a local historian you have to confront cherished local myths, and possibly undermine them. For Weston, there was the myth of Squire Dendy; for me there were the myths of Charles

Grimes and John Batman. A lot has been said, quite correctly, by Graeme Davison and by Richard Broome, about Weston's wonderful work in creating maps from rate books. But I think the really impressive thing about *A History of Brighton* is that *first* chapter on the 40s when the writer has to create a picture of the marine gentry or the marine nabobs. He has to put together the story from many hundreds of fragmentary references in Melbourne's early newspapers. Weston did not really have a single strong narrative source or memoir he could draw on, but he managed to use all that material to give us a picture of that early society and how it met its challenge from the small farmer and market gardener society east of New Street, Brighton. This was a revelation for me as a historian, and really Weston raised the bar with that first chapter, as he did with the entire book, to very high levels indeed.

Then, in the 1980s, he returned to this, his first book, and added a chapter on the 25 years since the centenary of Brighton in 1959. Now, I had lived in Brighton since 1966, simply regarding it as a dormitory suburb. I had the sort of attitude that dormitory suburbs are those where nothing of moment really happens—that was my attitude. And, in 1983, having lived there and brought up a couple of kids and having been involved in kindergarten activities and local schools, I had developed some sort of interest in the struggles in Brighton to retain community facilities, such as the sea baths. But I had not really focused on what was happening in a general sense in Brighton. And to turn to that final chapter is a revelation. Weston traces the transformation in local politics from a fairly conservative business group to a group leavened by the influence of women as they struggle to maintain Brighton's garden nature and so on. It is a fascinating chapter.

Writing recent history is really difficult. The subjects are alive! And you are writing about them! I imagine the quill must have been working at especially great heat in writing about that extraordinary councillor and mayor who gave us the great Australia Day sausage sizzle—Aubrey Sidaway. I had encountered Aubrey at Footscray High School, where he had been an absolute martinet, before he was consigned to the Correspondence School. Anyway, I admired the verve, yet restraint, with which Weston wrote about Aubrey.

The fascinating thing about Weston's final chapter about Brighton's battle to remain low rise, uncommercial, low density is that he confronts that issue head on. He points out, in fact, how that strategy, together with the larger metropolitan forces in this great ever-expanding pancake city,

have forced land values to rise astronomically. He crystallised the social consequences in a sentence I would like to read to you: ‘Because it has been associated with an ageing population, the heavy rate burden of Brighton’s low density has led on the one hand to exclusiveness and on the other genteel poverty’.

Brighton has been and is being transformed in quite dramatic ways at the moment. A long-term Brighton resident said to me that Brighton used to be ‘middle class down’ but was now becoming ‘middle class up’. One can only hope that Weston will be persuaded to write a little more about this transformation, which he has witnessed at first hand. In a sense Brighton is a Nimby suburb—a Not in My Back Yard Suburb. These are the realities of the commercial city in a capitalist society, and Nimby suburbs require by definition backyard suburbs. All the deviant functions of the large city have to take place somewhere. If you do not want them in your suburb, they are going to have to be accommodated elsewhere. Footscray was for a long time the backyard of Melbourne’s Nimby middle-class suburbs.

There was another profound thing I learnt from Weston’s book and from living in Brighton and understanding its streetscape and its society. When I approached Footscray, Weston had dramatised for me the nature of the wider city. *Brighton* is not a parochial, totally local-focused study. *Brighton* always has a metropolitan context. There are constant references to Brighton’s changing nature and its relation to the nature of the changing metropolis.

So, what we got in 1962 was not merely a superbly written book from someone with the poet’s eye, as Richard Broome has pointed out, and not merely a thoroughly researched book, but a book with a wider vision. Anyone who reads it can learn a lot about the shaping of Melbourne. And that above all is what I took with me when I went on to attempt a history of my own place.

REFLECTIONS ON SOURCES FOR *A HISTORY OF BRIGHTON**Don Gibb*

IN REFLECTING on the significant achievement of *Brighton*, I was pleased to note that I bought my copy in 1962, a time when I still considered that it was possible to read in fields other than those that I was teaching. Thus began my distant association with Weston that became less distant when, following an upgrading of my BA, I started a part-time MA in 1966 and, after suggesting a topic in Melbourne suburban history, was sent to see Weston and finished up writing about Sandringham, mostly under his supervision. The thesis never became a book, partly because it hardly got into the 20th century and partly because I became increasingly dissatisfied that it lacked the fine social analysis that goes beyond the demography of the census and the rate books to what was going on in households, schools, workplaces, churches, clubs, courts, pubs and so on. In other words it lacked much of what Weston achieved so well in *Brighton*.

In making judgements on Weston's achievements, it is salutary to recall the state of Victorian history and the resources for the writing of Victorian history in Weston's time. Access was difficult. There were no photocopiers, no guide to newspapers (the first appeared in 1959–60), no guides to archives, no general history of Victoria since Turner's 1904 volumes, no bibliographies of local histories (Carole Beaumont [Woods], 1980), no biographical registers of Victorian parliaments (Thomson & Serle, 1972), no guides to maps, no *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (first volume 1962) and, of course, no use by historians of computers—Lloyd Robson was pioneering their use in his doctoral thesis, which became *Convict Settlers* (1965). Research depended on visiting and working in institutions and libraries and physically using their indexes.

Of course, *Brighton* was published at much the same time as Margaret Kiddle's wonderful *Men of Yesterday*, shortly before Geoff Serle's magisterial *Golden Age*, before Noel Butlin's *Investment in Australian Economic Development* (1964) and well before Graeme Davison's masterly *Marvellous Melbourne* (1978). There were scarcely any works that provided an overall context into which a *Brighton* might fit, especially in social terms. Weston wrote in 1974 about how local history was 'the general history of a locality' and therefore difficult and necessarily very time consuming.

Difficult and time consuming because it needed to construct its narrative from a diversity of sources that were likely to be much more fragmentary than those used at the time by historians dealing with larger entities where the material collected at the centre was more easily accessible.

As you will know, *Brighton* contains pioneering work on the use of rate books. In the regrettable absence of household census returns, the rate book has become a substitute for those seeking to reconstruct society. It remains a most significant source for good local histories. Weston's work of reconstruction was remarkable, exemplified in the 1859 and 1887 maps of the municipality. The simplicity of the maps belies the enormous amount of work that went into them. I once thought that I could do something similar for Sandringham, then part of the Shire of Moorabbin, in the late 19th century. Working in the late 1960s in a very cold pillar of the then Moorabbin City Hall where the rate books were stored, I found the task well beyond me, despite the fact that I had an excellent model and mentor. I could extract material about owner ownership and occupations as the basis for tables in my thesis but creating a map was nigh on impossible. As already noted, there was no guide to maps, including the massive collection held at the Central Plan Office of the Lands Department. Users relied on the knowledge of the wonderful Bob Spreadborough, who, when I asked about early Sandringham maps, produced Henry Cox's survey of Port Phillip Bay in the 1860s. These sheets showed settlement along the bay as well as water depths. They were done for a time very close to Weston's reconstructed 1859 map and the similarities further testify to Weston's achievement.

