

VICTORIAN HISTORICAL JOURNAL

Volume 84, Number 2

November 2013

Articles

- Introduction.....Marilyn Bowler 187
- Lies, Damned Lies and Travel Writers: Women's Narratives
of the Castlemaine Goldfields, 1852–54.....Marjorie Theobald 189
- Frederick Dickson: the Man who Defrauded the University
of Melbourne.....Carole Hooper 212
- The Fortunes of Frederick Taylor.....Tony Edney 235
- The Death of a Hutkeeper near Geelong in 1840:
a New Investigative Approach
.....Beth D. Kicinski, Ian D. Clark and Teigan Arthur 257
- Scottish Identity in Stone: Statues of Robert Burns and
William Wallace in 19th Century Ballarat.....Ben Wilkie 277
- A Cultural Conflict? Belonging for Greek Child Migrants
in 1960s and 1970s Melbourne.....Alexandra Dellios 301

Historical Notes

- School to Work: Civvy Street 1939–45.....John Murphy 324
- Parliament in Exile: the Victorian Parliament at the
Exhibition Building 1901 to 1927.....Victor Isaacs 335

Reviews

- The Kelly Gang Unmasked.* By Ian Macfarlane. *The True Story
of Ned Kelly's Last Stand: New Revelations Unearthed about
the Bloody Siege at Glenrowan,* By Paul Terry.....(Don Gibb) 354
- Black Gold. Aboriginal People on the Goldfields of Victoria,
1850–1870.* By Fred Cahir.(Richard Broome) 357
- Melbourne before Mannix: Catholics in Public Life 1880–1920.*
By Patrick Morgan.....(Brenda Niall) 359
- Serving Church.* By Jane Carolan.....(Richard Broome) 361
- Books for the Profession: the Library of the Supreme Court
of Victoria.* By Sue Reynolds.(John Waugh) 363
- Life's Logic: 150 Years of Physiology at the University
of Melbourne.* By Juliet Flesch.....(Fay Woodhouse) 365
- Notes on Contributors..... 368
- Royal Historical Society of Victoria..... 371
- Guidelines for Contributors to the *Victorian Historical Journal*..... 372

INTRODUCTION

Marilyn Bowler

IN HIS OPENING TO *The Past Is a Foreign Country*, David Lowenthal comments:

The past is everywhere. All around us lie features which, like ourselves and our thoughts, have more or less recognizable antecedents. Relics, histories, memories suffuse human experience. Each particular trace of the past ultimately perishes, but collectively they are immortal. Whether it is celebrated or rejected, attended to or ignored, the past is omnipresent.¹

Reading the articles for this issue of the *Victorian Historical Journal*, my first as editor, I was reminded of the omnipresence of history on a personal, as well as an historical, level. Marjorie Theobald's discussion of the reliability of female travel writers' accounts of the gold rush era mentions the 40th Regiment of Foot, in which my great-grandfather served. In Victor Isaacs' article on the Victorian parliament in exile at the Exhibition Building, George Prendergast was one of those frequently complaining about the lack of facilities there. A Labor politician and later a premier of Victoria, Prendergast is now largely forgotten, except perhaps by historians, yet every morning I walk along Prendergast Street, named in his honour.

Other articles in this issue remind us that not all Victorian history is to be celebrated and that it contains villains as well as respectable citizens, though sometimes it is hard to tell the difference. Tony Edney's study of the fortunes of Frederick Taylor shows his involvement in a horrendous massacre of Djargurd wurrung people. Yet Taylor ended his days as a magistrate, a member of the Melbourne Club and the owner of

1 David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. xv.

an impressive Brighton home, Bonleigh—upgraded, we might say, from villainy to ‘respectability’. And both Bonleigh and the Melbourne Club survive in our time as ‘relics’ of Taylor’s time. Carole Hooper’s account of Frederick Dickson, the University of Melbourne’s embezzling accountant, suggests that nothing is new under the sun where fraud is concerned. The past is not always a foreign country.

Kicinski, Clark and Arthur’s application of the massacre methodology devised by Jacques Semelin to the death of a hutkeeper near Geelong provides us with a new technique for examining our past and for going beyond easy explanations of frontier violence.

Ben Wilkie’s article on Scottish migrants’ sense of identity as revealed in the Ballarat statues of Robert Burns and William Wallace examines one group of Victoria’s 19th century migrants, while Alexandra Dellios considers the Greek child migrants of the 20th century and whether the cultural conflict thesis holds true for them. A descendant of Scottish migrants myself, in the 1970s, I taught first and second generation Greek migrants at an inner city high school. Finally, John Murphy’s reminiscences of his wartime experiences as a telegraphist take us from Leongatha Post Office to the GPO in Elizabeth Street and to Puckapunyal army base, all of which have survived to the present day.

As Lowenthal observed, the past is everywhere.

LIES, DAMNED LIES AND TRAVEL WRITERS: WOMEN'S NARRATIVES OF THE CASTLEMAINE GOLDFIELDS, 1852–54

Marjorie Theobald

Abstract

In the mid-nineteenth century, the British public was avid for publications about the Australian goldfields. Both publishers and writers were happy to oblige. This article examines two such publications, both by women, and both claiming to be firsthand accounts of their travels on the goldfields: Mrs Charles Clacy, A Lady's Visit to the Gold Diggings of Australia in 1852–3 and Elizabeth Ramsay-Laye, Social Life and Manners in Australia. Marjorie Theobald is currently writing a history of the Mount Alexander diggings and intended using both publications to illustrate 'women's experience' of the gold rushes. However, she began to discover disturbing anomalies in both accounts, ranging from misleading autobiographical details to outright plagiarism. She argues that neither text can be taken as a firsthand, reliable account of the Mount Alexander diggings.

ON 8 JANUARY 1852, the *Honduras* reached England with official confirmation of the wealth of Victoria's gold mines and the first cargo of gold. *The Times* of London declared that the Empire did indeed have its own Eldorado.¹ From that time on, the British public could not get enough of the goldfields of central Victoria. Newspapers, periodicals and book publishers were quick to capitalise on the demand from intending migrants for information about the new Eldorado. Compilations of information on how to get there, what to expect and how to tackle the goldfields flooded the market in 1852–3.² Eyewitness

accounts by those who had gone to the diggings were especially sought after. With a gullible public avid for such publications, the more romantic and swashbuckling the better, publishers were not overscrupulous about the originality and firsthand authenticity of these accounts. This study examines the authenticity of two such publications, both by women, and both made accessible by new editions in recent years. As I am currently writing a history of Castlemaine, this study is primarily concerned with their reliability as sources on the Mount Alexander goldfields.

Mrs Charles Clacy, *A Lady's Visit to the Gold Diggings of Australia in 1852–3: written on the spot by Mrs Charles Clacy*, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1963, first published Hurst and Blackett, London, 1853.

Clacy's introductory remarks reflect the excitement generated in England by the Victorian gold rushes.

It was at the beginning of April, 1852, that the excitement occasioned in the published accounts of the Victoria 'diggings', induced my brother to fling aside his Homer and Euclid for the various 'guides' printed for the benefit of the intending gold-seeker, or to ponder over the shipping columns of the daily papers. The love of adventure must be contagious, for three weeks after (so rapid were our preparations) I found myself accompanying him to those auriferous regions.³

She does not tell us her maiden name, her brother's name or anything of her family circumstances. She claims to have married Charles Clacy while in Melbourne, and this is how she refers to herself in the authorship and publication of the book. It was published by Hurst and Blackett in October 1853 after she returned to England, was well reviewed, quickly reprinted, and followed a few months later with another book, *Lights and Shadows of Australian Life*. The Austlit website, a collection of secondary sources drawing on published work, has a complete list of her other works, most of them novels.

When *A Lady's Visit to the Gold Diggings* was republished by Lansdowne Press in 1963, the editor, Patricia Thompson, accepted it at face value. The book and others of its genre were taken up enthusiastically by feminist historians in the 1970s eager to write women, the more adventurous the better, back into the historical record. However, as it became accessible to a new audience, *A Lady's Visit to the Gold Diggings* came under closer scrutiny. In their exposé of the fraudulent goldfields author John Sherer, Molony and McKenna devote one sentence to Clacy, damning her by

association and querying the shortness of her visit—August to November 1852.⁴ In 1991, David Goodman took issue with Molony and McKenna, arguing that the mastery of local detail in Clacy's book suggested that she must have experienced the goldfields firsthand.⁵

In her study of women on the Victorian goldfields, Margaret Anderson concludes that Clacy did indeed visit Victoria briefly, and she bases this conclusion on unpublished research by Rosalyn Shennan.⁶ Shennan's meticulous research into the Sturmer family in England establishes that Clacy was born Ellen Louisa Sturmer in 1830, the daughter of the Rev. Frederick Sturmer and his wife Mary, née Norris. Shennan also claims to have tracked down Ellen and her brother Frederick on board the *Ayrshire* in April 1852, with the surname wrongly listed as Skinner. The newspaper account of the *Ayrshire's* arrival lists a Mr and Mrs Sturmer. Shennan also claims to have identified the four shipmates who eventually made up the Clacys' digging party.⁷ Neither Anderson nor Shennan questions the authenticity of Clacy's goldfields narrative. Shennan comments that she 'left a lasting legacy in the form of her narrative of early gold-rush Australia, seen through the eyes of a woman'. Shennan argues that the problem is with the marriage to Charles Clacy that Ellen claimed took place in Melbourne in 1852. Neither the marriage nor a plausible Charles Clacy can be found in that year. Ellen had only a few weeks in Melbourne before setting off to the diggings, and only three weeks afterwards before setting off back to England, yet she announces abruptly on page 137 that she is to be married and will no longer need the protection of her brother. Perhaps she came to Australia to join her fiancé. If so, there is no mention of a reunion when she landed in August 1852. Compulsory registration of births, deaths and marriages did not occur in Victoria until 1853 and it took some time to enforce the legislation. Nevertheless, there are 5004 pre-registration marriages recorded on the 'Pioneer' CD rom index for 1852 and 1853, taken from church records, and none of them was contracted between an Ellen and a Charles of any surname. There is no wedding announcement in *The Argus*.

But the plot thickens. According to Shennan, Clacy bore a child on the return voyage to England, baptised with the father given as Charles Clacy. The arithmetic of pregnancy is unforgiving, and the arithmetic in this case suggests that the child was conceived either just before she left England or on board ship on the journey out. The story of the marriage to Charles Clacy in Melbourne in 1852 could have been a smoke screen

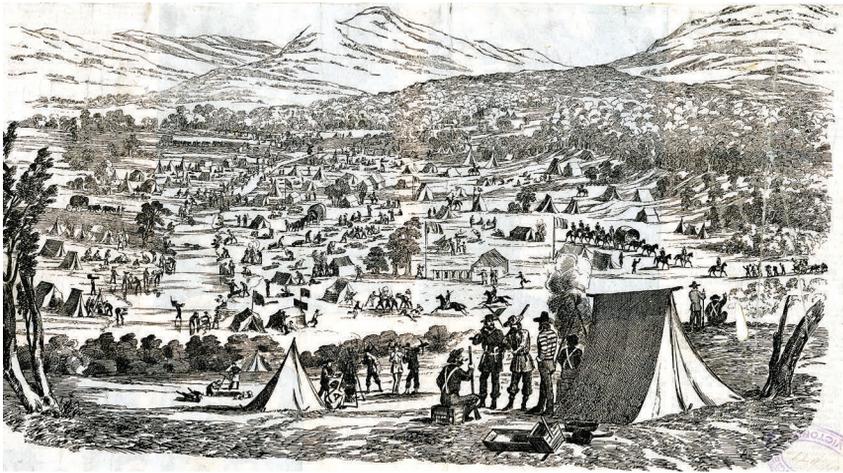
in a society that did not condone single mothers, especially of the middle classes. As Anderson remarks, it would have been a risky strategy. If Ellen Sturmer Clacy was indeed seduced and left pregnant, perhaps the Gothic story of Mary H. in Chapter 13, wooed on board ship and ruined by her faithless lover, is a fictionalised account of her own experience. To further complicate matters, there was a marriage between Ellen Louisa Sturmer and Charles Clacy in London in June 1854, the year after she published the book under his name.⁸

In *A Lady's Visit to the Gold Fields*, Clacy employs several genres of travel writing. In her introduction, she writes in an instructional mode:

When I reflect on the many mothers, wives, and sisters in England, whose hearts are ever longing for information respecting the dangers and privations to which their relatives at the antipodes are exposed, I cannot but hope that the presumption of my undertaking may be pardoned in consideration of the pleasure which an accurate description of some of the Australian goldfields may perhaps afford to many.⁹

Her final chapter is titled, 'Who Should Emigrate?' Chapters 6, 8, 9 and 10 are her general descriptions of life at the diggings, including chapters on Ballarat and Adelaide, which she makes no claim to have visited. As with many other goldfields compendiums, it would have been possible for a competent writer to bring this information together from an existing body of literature on the colonies.