There was no Public Record Office and none of the PROV guides that now assist the researcher. Using the government archives, located under the State Library, depended on the expert knowledge of the records that had been accumulated by a small hardworking staff. The collections of real estate maps in the La Trobe Library were acquired after *Brighton*, and Weston's work of course predates Frank Strahan's enterprising and pioneering collection of business records at the University of Melbourne.

The State Library is justifiably renowned for its collection of Victorian as well as Australia-wide newspapers and for their preservation. One of Weston's major sources was the local paper, the *Southern Cross*, first published in 1871. In the days before microfilm and digitising, the researcher could go to the printed word. In the case of many papers, including the *Southern Cross*, this was usually not in bound form. Each year

was kept in brown paper parcels tied with pink tape and folded horizontally in four so that, when you carefully opened them up to read, they tended to disintegrate along the folds and sometimes tore. The papers for the start of the year and for the end of the year suffered most.

I conclude with my estimate of Weston's impact on local history in Victoria. Most local histories were compilations, generally classified as antiquarian, necessary and useful but often collection for its own sake. Weston's particular contribution was to place much more value on professional training and the questioning of the materials of local historians. That did not mean that all local histories necessarily got better or that there were no professional local histories before *Brighton*. As you will judge, I am in great debt to Weston; I think we all are.

WESTON AND THE GOLD FIELDS

Charles Fahey

WHAT I WANT TO TALK ABOUT TODAY is a different community—I want to talk about Weston Bate's work on the gold fields, which has been a great inspiration to me. For those of you who know or who do not know Ballarat, I suppose you all know about the great Eureka Rebellion. No one writes about that as well as Weston. And there is also a wonderful little book that Weston wrote on the Victorian gold rushes; it is one of the finest overviews of the importance of the gold rushes in Victoria (*Victorian Gold Rushes*, published by McPhee Gribble Penguin in 1988). But what I like about Weston Bate's history of Ballarat, particularly the first volume, *Lucky City*, is the way that he goes from mere description to analyse what it is that makes Ballarat grow in the 19th century, and eventually what it is that brings that growth to an end in the last couple of decades of the century.

In preparing this paper, I went back to a wonderful essay called 'The Urban Sprinkle' that Weston wrote in 1970 for a special issue of the *Australian Economic History Review*. For me, that essay has been a model guiding my own research. In that little essay, Weston sets much of the agenda for what he was to do ten years later when he came to write the

history of Ballarat. It is the product of a particular period in Australian history when economic history was still something that historians practised, and I think one of the impetuses for this was the great work of Professor Noel Butlin. In this essay, ‘The Urban Sprinkle’, Weston gently chides a whole group of historians from Margaret Kiddle and Duncan Waterson to G.L. Buxton for their failure to analyse country towns in their regional histories.

What Weston also does in this essay—and it is great for those of us doing local history—is to make us think about what international historians were doing in the 1970s, telling us that we should look at the sources and methods they applied. So, for example, Weston used the work of an American economic historian, Eric Lampard, who said that historians should or could position themselves on various salients in looking at a region. Lampard suggested the demographic, the structural and the behavioural—and to these Weston suggested we could add the economic. Weston in this article also drew our attention to the work of another great American historian, Merle Curti, who wrote a book called *The Making of an American Community* in which he reconstructed a small Wisconsin town using the American census manuscripts. Unfortunately no such original census manuscripts exist in Australia, but Weston pointed out that we do have rate books, which, unlike the ten-year census, are updated each year. Rate books can be used to do many of the things for which census data can be used: occupations, home ownership, location of industry, providing answers to these and many other interesting questions about local areas.

Probably the worst thing Weston Bate ever did for me was to teach me to use rate books, because I am a pretty slow learner and I’m still using the damn things! I have gone back to teaching urban history and I teach planners. One thing planners have to learn if they are doing heritage planning is to use rate books. So, every year, I inflict rate books on my planning students.

In this little essay, Weston concluded that, ‘Towns are there in all their complexity. What point is there in simplifying them into something else?’ When Weston comes to write his great book on Ballarat, he does not try to simplify the city but, rather, tries to explain what makes it emerge out of nothing. Those of you who are aware of Anthony Trollope’s time in Australia know that he gives that wonderful description of Ballarat in 1870, where he makes cruel remarks about Bendigo—but he was wrong!

In *Lucky City*, Weston is trying to explain how Ballarat grew. Obviously the city grew on the strength of gold but I think Bate succeeds in taking us beyond those early alluvial rushes. He shows us how the deep leads buried under the basalt were attacked, the difficulty miners had in sinking below the basalt; and then he is able to show how the development of these deep leads stimulated the growth of the city. It is from the deep leads that the technology to build the engineering works developed. Weston talks about the democracy created through the deep leads. He calls it the gilt-edged democracy, where miners worked along with the capitalists. And he discovered there something that we think we have discovered only recently; he talked about the importance of the miners' residence area, that ability of miners to get a small block of land and create an ethos of home ownership. Weston also tells us how the mineral economy links in to the agricultural economy. He shows us the growth of Warrenheip, and he mentions the Anderson family of Smeaton (of whom, since my university days, I have had some experience, trying to restore their mills).

The other great strength of *Lucky City* lies in Weston Bate's attempt to describe why the city fails to grow by the end of the 19th century—and I think part of his success in doing this derives from his preparedness, unlike most local historians, to go back to the census, to analyse the data that is in the census, so that he looks at things such as age composition of the city, conjugal condition of the city, literacy, occupations and places of birth.

I want to conclude by thanking Weston for showing us that cities are not there just to be described but are there to be analysed.

AN APPRECIATION

Susan Priestley

MY APPRECIATION OF THE BATE STYLE began during a University of Melbourne lunchtime seminar that Weston hosted in the latter half of 1961. For this raw immigrant from Queensland, nervously presenting some preliminary research on Victorian Legislative Councillors in 1856, he was both welcoming and reassuring. But what remains strongest in memory is the homemade wholemeal bread in his

lunch—at least I thought it was home made, but, after hearing Graeme Davison last night, I am now not so sure. Home-baked bread, I had thought, was confined to far outback homes or those with ancient housekeepers from another era. Whatever the understanding or misunderstanding, for me a tiny window into the permeability of history was opened.

Months later, I was catapulted into undertaking a history of Echuca, commissioned by the then borough council but under the aegis of the university, to be ultimately presented as a masters thesis. It was not until about twelve years ago, when I was preparing an updated version of that history, that I learned that Weston was the prime instigator of the commissioning process. As guest speaker at a dinner, he had fired up local councillors to get histories done professionally rather than by local antiquarians. That led Kevin McCartney, Echuca's young town clerk (modern translation, CEO), to approach Melbourne's History Department seeking a masters student to undertake a centenary history. Alan Martin as acting head of department declined, since all current students were settled on their theses, but then thought of me, the archives assistant embarked on a masters preliminary course, and telephoned with the offer. Somewhat stunned and uncomprehending, I had to make the decision while walking across from the university archives to the department. Notwithstanding an initial blind panic about how to go about it, I delivered the manuscript to the publishers in mid-1964 and the thesis was submitted in January 1965, albeit with minimal supervision after Alan Martin's transfer to Adelaide.

The Bate example of hunting out local primary sources was a prime research beacon, dutifully expounded in a long explanatory bibliography to the thesis. But, unlike Brighton or indeed Camberwell, where Geoffrey Blainey had produced a commissioned history, Echuca's records repository was 50 metres up a disused concrete water tower, more freely accessible to birds and wind than people. Neither time nor support services were available to make extensive use of these council records, so I was unable to produce the maps using early rate books that featured in the Brighton and Camberwell histories. It was something of a relief to eventually compile one for the Waverley history published in 1979.

Other important lessons learned during my brief period as Frank Strahan's assistant at the Melbourne University Archives were that archival material must be interpreted in the context of its original purpose, and that adjunct material should be sought elsewhere. In Echuca's case, the local *Riverine Herald* newspaper, from its initial issue on 1 July 1863,

two years before the municipality was instituted, became a prime source. It provided a fuller, livelier account of council meetings than the bare minute book record of motions presented, and filled in some large gaps in council correspondence books. Where editorial bias existed, it was usually patent, even blatant, countering any likely manipulation through press anonymity, while factual errors were promptly corrected by the editor or a vigilant reader. To their great credit, Echuca Historical Society volunteers have spent decades indexing the paper, initially on cards and since transferred to a computerised system. A study of the ongoing *Herald* and its long community interaction, although its base has now moved away from Echuca, might provide an interesting journal article, as would South Melbourne's now defunct *Record*, albeit covering a shorter time span. Another point I would like to make is that *Making Their Mark*, my volume in the three-part Victoria Sesquicentenary series (1984), was largely drawn from existing local histories, together with some pamphlets, articles and memoirs, all published before about 1982. For this reason, if no other, I remain indebted to those conserving and recording grassroots history.

I turn now to tell of the Bate dynamo for local history on the ground—not to mention flying across it on car wheels or over it in small training planes—that has characterised his service to this Society since his retirement from academia in 1989. The formal summary reads: councillor 1990 to 1998 and again from 2001 to 2009, vice-president 1990 to follow A.G.L. Shaw as president from 1991 to 1997, then president again from 2002 to 2005—to my lasting gratitude. Bringing this formal record to life are some vivid impressions and memories of the dynamo in action (this is oral history you understand) that derive from visits throughout greater Melbourne and out to the state borders for excursions and for meetings of State Committee (now morphed into the History Victoria Support Group).

A typical occasion might see our arrival in a small fleet of cars, or perhaps a tour bus, at a building faded to a patina of age, wherein might be displayed a collection of 'pioneer' objects, images, manuscripts and printed works. Although we were greeted warmly, and always most hospitably in the way of homemade refreshments, by our hosts, we noted that they were commonly somewhat downcast by a shortage of members and resources in pursuing their historical work. A rousing Bate presidential address or vote of thanks would guide them to fresh ideas, avenues of support and links to sympathetic or knowledgeable comrades in arms. Weston's network through the Museums Advisory Board and his grasp of local history were

both richly apparent. Our departure would be accompanied by wide smiles and the equivalent of rousing cheers that resounded for weeks afterwards in letters of thanks and reports by ‘bush telegraph’.

Equally treasured was Weston’s knowledge of Victorian people and places when planning RHSV excursions, which could last from an afternoon to a weekend and, more rarely, a Tuesday to Friday week. Unfailingly, there came offers of personal contacts to shed light on the inside or the personal story of a place. On tour, the knowledge was expanded and expounded in his witty and occasionally provocative coach commentaries. Both wit and provocation would lead to calls for the microphone to be passed around the coach for more wit, elaboration or vigorous rebuttal. We all got to know one another and our local history so much better. The late Stewart Bradley’s rollicking account of Stawell’s history and its Easter Gift during his youth, as our coach made a circuitous tour of the town, is a personal favourite. People here will have others.

Stimulating interest and enjoyment in history, and revealing the wisdom emanating from that interest, are among Weston Bate’s finest talents. It is a legacy of immeasurable worth for the RHSV and its members and, beyond that, for all those seeking to understand the people and places within their ken.

REVIEWS

An Eye for Eternity: The Life of Manning Clark. By Mark McKenna. Miegunyah Press, Melbourne University Publishing, Melbourne 2011. Pp. 793. \$54.99, hardback.

It is likely that everyone who reads this review has read something by Manning Clark—something from the six-volume *A History of Australia*, or his two-volume autobiography, or perhaps *In Search of Henry Lawson*. Clark's works have sold and are still selling more widely than those of any other Australian historian; one could claim that he created an audience for Australian history outside the academy. It is also likely that everyone reading the review has a strong opinion about Clark's work; they love it or they hate it. This opinion may be purely literary, based on a reading of his story-telling as compelling, or of his prose style as turgid and bombastic. It is more likely to be coloured by one's political judgement of the man himself, as prophet of the new republic or traducer of British civilisation. Clark tended to polarise his audiences as readily as he engaged them.

This biography is essential reading for everyone who has been engaged by the words of Manning Clark. It will broaden your understanding of that engagement, placing it as part of the making of Australian history in the last decades of the last century. It is a complex book, always working at several different levels: the story of the man's life; the story of how that man wanted to be remembered; the story of the biographer's growing relationship with that man, whom he never met. And, for all that, it is a great read. McKenna writes of Clark's lecturing style that it could seem humble, diffident: 'Let me tell you what you already know'. His own achievement is similar; he is always present as the story-teller, presenting the facts as

he has come to know them. And he does this without blocking the readers' view or making up their minds for them.

Other reviewers have already told how well McKenna captures the life, both public and private, and the work of Manning Clark. The judges who gave McKenna the 2012 Prime Minister's Award for non-fiction describe his achievement as 'a masterful biography, a deeply compassionate portrait of a complex and flawed man'. I want to explore an aspect of this achievement that has been little commented upon, one that moved me deeply.