In the remaining chapters, Clacy employs the personal or quasi-diary mode, even dating her travels, so that the reader has the right to expect that this is a firsthand account of what she experienced. The title claims that the account is written 'on the spot', and Clacy assures her readers that nothing would induce her to 'turn uninteresting truth into agreeable fiction'.¹⁰ So, does Goodman's claim that Clacy was intimately acquainted with the goldfields stand up to close textual scrutiny? Unfortunately, there is ample evidence that Clacy plagiarised material from contemporary newspapers and authentic accounts available in England by 1853. *The Argus*, for example, had a reporter stationed at Mount Alexander (Castlemaine) from its discovery in late October 1851. At the time that Ellen Clacy claims to have arrived, the reporter at Mount Alexander was Daniel Bunce, a botanist who had been on one of Leichhardt's earlier expeditions and went on to become the first curator of the Geelong Botanical Gardens. Bunce reported on every aspect of life on the goldfields: the journey from Melbourne to



Mt Alexander diggings 1851, print from a sketch by R.S. Anderson, published in The Australasian, 30 January 1897. (RHSV Collection: ART-0240.)

the diggings; what prospective miners should bring; every rush and its outcome; every large nugget; the primitive technologies employed by the alluvial miners; the accidents which befell them; the criminals who preyed upon them; the cost of living; the price of gold; and the licence hunts. If you will pardon the pun, he is a gold mine of information for historians today—and was for any unscrupulous writer hoping to rush a publication onto the market in the 1850s.

Clacy begins her personal account with the set pieces of emigrant literature: the journey out; landing; a description of Melbourne; and the near impossibility of finding board and lodgings. Clacy and her brother made up a party with the four shipboard acquaintances mentioned by Shennan. She takes us through the party's preparations for departure to the diggings, complete with costings, reproducing a list of rules drawn up before they left Melbourne. She takes us through the gruelling three-day journey up through Flemington and along what is now roughly speaking the Calder Freeway. They were not attacked by bushrangers in the Black Forest; this hardy perennial of goldfields literature occurs on the return journey.

The party went first to Bendigo, then decided to try the new diggings at the Ovens (Beechworth), publicised by *The Argus* in early November 1852.¹¹ They decided on some rest and recreation in Melbourne first, with a detour to the Forest Creek diggings (part of the Mount Alexander

diggings), purely in the spirit of adventure. In Clacy's account, they came onto the Forest Creek diggings on 16 October 1852. Having sold up all their belongings in Bendigo, the party hitched a lift with a carrier at half-a-sovereign each, passed the Porcupine Inn at Ravenswood and reached the gold commissioner's camp two hours later. Coming via this route in November 1852, this has to be the Golden Point outstation on Forest Creek, established in April 1852 to redress the diggers' grievance about the centralisation of administration in Castlemaine. Clacy describes the camp:

An air of quiet prevailed, and made the scene unlike any other we had as yet viewed at the diggings. It was in the middle of the month; here and there a stray applicant for a licence might make his appearance, but the body of the diggers had done so long before, and were disseminated over the creek digging ... To the right of the Licensing Commissioners tent was a large one appropriated to receiving the gold to be forwarded to Melbourne by the government escort. There were a number of police and pensioners about.¹²

In 1852, Thomas Ham, a Melbourne engraver, published his *Five Views of the Gold Fields of Mount Alexander and Ballarat, in the Colony of Victoria*. They were 'drawn on the spot' by David Tulloch, who was at Mount Alexander in December 1851 in time to sketch the huge protest meeting against the licence fee. Another of his sketches is entitled 'Commissioner's Tent and Officers' Quarters, Forest Creek December 1851'. This is the first camp established by Commissioner F.A. Powlett in October 1851. Tulloch's comments accompanying the Commissioner's camp sketch state:

There is an air of quiet in this engraving, not perceived in any other scene we have portrayed; this is the general feature of the Chief Commissioners Quarters, with the exception of the earlier days of the month, when licences are issued, and those days appointed for receiving gold to be forwarded to Melbourne by the Government Escort. The large tent, near the centre, was appointed for this purpose ... and that to the left to the use of the Licensing Commissioner.

Unfortunately for Clacy, Powlett's camp, which she claims to have visited in October 1852, was long gone. By the time Clacy arrived, a new outstation of substantial wooden buildings had replaced the tent encampment at Golden Point, and a detailed description appeared in the *Melbourne Morning Herald* for 22 September 1852.

Clacy's subsequent discussion of the improvement of law and order on the diggings closely follows Tulloch's text in *Five Views of Mt Alexander*.

Here is Tulloch's version:

Since that period many desirable changes have been effected—large bodies of police have been placed on duty, and the government is now erecting wooden buildings in various parts of the Diggings, for the accommodation of its officers; and more energetic measures have been taken in the appointment of additional Assistant Commissioners (who are also magistrates), with large bodies of Pensioners as Police under their direction,—thus the diggers are enabled to carry on their operations, and feel that their lives and property are as secure as in a well-ordered town. Roads traversing the different Diggings are also in progress, which, it is obvious, will greatly facilitate inter-communication.

Here is Clacy's version:

Not many months ago, the scarcity of [police] at the diggings had prevented the better class of diggers from carrying on their operations with any degree of comfort ... But this is now altered; large bodies of police were placed on duty, and wooden buildings erected in various parts of the diggings for their accommodation. Assistant Commissioners (who are also magistrates) had been appointed, and large bodies of pensioners enrolled as police, and acting under their orders. Roads were also being made in all directions, thereby greatly facilitating intercommunication.¹³

Clacy also draws on Tulloch's sketch of the old shepherd's hut where the protest meeting of December 1851 took place. She quotes Tulloch's account of the politics of the meeting in full, commenting that 'the following account is so correct, that I cannot do better than transcribe it'. However, she then embarks on a walk past the shepherd's hut, complete with pen portrait of the structure, reflecting: 'I could not but mentally contrast the scene that took place there on the important day of the monster meeting, to the deep tranquillity that must have reigned around the spot for centuries before the discovery of gold drew multitudes to the place.'¹⁴

In stark contrast to Clacy's rosy view of law and order on the Mount Alexander field, October 1852 was a particularly violent and troubled time on the diggings.¹⁵ In early October, a rush of thousands of miners from Bendigo to the Forest Creek diggings prompted a notorious gang of criminals from Fryers Creek to relocate to the area. In the parlance of the diggers, they were 'night fossickers', men who removed heaps of rich auriferous material from claims under cover of darkness. They were also violent men, openly scorning the meagre forces of law and order. In the space of a few days in October, a gang brazenly held up a public house at

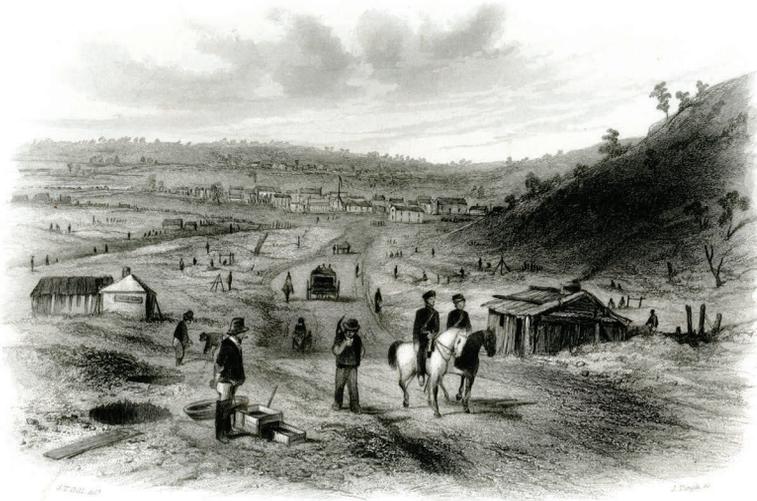
Saw Pit Gully (Elphinstone); there was a brutal gang rape at Fryers Creek (Fryerstown); and a near-fatal brawl in a sly-grog tent. In mid-October, 4,000 diggers met to form the Gold Diggers Mutual Protection Association to petition Governor La Trobe for a more efficient police force on the diggings.¹⁶

Clacy makes no comment on this trial of strength between the miners and the authorities, though she can hardly have failed to notice it. Despite Clacy's assurance that all was well on the goldfields in October 1852, she tells her readers that she personally witnessed just such an incident of lawlessness and vigilante action on her brief visit. Clacy claims that her party were almost knocked down by a mob pursuing a miscreant who had apparently shot and killed another man in a sly-grog tent. This incident (mentioned above) is reported in *The Argus* as part of its continuing campaign to expose the lack of protection afforded to the miners. Here is the passage from *The Argus*:

As an instance of the consequence to the diggers of the present absence of an efficient system of police, a man was yesterday afternoon shot in the course of a drunken brawl which took place at one of those dens of infamy—a grog establishment. Fortunately, however, for the man, the ball glanced over the forehead . . . without doing any serious injury. After firing the pistol, the fellow took to his heels, and was soon chased by an immense mob of diggers in pursuit, shouting 'stop him!' and after his capture this cry was changed to 'string him up'; 'it is useless taking him to the police office'. It is but justice to add, however, that the party who were desirous of urging this summary mode of proceeding were labouring under the impression that the man shot at was dead. On conveying him to his adversary, so far from acting the part of a dead man, he 'showed fight', roaring out 'come on' and such like pugilistic demonstrations.¹⁷

Here is Ellen Clacy's version:

We had not gone far before a digger with a pistol in his hand shot by us; he was followed by a mob, hooting, yelling, and screaming, as only a mob of diggers can. It was in full pursuit, and we turned aside only in time to prevent ourselves from being knocked down in the confusion. 'Stop him – stop him' was the cry. He was captured, and the cry changed to 'String him up—string him up – it's useless taking him to the police-office'. . . . At this moment the firmly-secured and well-guarded culprit passed by, to be confronted with the dead body of his adversary. No sooner did he come into his presence that the ci-devant corpse found his feet, 'showed fight' and roared out, 'Come on', with a most unghostlike vehemence.¹⁸



*Forest Creek from the road to Castlemaine, S.T. Gill & J. Tingle, from Victoria Illustrated, Sands Kenny, 1857.
(RHSV Collection: ART-0306.019.)*

Unfortunately for Clacy, the incident took place on 8 October, eight days before she reached Forest Creek, though it was published by *The Argus* on the very day that she claimed to have arrived.

Another clear case of plagiarism is taken from *The Argus* for 29 September 1852. Here is *The Argus* version:

The reports from Pennyweight Flat, Lever Point, Nicholson's Gully, Sailor's Gully, and Dingley Dell, still continue to be favourable, although in many instances the parties who are digging in the centre of gullies, or what is called 'the slip', experience considerable trouble in bailing out the water. By-the-bye I cannot say much for the names which have been given to many of these localities. Dingley Dell is, however, an exception, and certainly far more euphonious in sound compared to Dirty Dick's Gully, for instance; this name was given to the place by Mr Hodges, a gentleman from Adelaide, and was suggested by the perpetual tinkling of bullock bells, it being a favourite camping place for bullock drivers, offering as it did an excellent supply of both wood, water and food for their cattle.¹⁹

Here is Clacy's version:

The diggers in Pennyweight Flat, Nicholsons Gully, Lever Flat, Dirty Dick's Gully, Gibson's Flat, at the mouth of Dingley Dell, and in Dingley Dell itself, were tolerably contented with their gains, although in many instances, the parties who were digging in the centre of the gullies, or what is termed the 'slip', experienced considerable trouble in bailing the water out of their holes. Some of the names given to the spots about Forest Creek are anything but euphonious. Dingley Dell is, however, an exception, and sounds quite musical compared to Dirty Dick's Gully. The former name was given to the place by a gentleman from Adelaide, and was suggested by the tinkling of the bullock's bells, it being a favourite camping-place for bullock drivers, offering, as it did, an excellent supply of both wood, water, and food for their cattle.²⁰

On 19 October 1852, Clacy's party left the Mount Alexander diggings for Melbourne. Their route took them through Golden Point to the foot of Mount Alexander where they camped for the night. This is not the usual route but it enables Clacy to describe the beauty of the scene around her:

It was a lovely evening and our eyes were feasted by a most glorious sight. All the trees of the forest gradually faded away in the darkness, but beyond them, and through them were glimpses of the granite-like walls of the mount, brilliantly shining in and reflecting the last glowing rays of the setting sun ... we could have imagined that we were approaching by night some illuminated, some enchanted castle.²¹

In October 1852, James Bonwick published his account of his travels on the diggings, entitled *Notes of a Gold Digger and Gold Diggers' Guide*, and generally accepted as the first authentic account of the Australian goldfields.²² Here is Bonwick's description of the same scene, encountered as he travelled from Mount Alexander to Bendigo in 1852:

On your right you have the long range of Mount Alexander. Upon a lovely evening my senses were feasted by a delicious scene. All the forest trees before me were in darkness, but beyond them and through them were caught glimpses of the granitic walls of Alexander, brilliantly shining in the last red rays of the setting sun. It was as though I was approaching by night some illuminated enchanted castle.²³