Manning Clark's wife, Dymphna Lodewyckx, a talented linguist, gave up a promising career to support the emotional, sexual, cultural and intellectual needs of a man who rewarded her with a love that always asked of her more than she could give, and turned away from her to seek solace with other women. McKenna tells this story with a clear-sighted compassion that gives equal voice to both husband and wife—no mean feat, given that Manning spoke and wrote constantly about his inner feelings and Dymphna hardly at all. McKenna understands the sense of personal inadequacy that drove Clark's infidelities as being closely related to a recurring anxiety about death, 'a deep-seated fear that ... any trace of his existence would soon be wiped out. Over time, writing and public performance became his creative response to death, each word from his pen another layer of sediment deposited in defiance of the passage of time' (p. 27).

In the end, death came to Clark in the form of a massive heart attack. A witness told McKenna, 'he was desperate to stay alive ... there was this overwhelming feeling of terror, of him not being ready'. Dymphna wondered whether she 'had done the right thing' as he lay dying. McKenna comments that: 'All her married life she had found it difficult to comfort Clark in his anguish. The last hours of her life with him were no different' (p. 673). The last event in the book is Dymphna's death, 'lying on the same bed in which Clark had died ... he calling out for help, she asking to be left in peace' (p. 703).

But McKenna gives the last word to a friend who remembered another vision of the couple. 'Unseen, she caught sight of Manning and Dymphna ... Their heads were tilted back, their faces cascading with laughter.'

Marian Quartly

University Unlimited: The Monash Story. By Graeme Davison and Kate Murphy. Allen & Unwin, Sydney 2012. Pp. xxix + 385. \$35, paperback.

Most university histories are occasioned by anniversaries and have a commemorative purpose. They recall the origins of the foundation and the purposes it was meant to serve as prelude to a narrative of progress and achievement. The narrative allows for setbacks—there are incidents of mismanagement, periodic financial crises and stretches of community or government neglect—but ultimately the institution grasps its opportunities to fulfil the academic mission.

This kind of university history is usually written from within. Most of its readers are former and current students and staff, with memories and interests that they expect to find validated. Their expectations are similar to those that attach to popular forms of national history: to relate the formative events that shaped a distinctive character and identity, record the contributions of those who best exemplify them, and show the living force of traditions that bind the affections of its members. Yet, because such university histories are so inwardly directed, they tell us little of how their own differed from others. Richly descriptive, they are impoverished in explanation. We have many histories of Australian universities but still no history of the Australian university.

There are some distinguished exceptions. Patrick O'Farrell's history of the University of New South Wales provided a compelling account of the legacy of public service control of an institute of technology, while Dick Selleck's *The Shop* is a searching appraisal of the first 90 years of the University of Melbourne. To these exemplars can now be added this history of Monash. It follows Simon Marginson's outstanding study, *Remaking the University: Monash* (2000), which showed how Monash seized the opportunities provided by the higher education reforms of the late 1980s. Marginson has unrivalled expertise on that subject, but Graeme Davison and Kate Murphy work across a broader time span and give broader treatment of university life.

Their story is of a university located on the outskirts of Melbourne that has looked outwards to seize opportunities; throughout its 50 years, it has always been a university in a hurry. It began in 1961 as a self-consciously new foundation, formed in the post-war ethos of modernity. A decade later, it was Australia's most radical campus but, in the 1980s, it embraced

the neo-liberal spirit to become the most striking Australian example of the enterprise university. Then, as higher education began to globalise, it projected itself as Australia's international university, and even aspired to the status of the university unlimited. Spread over six campuses and with offshoots in Malaysia, South Africa, India and Europe, it is our largest and most international tertiary education institution.

These characterisations of Monash's development are more than the hyperbole that encroaches on many university histories. The authors have made good use of the higher education literature to test and contextualise their claims. Davison's breadth of intellectual expertise is evident in the treatment of Monash's activities, while his knowledge of British and north American universities illuminates the influences that shaped the university. The research that supports this history extends beyond the university's archives, which the authors have mined extensively, and the voluminous testimony they have gathered. Commonwealth and state records, policy documents and other external sources provide important additional information, making for a more nuanced and contingent treatment than is the norm.

This can be seen in Davison and Murphy's account of Monash's origins. There was talk of creating a second university well before the Murray committee confirmed its need in 1957. And, while the Murray committee insisted it should be more than a university of technology, the planning of the new university was in the hands of an interim council dominated by businessmen for whom John Monash was the obvious namesake. In their search for a suitable site they first looked close to the city, and then outwards to the Caulfield race-course, golf courses in the sandbelt and, finally, Clayton, where the industrialists on the interim council had established their new plants. The council chairman was Robert Blackwood, a former professor of engineering and the general manager of Dunlop; he chose Louis Matheson, his former colleague in the Melbourne faculty of engineering, as the foundation vice-chancellor, and they designed a university on industrial lines: rational, functional and hierarchical. But, while they were doing so, the Australian Universities Commission insisted that Monash commence by teaching arts and commerce as well as science and engineering. And the hasty timetable (the Murray Committee said teaching should begin in 1964 but we learn that this page of its report was lost in transmission) meant that the first students encountered a muddy building site that soon became known as 'the Farm'.

Early chapters provide a detailed account of the first professors, their liberal ethos and educational innovations. We learn also of the first cohorts of students, typically the first in their family to attend university, and no less than half of them financing their studies with an Education Department bond. This analysis carries over to their successors in the period of student radicalism, where it is supplemented by extensive oral history. To my mind, the gallery of activists is selective, and there is a tendency to gather in the testimony of students who achieved greater eminence after than during their time at Monash. However, the account of Louis Matheson's travails is measured and persuasive.

After examining the successful leadership of Matheson's successor, Ray Martin, Davison and Murphy find the treatment and assessment of subsequent vice-chancellors more challenging. They loom larger in the narrative, partly because they acquired greater power and partly because the greater size and complexity of the university makes it difficult to reach into the faculties, departments and classrooms on more than a selective basis. The book provides a compelling explanation of the pressures that built on the university in the decade after 1975 when the government froze funding, but its account of how the university responded to the breaking of the log-jam by John Dawkins in 1987 rests perforce on Mal Logan and his deputies. The authors allow Logan to present his version of events as he exploited his influence with Dawkins to swallow up colleges across the state and make Monash the largest of all the universities. They note his backtracking and record his subsequent admission: 'I'm not sure why we went to Berwick'. They refer to his 'charm, bluff and chutzpah', but pass over the self-indulgence.