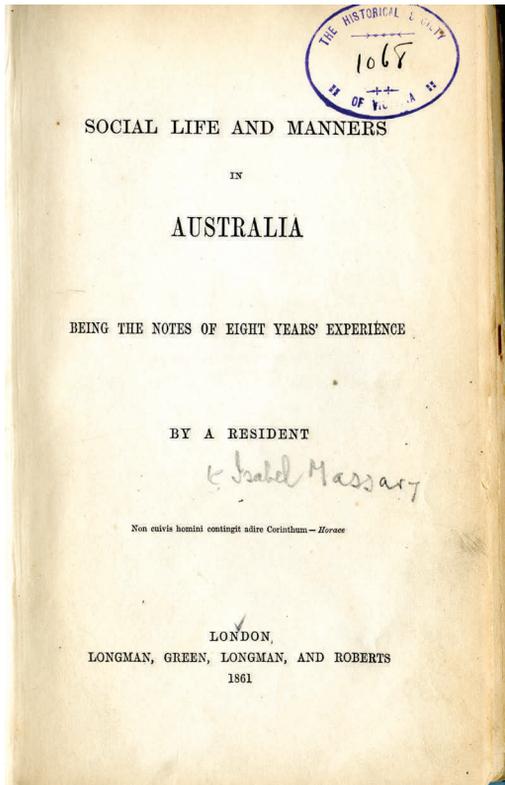
Once the reader is alerted to Clacy's unacknowledged use of Bonwick's work, it is not hard to find other examples. Both remark that the eucalypts at Iron Bark are like majestic Doric columns; both encounter the Vandemonian apple seller who tells his customers that if they dislike Van Diemen's Land they need not buy his apples; Clacy's initial tour of Forest Creek is

taken almost word for word from Bonwick. Without naming him, Clacy acknowledges that she has read Bonwick when she remarks: ‘Well might an Australian writer, in speaking of Bendigo, term it “The Carthage of the Tyre of Forest Creek”’.²⁴ However, the other passages from Bonwick are woven into her diary account as her own experiences.

So, was Ellen Clacy ever on the goldfields of central Victoria? It is clear that whole passages of *A Lady’s Visit to the Gold Diggings* were taken from the work of *Argus* reporter Daniel Bunce, James Bonwick’s *Notes of a Gold Digger* and Ham’s *Five Views of Mount Alexander*, all available in England by 1853. Why would a woman who later made her living as a novelist cobble together the work of other people, rather than drawing on the teeming life of the goldfields going on around her? So was *A Lady’s Visit to the Gold Diggings* an elaborate smokescreen to conceal the birth of a child outside marriage in an era when society did not readily forgive such a transgression?

Elizabeth Ramsay-Laye, *Social Life and Manners in Australia: being the notes of eight years’ experience*, Pranava Books, Delhi, 2008, first published Longman, Brown, Green and Roberts, London, 1861, under the authorship of ‘A Resident’.

Elizabeth Ramsay was born in 1832 in Scotland, the daughter of Captain Robert Ramsay of the 14th Regiment and his wife Margaret Cruikshank.²⁵ The Austlit website adds that she was one of five children and that the family fortunes came from tea plantations in India. This probably should be the West Indies, as Elizabeth makes references to her childhood there in *Social Life and Manners*. Her older brother, Robert Ramsay, came to Australia in 1839 where he prospered as a squatter and eventually entered Parliament in Queensland.²⁶ Austlit claims that, in 1853, Elizabeth married Major (sometimes Captain) Francis Fenwick Laye of the 25th Regiment of Foot, the Kings Own Borderers. He was thirty-one years older than Elizabeth, had ten children by his first wife, and had lost his second wife after only a few years of marriage. Austlit quotes from a Laye family history to the effect that ‘The two left for Australia, for gold and adventure, planning never to return, and leaving the children behind, probably with his mother, Mary Airey Laye. They returned unexpectedly in 1861, eight years later’. Elizabeth was later active in the English women’s movement, writing on subjects such as the right of married women to have careers, and she wrote several novels, sometimes under the name of Isobel Massary. After



Title page, Social life and manners in Australia, being the notes of eight years' experience, Elizabeth Ramsay-Laye, London, Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1861.

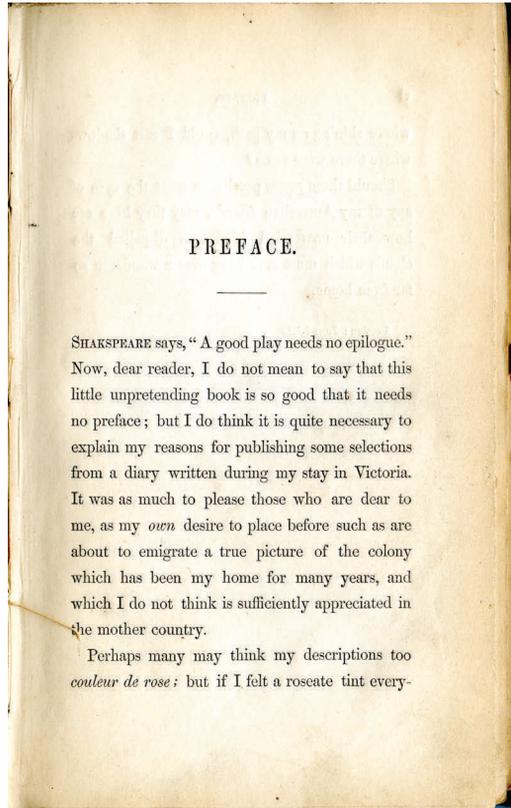
the death of Major Laye in 1881, Elizabeth was sufficiently well-off to travel widely and continue to write. She died at Lee Priory, Kent, in 1932.

I have not been able to track down the Laye family history referred to, but there is a website devoted to Emily Laye, daughter of Francis Laye and his first wife, Anne Walsh, authored by her American great-great grandson, Patrick Paskiewicz. According to Paskiewicz, Emily was a beautiful woman, who led an adventurous and free-spirited life, and for this reason, he is intrigued by her equally adventurous stepmother, Elizabeth Ramsay-Laye. He writes that Francis Laye's third wife was 'a woman half his age ... a wealthy author and would-be artist'. He is presumably quoting from the same family history when he states that the newlyweds

left for Australia, 'for gold and adventure, planning never to return' etc. In *Social Life and Manners*, Elizabeth says that she came reluctantly to Victoria a few weeks after her marriage when gold fever was at its height: 'Disgust, indeed, is not a word strong enough to express my feelings at the moment, particularly as I had to wear a calm face, and not distress loving friends by an ebullition of feeling.'²⁷ She did, however, decide to bring her Paris trousseau, a decision which she did not regret as she was swept up into the social whirl of Melbourne and the goldfields. Paskiewicz is understandably puzzled that he cannot find the marriage in the records for 1853 or thereabouts.

The reason for this is not difficult to find. In the English census of 1861, Francis Laye, 'barrack master', is recorded as living with his second wife, Anne Robertson, and several children in Gosport near Plymouth.²⁸ Anne died in Croydon, Surrey, in October 1875, and Francis Laye married Elizabeth Patricia Ramsay two years later in June 1877. The first edition of *Social Life and Manners* appeared in 1861 under the authorship of 'A Resident', but after the marriage, the author became Elizabeth Ramsay-Laye.²⁹ The preface to the book was written in London in June 1861, but the Scottish census of 1861 shows Elizabeth living at 1 Saxe Coburg Place, an upmarket residential area of Edinburgh, with her mother and her squatter brother, Robert, then on furlough in Scotland. It is difficult for us now to imagine the scandal that would have surrounded a young woman from a well-to-do family making off to the colonies in 1853 with a married man twice her age. If this was indeed the case, we can only salute herchutzpah in setting herself up as an arbiter of morals and manners in the colonies. But does this breathtaking hypocrisy necessarily discredit *Social Life and Manners* as a firsthand account of her eight years in Victoria? Perhaps the couple went to Australia to escape the odium of their illicit relationship. If they did so, it was under an assumed name, as they do not appear in the shipping records of the times under any permutation of Ramsay or Laye.

In the book itself, Elizabeth Ramsay-Laye writes exclusively in the diary mode; she declares her hand in the preface, describing *Social Life and Manners* as 'selections from a diary written during my stay in Victoria'. As with Clacy, the reader has the right to expect that the work is an authentic, firsthand account of the diggings, though culled from her diary upon her return to England where it was published by Longman in 1861. As with Clacy and other women writers of her era, she felt the need to excuse her presumption in publishing at all. In the preface, she explains that she



Preface, Social life and manners in Australia, being the notes of eight years' experience, Elizabeth Ramsay-Laye, London, Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1861.

wishes to 'place before such as are about to emigrate a true picture of the colony which has been my home for many years, and which I do not think is sufficiently appreciated in the mother country'.³⁰ She hopes that the book may find its way into the hands of her Australian friends as a tribute to their kindness in those years. Four chapters are taken up with the Layses' sojourn on the goldfields, six with their life in Melbourne, and one with their holiday in New Zealand, immediately before returning to England in 1861. This article is concerned with their two years on the goldfields.

The reader is told that, upon reaching Melbourne, the couple set off immediately for the Castlemaine diggings and remained there for two years. This places the reminiscences in the years 1853–1854. Elizabeth

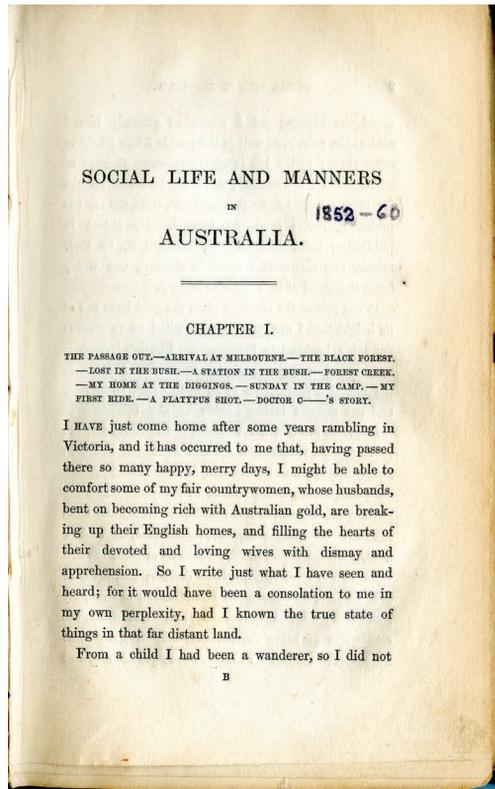
and her husband made the journey by spring cart and her reaction to the countryside through which they pass is ecstatic. It is a park-like land with an abundance of flowers carpeting her path and birds of every hue wheeling above her head as if to display their brilliant plumage. When the driver loses his way near Kyneton on the trip to the diggings, they are taken in by a nearby squatter, who, by the first of many coincidences, happens to be an old acquaintance from home.³¹ She is aware that her descriptions of this 'most romantic land' may be thought too '*couleur de rose*', but insists that 'if I felt a roseate tint everywhere shining on my path, could I cast shadows where there were none?'.³²

The diary of her Castlemaine sojourn favours the administrating class and their squatter friends over the huge drama of the miners going on around her. When she notices the diggers at all, it is as wife-beating drunkards, haggard and filthy, sacrificing all to this unseemly scramble for wealth, though she does help an Irish digger's bride to choose a more tasteful gown. The Irish servant girls, she tells her English readers, 'become very different beings when away from Ireland'.³³ Her initial reaction to the diggings has a literary touch—'The country has the appearance of one vast cemetery with fresh made graves'—though the cemetery metaphor is common enough in goldfields literature.³⁴ But she disposes of the four-mile ride through the diggings into Castlemaine in two sentences, remarking only that the way is bordered by these unpleasant-looking excavations and that the diggers live in tents. In Castlemaine, they are received by friends (Mr and Mrs S.) and put up for the first night in a commodious and well-appointed tent, the gentlemen leaving the ladies to it and finding accommodation in neighbouring tents. The evening's conversation centred round setting the newcomers up in similar style, and next morning, a deserving widow is summoned to be interviewed for the position of servant to Elizabeth.

There follows the first of Elizabeth's intriguing stories concerning former acquaintances discovered on the goldfields, fallen in social standing and plumbing the depths of despair. Elizabeth, who casts herself as both rescuer and redeemer, spends page after page on these vignettes of self-inflicted suffering. The would-be servant is none other than the 'petted and trusted' maid of a neighbour in the West Indies, who, against the wishes of her mistress, had married a handsome young sergeant and ended up on the goldfields of central Victoria destitute and alone. A few pages later, she finds Adelaide C., a childhood friend, once 'loved and admired by the brilliant circle in which she moved', dying in a state of degradation and disgrace in

a tent in Castlemaine, spurned by the ladies of the Commissioners Camp. William, the son of Sir William F. in the south of England, who married the rector's daughter Clara against his father's wishes and was cast out, is discovered living the life of a squatter on the banks of the Loddon in central Victoria. And there is her cousin Charlie, who came against his father's wishes to search for gold; he is found by Elizabeth in an appalling condition, bitterly regretting his folly, in a tent at Fryers Creek. It beggars belief, not to mention the laws of probability, that Elizabeth's path through the goldfields could be strewn with so many lost souls awaiting rescue at her magnanimous pleasure. Is this the future novelist fighting to get out? Or are these stories an unconscious psychological exploration of her own fallen status as the mistress of a man twice her age?