Logan's successor, David Robinson, presents a greater difficulty since he came unstuck and declined to be interviewed for the book. While Logan began the entry into Asia, Robinson embarked on a global strategy that became an end in itself. The history records Andrew Markus, a staff representative on the council, as the only dissenting vote when it met in Malaysia and resolved to begin an ill-considered venture in South Africa. It reports the businessman-chancellor conceding in hindsight that he should have listened to Markus's concerns. But there is no evidence that the council asked why it had selected such a recklessly autocratic vice-chancellor. On the contrary, it was loath to accept that the revelation he was a plagiarist made it impossible for Robinson to remain vice-chancellor. The lack of

accountability of university governing bodies that have been turned into corporate boards is startling.

The heroes on this occasion were those who risked official displeasure (I recall one senior academic telling me that his invitation to the Monash corporate box at the MCG was withdrawn) to insist that the matter could not be passed over. Monash is fortunate to have had such men and women of principle and resolution, but it is not clear that their interventions have withstood the cumulative effects of an enterprise that decides there are no limits. This, then, is something more than a university history in the conventional mode. It is a rich and instructive account of the forces that have remade the Australian university.

Stuart Macintyre

Wolfgang Sievers. By Helen Ennis. National Library of Australia, Canberra 2011. Pp. 197. \$49.95, paperback.

In the 1950s, people began to speak more confidently of Australia as a 'modern nation'. 'Modern' meant more than just new or up-to-date; it signified a new aesthetic, a new sense of history, a new way of looking at the world. The movement was strongest in Melbourne, partly through the advocacy of local champions like Robin Boyd, as well as the quieter influence of a talented cohort of émigré European photographers like German-born Wolfgang Sievers, whose striking black-and-white images of the city's skyscrapers, offices, factories, flats, power stations, oil refineries captured the essence of the modernist ideal. It has taken a while for the photographers to receive their critical due: Sievers, for example, has no entry in either Alan McCulloch's *Encyclopedia of Australian Art* or in Philip Goad and Julie Willis's recent *Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*. Over the past decade, before Sievers' death in 2007, however, the National Library of Australia acquired more than 65,000 images from his Sandringham studio. This elegant monograph presents a selection of about a hundred, together with a biographical and critical introduction by Helen Ennis, who has made a special study of Sievers and his fellow émigré photographers, Helmut Newton, Henry Talbot and Mark Strizic.

Ennis poses some intriguing questions about the relationship between the man and his art. A Jew on his mother's side, Lutheran on his academic father's side, the young Sievers experienced the Nazi takeover of Germany

as a profound crisis of identity. In the midst of his studies at Berlin's Contempora School of Applied Arts, an offshoot of the Bauhaus, he fled, first to Spain, then in 1938 across the Belgian border to London and on to Melbourne—as though to distance himself as far from the unfolding horror as possible. 'I left my native country, not because I am partly of Jewish descent, but because I cannot and will not live without freedom', he later told the Australian intelligence authorities. His early work, such as *Poverty in Berlin*, 1933, recently exhibited in the New South Wales Gallery's touring exhibition of German modernist art, 'The Mad Square', hints at a humanism absent from most of his later Australian oeuvre.

'It was now time to forget about the past, we hardly ever talked about it', he later confessed. In Melbourne, he quickly won the patronage of the city's leading architects and industrialists, who recognised his adaptability, technical brilliance and flair. The flagbearers of Melbourne modernism, Grounds Romberg and Boyd, and Bates Smart and McCutcheon, were among his most regular clients, and the book includes photographs of such landmark buildings as Romberg's *Stanhill*, Grounds's National Gallery, Boyd's John Batman Motel, McCutcheon's Monash University Engineering complex, and McGlashan's *Heide II*. From his Bauhaus masters, Sievers had learned to love the stark geometry of industrialism. His human subjects seldom look into the camera, their personal identity subordinated to their role as accessories of giant machines. As Ennis shows, Sievers' most memorable images were masterpieces of contrived theatricality: meticulously composed, brightly lit, and often shot in sharp focus against the darkness of the factory floor at night. 'To take a dull subject and create a successful dramatic shot is what good industrial photography is all about', he declared. Perhaps there was more than modernist doctrine and business acumen, however, to his artistic project. His images evoke an innocent faith in industrial progress coupled with an admiring, but emotionally distant, view of its human agents. Towards the end of his career, he sometimes pondered the ethical implications of his resolute pursuit of technique. Was he using his skill as a photographer to glamorise the pollution and environmental despoliation of industry, he wondered? 'So far I have found no valid answer to these problems.'

Looking forward, embracing the new, was perhaps Sievers' way of expunging the traumas of his past. Yet, as Ennis argues, the humanistic gaze occasionally reappeared—for example, in a touching series of portraits of Aboriginal women and children taken on a 1957 expedition to mining

sites on Cape York. And, when the spectre of war reappeared during the 1970s Vietnam conflict, he was prepared to brave the disapproval of his clients to raise a voice of protest. Ennis, author of several other studies in partnership with the National Library, is a deft, perceptive guide to Sievers' legacy. (I noticed only one error: Sievers' friend, Richard Casey, was treasurer in the government of UAP, not Labor, Prime Minister Joseph Lyons.) This handsomely designed volume offers a fascinating window on the modernising landscape of post-war Australia, a tempting sample of the thousands of other Sievers images now browsable through the National Library's digital collections, and some tantalising glimpses into the soul of the conflicted artist who created them.

Graeme Davison

Australia's Controversial Matron: Gwen Burbidge and Nursing Reform.
By Judith Godden. The College of Nursing, Sydney 2011. Pp. xvi + 357.
\$30, paperback.

One of the things that nurses seem to remember of their time as students at Fairfield Hospital during the 1940s and 50s were late-night encounters with Matron Gwen Burbidge's dog. Student nurses attempted to sneak into their quarters unobserved, but the furious barking of the dog alerted Miss Burbidge to the late arrival and punishment ensued. Miss Burbidge's reputation for enforcing discipline among her staff is legendary but, in *Australia's Controversial Matron*, Judith Godden gives us a rather different picture, the story of a nurse with remarkable talents and incredible drive, who swam against a conservative tide for most of her professional life.

Beginning as a general nurse and displaying an aptitude for learning, Gwen Burbidge was thrust unexpectedly into the role of nurse tutor by Miss Jane Bell, then lady superintendent at the Melbourne Hospital. Subsequently, Burbidge accepted a position as nurse tutor at the Melbourne Hospital's rival, the Alfred. She later completed a two-year, self-funded diploma in nursing in London. Through her teaching and learning, Burbidge came to understand the important distinction between 'training' for nurses and 'education' for nurses, the former simply forming accepted behaviours, the latter developing critical thinking skills. And, recognising that there was more opportunity to reform nursing training away from the classroom, when she returned to Australia in 1939 Burbidge accepted an appointment as

matron at the Queen's Memorial Infectious Diseases Hospital, colloquially known as Fairfield. There she served out her professional career, retiring in 1961. Gwen Burbidge has the honour of being the only nurse in Australia to have undertaken a Rockefeller Fellowship.