In Elizabeth's account, the Layes are quickly swept up into the social whirl of the elite set at Castlemaine. Soon after their arrival, they received an invitation to tea.³⁵ The tent, one of the largest on the Commissioners Camp, had a huge mud and stone fireplace with a blazing fire and two immense kettles on the boil. It was lined with green baize and furnished with sofas, armchairs, occasional tables and a grand piano. The ladies ('for ladies they were in every sense of the word') were elegantly dressed in the newest fashions. When the tea had been served, there was vocal and instrumental music of such excellence that the company forgot for a time that they were in the land of the diggers. The alluvial miners were resentful that their monthly licence fee was used to feather the nests of the officials on the Camp; if this account of an afternoon tea party is authentic, they may have had a point. On this occasion, Elizabeth is befriended by Dr C. and his wife, who invited her to join them in a riding party, which includes a visit to a patient. There are many of these outings on horseback, and there is always lunch at the home of a hospitable squatter. A ride to the Tarrangower [Maldon] diggings confirms Ramsay-Laye in her low opinion of the diggers, for at this newly-rushed field, they were of the most degraded kind. The ride provides the setting for the obligatory attack by bushrangers. There were indeed bushrangers at work between Castlemaine and Tarrangower in early 1854, but Elizabeth and her party, mounted on superior horses, outpace them with ease. No-one in Castlemaine, she tells the reader, 'thinks of riding a badly bred horse'.³⁶ During their stay, the Layes received an invitation to a ball.³⁷ They joined some friends in hiring an omnibus to ensure that their dresses were 'neither tumbled nor tossed'. The ball was held in a large canvas structure especially erected for the



*Page 1, Social life and manners in Australia,
being the notes of eight years' experience,
Elizabeth Ramsay-Laye, London, Longman,
Green, Longman and Roberts, 1861.*

occasion, with smaller tents for refreshments and the ladies' dressing room. On entering the latter to divest herself of her cloak, Elizabeth found several babies bundled up on the divans and sofas. The ball room was elaborately decorated with artificial flowers, the walls covered with pink and white calico, and the roof pillars adorned with garlands of pink and white. No expense had been spared on the supper; the band was excellent; and the dancing went on until daylight.

Ramsay-Laye's one-dimensional depiction of life on the diggings is not necessarily proof that she was never there, but there are disturbing anomalies in her account. As already mentioned, there is no record of the Lays on the inward-bound passenger lists to Melbourne in 1852 or

1853. Nor is there any record of their reported departure to New Zealand in the late 1850s. There are slips in place names, which, after two years' residence, should have been second nature to her: the Lodder River for the Loddon River; Campbells Flat for Campbells Creek. She refers to the gin palaces rather than the sly-grog tents. The diggers have servants who prepare their evening meals. Her description of the market place, mostly tents with some wooden stores replete with every conceivable finery imported from London, is a strange amalgam of Castlemaine and Post Office Hill at Forest Creek. There is the identity of the mysterious Dr C., who obligingly took her on his visits to his patients. By mid-1853, the qualified medical men of Castlemaine, led by the official surgeon and coroner, Dr James McCrae, had moved against the quackery rife on the diggings and formed the Castlemaine Medical Association. Their names and locations were common knowledge, especially those connected with the Camp.³⁸ There was no Dr C. among them.

Ramay-Laye's grasp of the geography of the diggings is uncertain to say the least. She has Barkers Creek flowing through the Bendigo diggings. Her frequent riding parties take day trips, with time out for luxurious lunches, which would tax the stamina of the most determined riders. She smooths the brow of a dying digger on the plains near Quartz Hill where no plains are to be found. A trip to the Avoca diggings in search of cousin Charlie takes them through Bendigo, rather than Daisy Hill (Maryborough), though they may have decided to visit the Bendigo diggings, which had eclipsed the Mount Alexander diggings by mid-1853. Near Avoca, they spend the day with a tribe of Aborigines, who are 'not as disgusting as they are generally represented'. Despite the near destruction of the Aboriginal way of life in the path of the squatters, they are apparently still following their traditional ways, and the encounter allows Elizabeth to inform her English readers about their customs and habits. She relates the details of a romantic entanglement between a beautiful lubra named Lucy and a white man from the neighbouring station. And at a time when most squatters were still doing it rough, we are introduced to Elizabeth's landed gentry, with their well-appointed homes and daughters the equal of any debutante in England.

There is also the mystery of her husband's occupation on the diggings. There is no hint as to why they came to Australia at such short notice, a decision that caught the newly married Elizabeth by surprise. Their immediate departure from Melbourne for Castlemaine suggests that they

had some purpose in making the trip; it was not unusual for middle-class travellers to visit the diggings, but not for two years. On one occasion, Elizabeth mentions that she is entertained while her husband is ‘occupied with his affairs’.³⁹ One source states that Francis Laye was ‘a colonial official at the Diggings’, but no evidence is given.⁴⁰ So was Elizabeth’s husband one of La Trobe’s gentleman gold commissioners hastily appointed to govern the diggings when the rushes began in mid-1851? The gold rushes were certainly a bonanza for well-connected immigrants bearing testimonials from important people, and military men like Major Laye were preferred. Chief Gold Commissioner William Wright and Commissioner J.E.N. Bull of Castlemaine were both military men. However, all such appointments had to be published in the *Victorian Government Gazette* and there is no sign of Francis Fenwick Laye under any permutation of his name. The Layes were not living in the actual Commissioners Camp, as Elizabeth mentions several times that they walked to the Camp to attend church (‘in a building formed of thin planks, with a canvass [sic] roof’), or for the social functions which occupied her time. Whether or not they were officially connected to the Gold Commission, social intercourse with the top brass is by implication only. Commissioner Bull is not mentioned by name and is wrongly referred to as the ‘warden’, a title he assumed only after the Gold Commission was dismantled in 1855. There is only one, rather brief, description of the Camp itself and it does not suggest that Major Laye is connected either to the Gold Commission or the 40th Regiment which guarded it.