How individuals negotiate the complexities of life is inherently interesting for fans of biography, and Judith Godden's analysis of Gwen Burbidge's life is no exception. Godden's unravelling of the various factions in nursing's professional sphere is detailed and some readers may find the complexity difficult to fathom. But that complexity underscores just why Burbidge can be considered a controversial figure in Australian nursing. Godden's contention is that her subject was committed to reform in nursing, particularly in nursing education, but that her ideas were too radical for the time and for the prevailing networks.

The essence of nursing, and nursing education particularly, is under the microscope in this biography. The challenges that Burbidge faced during her working life turn on the notion of nursing itself: what it means to nurse, what it means to be a nurse, how nursing is defined in regulatory terms, and what sort of education is necessary to produce a nurse. At Fairfield, according to Godden, Burbidge's main challenge, the 'elephant in the room', was ever-present staff shortages. Burbidge's multi-faceted solution was to introduce and regulate nurses with less training thus freeing up fully registered nurses to perform the more technical tasks, to encourage those who had not thought of nursing to become trainees, and importantly to turn training into education. In challenging orthodoxy, Burbidge met with considerable opposition, and was accused of threatening the long-fought-for status of the nursing profession.

Among the innovations made by Burbidge was the appointment of a recruitment officer to attract staff and the use of the media as a recruiting vehicle. She permitted visitors to infectious cases at the bedside in the 1950s and introduced team nursing to replace task nursing. During her tenure, Fairfield offered migrant women courses by which they could then train as nurses' aides. Eventually, Burbidge made the radical step of introducing male nurses to Victoria.

Gwen Burbidge was a public-spirited individual with a complex personality and afflicted by numerous life-long ailments. She consulted astrologers and fortune tellers, yet was something of a psychologist herself. She had a knack for convincing her administrative colleagues that improvements thought to be costly (such as a mechanical potato

peeler) made good economic sense. Burbidge also cleverly characterised solutions to problems at Fairfield Hospital as requiring a co-operative effort, thus including nursing as part of the solution. However, while generally a politically savvy operator, she seriously underestimated her opponents in nursing's professional sphere when, in 1948, she approached the federal government to secure funding for a college of nursing based in Victoria. What followed was a spectacular fall from grace, with Burbidge's reputation saved, only to a degree, by her departure overseas to undertake the Rockefeller Fellowship. For anyone remotely interested in Australian nursing and health politics in the 20th century, *Australia's Controversial Matron* is an engaging and absorbing read.

Madonna Grehan

Our Schools and the War. By Rosalie Triolo. Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne 2012. Pp. xvii + 364. \$39.95, paperback.

For all the lamentations about book publishing dying, the next six years are certain to bring an inundation of books commemorating in one way or another various centenaries associated with the First World War. The vast majority of these will be military histories, with endless accounts of the vain heroism of Gallipoli, the mechanised slaughter of Fromelles, the Somme and Passchendaele and the costly triumphs of Villers Bretonneux and Mont St Quentin, but doubtless there will be some stories of the home front, of anti-German feeling, the conscription campaign and the manifold eccentricities of Billy Hughes. It is doubtful, however, if many of them will be either as original or as valuable as Rosalie Triolo's *Our Schools and the War*. Fortunately, it has been published ahead of the main rush as it is a marvellous book and it would be a shame if it were to be lost in the torrent of publications in 2014 and beyond.

Based recognisably (but not to its detriment) on a Monash University PhD thesis, which won the prestigious Molly Holman medal, *Our Schools and the War* is a comprehensive account of the impact of the war on Victoria's state education system. Triolo argues that it is doubtful if the Victorian school system has ever been mobilised or involved in any other event to the extent that was the case between 1914 and 1918. She shows how the war was explained to children and the way they were encouraged to join in patriotic activities; she tells stories of the 753 teachers who

enlisted and depicts the impact on school communities of the deaths of many of them; and she discusses the importance of the commemoration of the war dead in schools.

The story is dominated by two towering individuals, Frank Tate, Victoria's first director of education, who moulded the state's education system between 1902 and 1928, and Charles Long, the foundation and long-serving editor of both the *School Paper* and the *Education Gazette*. Moustachioed and stiff-collared, their stern visages greet the reader in the preface and their characters and attitudes dominate the book. In the decade before the war, they had prepared the teachers and children of Victoria (and several other states that used the *School Paper*) 'to offer their lives in times of trouble to God, Queen, King and Empire', and this translated seamlessly after August 1914 into expectations of 'self-denial' on the homefront and of all eligible men's preparedness to 'self-sacrifice' on the battle front.

While strong and unquestioning supporters of the war, Tate and Long rarely slipped into simplistic militarism and avoided the glorification of war. The Education Department 'never espoused the hatred of the enemy' that characterised many other official institutions, declining to distribute posters of German atrocities in schools and rejecting any encouragement of hatred of Germans in Australia. Nonetheless, the department's publications continually encouraged enlistment and railed against 'shirkers'. Typical was a letter published in the *Education Gazette* from a soldier expressing how he would rather be killed than 'live and die in fear as cowards do'. The *Education Gazette* and the *School Paper* campaigned strongly in favour of conscription and there were many articles criticising strikes and industrial action during wartime. Triolo shows that teachers generally accepted the tight discipline of the Education Department and did not speak out against conscription, whatever their personal views.

Both Education Department publications published many letters from teachers at the front. These include many tales of horror and heroism but also of chance meetings between fellow teachers or teachers and pupils, and observations by soldiers of schools they had seen in Egypt, France and England. In Egypt, several soldiers noted that the beginners' English classes all seemed to make great use of nursery rhymes for rote learning, particularly 'Twinkle twinkle little star'.

The structure of the book is thematic, with chapters on the department's general attitude to the war, the encouragement of children's war work, the enlistment of teachers and their war service, the commemoration of the

war and so on. While it is hard to see that it could have been structured any other way, it does mean that there is a degree of repetition and jumping back and forwards chronologically.

What I thought the outstanding chapter in the book, 'Our Anzacs', analyses the development of the Anzac legend and the celebration of Anzac Day in schools. The frontispiece for the chapter is the cover of the *School Paper* for April 1918 for grades 7 and 8, which shows how consciously the legend was built up. The 'introductory' reads:

This, the third Anzac Number of the *School Paper*, is issued that the story of the Anzacs may be read again, and the deeds of those heroic men whose patriotism, bravery, and endurance were put to the supreme test for the first time during the present war may be vividly called to mind. The story is one that Australasians will not willingly let die.

Frank Tate and Charles Long would be deeply gratified if they could see the honour still accorded to Anzac Day a century later, even though much else that they held sacred has been swept away.

Peter Yule

VICTORIAN COMMUNITY HISTORY AWARDS

The following short reviews cover six of the nine Victorian Community History Awards made in 2012. We hope to publish further reviews in a later issue of the journal. A complete list of the winners of the awards for 2012 can be found on the RHSV website at <http://www.historyvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/VCHA-2012-Awards-Booklet.pdf>.

Overall Winner of the Community History Awards 2012

The Art of Being Melbourne. By Maree Coote. Melbournestyle Books, Melbourne 2012. Pp. 212. \$69.50, hardback.

The Art of Being Melbourne is a richly illustrated journey through the streets of Melbourne from the earliest days of European settlement to the city we recognise today. Unlike conventional histories based upon documents, manuscripts and interpretations of the written word, Maree Coote provides a compelling history of the development and evolution of a city through paintings, prints and drawings by some of Australia's most

celebrated artists. More than a topographical or architectural synopsis of the city's changing physical character, this book draws upon images to chart changes in the cultural imaginary of Melbourne. From early attempts to market Melbourne for European migration to the effects of the gold rush; from Federation, two world wars and the Great Depression to the rhythms of modernity and the alienation and consumerism that characterise contemporary city living, the artworks each provide evocative insights of how people engaged with the city. Whether celebratory, critical, playful, reflective or biting social commentary, the individual perspectives of the artists offer valuable understandings into the cultural milieu of their time. This is the unique strength of *The Art of Being Melbourne*. By bringing together the work of 45 artists, ranging from early colonials such as Joseph Panton and Wilbraham Liardet, Australian Impressionists including Frederick McCubbin, Tom Roberts and Arthur Streeton, through to modernist and contemporary artistic responses, Coote provides poignant perspectives on how people responded to the physical environment, the weather patterns and historic social events that have taken place in Melbourne since European settlement.

The book includes numerous iconic images such as John Brack's *Collins St, 5pm*, 1955, which presents a bleak view of the monotony of city life for Melbourne's office workers, alongside a recent parody complete with fast-food outlets by Los Angeles-born artist Shag (Josh Agle). Other important works include Albert Tucker's sinister *Tramstop*, 1946, and works from the series, *Images of Modern Evil*, 1945—disturbing views on the perversity of war and the moral decay witnessed on Melbourne's streets during World War II. Paintings by Jeffrey Smart, including *Melbourne Gate*, 2002, depicting the Citylink Gateway, together with *Turn-off to Dandenong*, 1986, present the city as an alienating force, while Jan Senbergs' vortex of roads and bridges in works such as *Melbourne*, 1999, and *Ring Road*, 2011, are more whimsical comments on the notion of the 'hyper-linked, yet disconnected' city.

Well researched with incisive commentary by Coote, sprinkled with a judicious use of quotes by the artists, this is a very readable book for those who would like a visual survey of the development of the city of Melbourne from its earliest beginnings.

Wendy Garden

Local History—Small Publications Award

Chewton Then and Now: A Series of Studies Investigating Change over Time in The Former Mount Alexander Goldfield Town of Forest Creek Later Known as Chewton. By Ken McKimmie. Deniliquin Newspapers Pty Ltd, Deniliquin 2011.

Chewton Then and Now contains 50 studies of historic buildings and heritage sites in the Chewton gold field. While it is on the main road to Castlemaine, these days nearly engulfed by Castlemaine's expansion, Chewton has been a bit of a backwater and has maintained much of its identity. There has been relatively little change and it has retained many of its historic buildings and heritage sites.

Ken McKimmie has selected and researched 50 of these homes, businesses and mining sites. He engagingly records their history through a combination of historical narrative and old and new photographs. These are complemented by informative maps and sketches that show the placement of structures within the sites. This is an attractive and well-presented small book, a fine example of a fresh approach to local history and heritage.

Don Garden

Historical Interpretation Award

Goldfields Track Walking Guide to the Central Victorian Goldfields Cultural Landscape. By Gib Wettenhall & Great Dividing Trail Association, Inc. em Press, Ballarat 2012. Pp. 160. \$29.95, paperback.

Gib Wettenhall has a deserved reputation as an author and publisher who has delved into many aspects of Victorian history and appreciation of its environment. He is a previous VCHA winner.

Goldfields Track Walking Guide is a very impressive and beautifully presented walking guide to the 210km goldfields walking track that extends from Mt Buninyong to Bendigo. However, heritage tourists travelling by car or bus will find it equally valuable to identify and appreciate the towns and the natural and historic heritage sites along the way.

A group of authoritative authors and creators has been brought together to map, photograph, describe and guide users through the book's series of map-spreads into which the walk/tour is divided. What lifts this book

above most guides is its informative sections on reading the landscape and the cultural heritage that will be encountered. There are short biographies of some of the famous district personalities. It is a model for such guides.

Don Garden

Multimedia History Award

Wyperfeld 100: A Traverse in Time. By Friends of Wyperfeld. 2012. DVD.

This delightful DVD was produced by the Friends of Wyperfeld to mark the centenary of the reservation of the first section of Wyperfeld National Park. It is a high-quality production, combining beautiful contemporary filming with historical footage and images, and interviews with people involved with the park and the Friends.

The Mallee is rich in biodiversity, but it was its unsuitability for farming that was largely responsible for its initial reservation as one of Victoria's early national parks. For many years it was neglected and degraded. Among the elements in bringing Wyperfeld back to life in recent decades are the enthusiastic volunteers comprising the Friends of Wyperfeld, an offshoot of the Victorian National Parks Association. Though treated initially with some suspicion by the rangers, their contribution to removing weeds and pests, revegetating and establishing signage and other services has won recognition and appreciation. One of my favourite images is a line of 'heritage' tractors traversing a hilly track *en route* to rip rabbit burrows.

The issues considered are placed within the context of changing attitudes to the environment over the last century and a mounting community appreciation of, and desire to protect, our natural history and heritage.

Don Garden

Local History Project Award

Coranderrk Database. Compiled by Mick Woiwod. Tarcoola Press in association with Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Inc., Kangaroo Ground 2012. Pp. 242 + CD-ROM.

This compilation is available as print on demand or on disc. It is a resource kit providing detailed material presented chronologically about

Indigenous people at the Coranderrk Aboriginal station near Healesville, designed to serve communities in the Yarra Valley and Victoria generally through libraries. It represents a huge effort in collection, arrangement and interpretation and deserves to be widely used. It also presents new material about the well-known story of Coranderrk's demise. The compiler links that demise to Victorian Acclimatisation Society office-bearers on the Board of Protection of Aborigines, and provides careful documentation and argument that will be further aired in Woiwod's forthcoming *Barak and the Black Hats of Melbourne*. His research makes this much more than a compilation.

Don Gibb

Collaborative Community History Award

From Inkwell to Internet: A Century of State Secondary Education in Leongatha. By Lyn Skillern and others. Leongatha Secondary College, Leongatha 2012. \$40 + \$12 postage from Leongatha Historical Society.

Starting in 1912 as Leongatha Agricultural High School in the wake of the Fink royal commission report into technical education, the school was one of the earliest state secondary schools, almost all of which were in regional Victoria. Those schools established before 1914 have had or are about to have their centenary years. An approaching centenary sometimes prompts a history. Leongatha's is one that tells us about changes in school education, community involvement, interaction between students and teachers, and much else. The present Leongatha Secondary College resulted from the amalgamation of Leongatha High School and Leongatha Technical School in 1990. It is a model for other state secondary schools' histories. It is clearly written, based on solid research, well illustrated and comprehensive of the whole period. Its several authors and use of student memoirs make it a community collaborative project. It also includes lists of students at the high school and the shorter-lived technical school, as well as the current secondary college. This is a welcome addition to Victorian education history, where so much of the publication has been about non-government schools.

Don Gibb

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Weston Bate OAM FRHSV, foundation professor of Australia Studies at Deakin University, is the author of *A History of Brighton* and *Lucky City: The First Generation at Ballarat 1851–1901*. He served as president of the RHSV from 1991 to 1997 and 2002 to 2005.

Richard Broome, professor of history and honorary research associate at LaTrobe University, is a former editor of the *Victorian Historical Journal* and *Australian Historical Studies*. He has published on local history (*Coburg: Between Two Creeks*) and Victorian history (*The Victorians: Arriving*), and his most recent book is *Aboriginal Australians: A History Since 1788* (2010). He serves on RHSV Council and chairs its Publications Committee.

Graeme Davison is emeritus professor of history at Monash University. His most recent book is *University Unlimited: The Monash Story*.

Charles Fahey teaches history at LaTrobe University. His research interests are the Victorian gold fields, and Australian farming and labour market history.

Don Garden FRHSV taught history at the University of Melbourne where he is now an honorary fellow. His books include a history of Victoria, a number of local histories, and an environmental history of Australia and the Pacific. He serves on the RHSV Council and is immediate past president of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies.

Wendy Garden is curator at the Maroondah Art Gallery. She was formerly curator at the Royal Historical Society of Victoria.

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

Madonna Grehan is an honorary fellow in the University of Melbourne's School of Health Sciences. She completed her PhD in 2009 on the subject of nurses, midwives and the care of women in Victoria since European settlement. Madonna is the honorary director of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery History Project.

John Hirst is emeritus professor of history at LaTrobe University. His most recent book is a collection of his essays, *Looking for Australia*.

Carol Holsworth is an independent scholar specialising in the history of the Chinese in Bendigo. Through the Holsworth Local Heritage Trust she has contributed to funding publication of many works of local and regional history in Victoria.

John Lack FRHSV is a principal fellow in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne. He was editor of the *Victorian Historical Journal* from 1987–1989. John has written on aspects of Melbourne's local history, notably Footscray and Sunshine, as well as a history of the 2nd/29th Battalion and several political personalities.

Sharron Lane has worked for a number of years as a social researcher, including specialising in heritage at Kildonan UnitingCare. She is currently completing a PhD in social welfare history at the Australian Catholic University.

Andrew Lemon FRHSV is current president of the RHSV, an independent professional historian and author of many books, particularly on aspects of the history of Victoria. He edited the *Victorian Historical Journal* from 1990 to 1999. **Amanda Lourie** is completing a PhD at Deakin University on science in 1850s to 1870s colonial Victoria. In July 2012, she gave one of the RHSV New Historians lectures on the scientific methodology of William Blandowski.

Stuart Macintyre is Ernest Scott professor of history at the University of Melbourne and is currently working on a study of the creation by John Dawkins of the unified national system of higher education.

Elizabeth Morrison is a print culture historian with a particular interest in the 19th-century Australian newspaper press. She is the author of *Engines of Influence: Newspapers of Country Victoria, 1840–1890* and is completing a biography of David Syme.

Sybil Nolan is a lecturer in publishing and communications at the University of Melbourne, where in 2011 she completed a doctorate in Australian political and media history, 'The *Age* and the Young Menzies: A Chapter in Victorian Liberalism'. She was a journalist at the *Age* from 1989 to 1996.

Susan Priestley FRHSV is the author of five Victorian local histories, four institutional histories and *Making their Mark*, one of three volumes of *The Victorians*, published to mark the 150th anniversary of European settlement. She was president of the RHSV from 1997 to 2002 and a councillor 1991–2009.

Marian Quartly is professor emerita of history at Monash University. She has served as editor of *Australian Historical Studies* and as the founding editor of *History Australia*. She is currently engaged in a history of adoption in Australia and (with Judith Smart) a history of the National Council of Women of Australia.

Carole Woods FRHSV is a freelance historian. She is a member of RHSV Council and the society's honorary secretary. A widely respected writer of local history herself, Carole has been a judge of the Victorian Community History Awards for eleven years.

Peter Yule FRHSV is a research fellow in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne. His most recent book is *William Lawrence Baillieu: Founder of Australia's Greatest Business Empire*.

ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF VICTORIA

PROMOTING AND PRESERVING THE HISTORY 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.

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Membership of the RHSV is open. All those with an interest in history are welcome to join.

The Society's core activities encompass a diversity of activities that bring history to a wide range of people. Working with a large number of volunteers, the RHSV conducts lectures, exhibitions, excursions and workshops for the benefit of members and the general public. We also publish the *Victorian Historical Journal*, a monthly newsletter, *History News*, and monographs.

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4. The Royal Historical Society of Victoria does not pay for contributions to the *Journal*.
5. Articles within the range of 4000–8000 words (including notes) are preferred.
6. The manuscript should be typed or printed in a minimum 12-point serif typeface on one side only of A4 pages, double or one-and-a-half line spaced (including indented quotations and endnotes), with margins of at least 3 cm.
7. References should be supplied as endnotes and should not exceed 10 per cent of the text. They should be devoted to the citation of sources only.
8. The title page should carry: author's name and title(s), postal address, telephone number, fax and email address where available, word length of the article (including notes), a brief biographical note on the author, a brief abstract of *no more than 100 words*.
9. Suitable illustrations for articles are welcome. Please send photos by email or on disk as separate files (TIFF or high resolution JPEGs). Do not embed them in your text or email.
10. Titles should be concise. A subtitle can also be submitted. The editor reserves the right to alter the title in consultation with the author.
11. Send an electronic copy of your manuscript, either on disk or preferably as an email attachment (.rtf, .doc or .docx file format). Email attachments should be sent to office@historyvictoria.org.au. Telephone enquiries to the RHSV office 9326 9288.