We crossed a good stone bridge, which had just been built over the creek, and reached the flat on which the camp is situated. The Commissioners were just going to their mess, which was in a canvass [sic] house. They were a numerous party, notwithstanding the report that many of them were married. The Chief Commissioner or Resident Warden has a very nice house and garden.⁴¹

Commissioner Bull did indeed have a substantial home by this time (still standing at 5 Yandell Street), and the stone bridge over Barkers Creek was completed in time for Governor Sir Charles Hotham’s visit in September 1854. Elizabeth continues her walk:

We passed a house a little beyond, which quite caught my fancy: in front it had only two windows and a door between them, but at each side were two large bay windows; whilst a very deep verandah, covered with roses and luxuriant creepers in full bloom, gave a particularly pleasing appearance; it was surrounded by a nice garden seemingly well stocked with vegetables and

flowers. This was the residence of the officer commanding the detachment of the 40th Regiment.⁴²

This is a reasonably accurate description of the Military House which still stands, though in a derelict state, at 4 Camp Crescent, Castlemaine. So was Francis Laye in Castlemaine seconded to the detachment of the 40th Regiment that had been sent to garrison the Gold Commission in early 1853? Five detachments of the 'Fighting Fortieth' had reached Victoria aboard the *Vulcan* in October 1852 in response to La Trobe's panicky call for troops from Britain, but this is too early for the Layes. Elizabeth mentions the Regiment several times: she meets them with the gold escort on her journey to Castlemaine; she is back in Melbourne in time to farewell them warmly for their clash with the miners at Eureka; and she notes that they have been seconded to fight in the Maori wars of 1860. If her husband was with the 40th Regiment, she does not say so. Major Laye is not on the comprehensive list of military officers in Victoria sent by Governor La Trobe to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in October 1853.⁴³ A private gold escort operated briefly from the goldfields to Melbourne, but as it began in May 1852 and ceased in August 1853, the timing makes it unlikely that Francis Laye was involved.⁴⁴

So was Major Laye simply in Castlemaine with an eye to the main chance? Elizabeth tells the reader: 'My husband realised a large sum of money by buying allotments in the township of Castlemaine and also at Muckleford flat for agricultural purposes. It is considered that farms pay extremely well here, as the produce always finds a ready market in Castlemaine.'⁴⁵ The township of Castlemaine was surveyed by W.H. Urquhart in late 1852 and the first town allotments went up for sale by auction in February 1853, probably before the Layes arrived. Speculation was rife, with many of the Camp officials well to the fore. However, there was another sale of town allotments in November 1853 in which Captain Laye could have invested. The Muckleford sales, which took place in April and July 1853, were indeed intended to stimulate the production of food for Castlemaine, but there is no record of Major Laye purchasing land at any of these sales.⁴⁶ There were no farms selling produce to Castlemaine in 1853.

At this stage of the research, it is not possible to say with certainty whether Elizabeth Ramsay-Laye was ever on the goldfields, though it would hardly seem plausible that she could publish a book claiming an eight-year residence in Australia if she had never been there at all. The problem is that the Layes left no footprints in Victoria. They are not on the shipping

records either entering or leaving Victoria. Major Laye was not employed by the Gold Commission, nor was he guarding the Commissioners' Camp (though she does not make these claims), and he did not speculate in land in Castlemaine as she does claim. In *Social Life and Manners*, she does not indulge in outright plagiarism as does Ellen Clacy, though many of her key anecdotes are generic goldfield yarns: the encounter with the bushrangers, the assault by robbers upon her tent, the digger's wedding to the Irish servant girl. Her account of the grand ball closely resembles a report in *The Argus* of a ball held at the Commissioner's Camp in November 1853.⁴⁷ If she were indeed in Victoria as the mistress of Major Laye, gossip would have followed her, and she would not have been received into polite society either on the goldfields or in Melbourne as she claims. Is *Social Life and Manners* then Elizabeth Ramsay-Laye's first foray into fiction, exploiting, as did Ellen Clacy, the appetite of the English reading public for tales of the Australian goldfields?

When I set out to write a history of Castlemaine, I had Clacy's *A Lady's Visit* and Ramsay-Laye's *Social Life and Manners* in my collection and intended using them to give a woman's point of view on the relentlessly masculine world of the goldfields. However, as my research progressed, I began to encounter the disturbing anomalies that I have discussed in this article. It is still possible that both women visited Australia, and perhaps even visited the goldfields, but in neither case am I now prepared to accept their work as firsthand, reliable accounts of the Mount Alexander goldfields.

NOTES

- 1 *The Times*, 19 January 1852.
- 2 R.D. Walshe, *Historical Studies*, Eureka supplement, 2nd edn, Melbourne, 1965, bibliography of goldfields publications.
- 3 Clacy, p. 9.
- 4 John N. Molony and T.J. McKenna, 'All that Glisters', *Labour History*, no. 32, May 1977.
- 5 Davis Goodman, 'Reading Gold-Rush Travellers' Narratives', *Australian Cultural History*, no. 10, 1991.
- 6 Margaret Anderson, 'Mrs Charles Clacy, Lola Montez and Poll the Grog-seller: Glimpses of Women on the Early Victorian Goldfields' in Iain McCalman, Alexander Cook and Andrew Reeves (eds), *Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2001; M. Rosalyn Shennan, 'A Goldfields Adventurer', unpublished paper, copy in possession of the author.

- 7 On the shipping lists for the *Ayrshire* for April 1852, Shennan identifies the four men as Octavius Folkard, Frank Brown, Richard Plumpton and William Cockburn Messer.
- 8 Ancestry.com.uk, Births, Deaths and Marriages, 1854. My attention was brought to this marriage by one of the reviewers for this article.
- 9 Clacy, p. 9.
- 10 Clacy, p. 9.
- 11 *The Argus*, 3 November 1852.
- 12 Clacy, p. 93.
- 13 Clacy, p. 93.
- 14 Clacy, pp. 94–96.
- 15 This account of lawlessness is taken from *The Argus*, throughout October 1852.
- 16 A detailed account of this meeting and the petition to La Trobe appeared in *The Argus*, 30 October 1852.
- 17 *The Argus*, 16 October 1852, by-line 8 October 1852.
- 18 Clacy, p. 97.
- 19 *The Argus*, 29 September 1852.
- 20 Clacy, pp. 97–8.
- 21 Clacy, p. 99.
- 22 James Bonwick, *Notes of a Gold Digger and Gold Diggers' Guide*, Hawthorn Press, Melbourne, 1942, first published James Bonwick, Melbourne, 1852.
- 23 Bonwick, p. 6.
- 24 Clacy, p. 48.
- 25 All research into census data, and births, deaths and marriages was done via Ancestry.co.uk.
- 26 For Robert Ramsay, see *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 6, 1976; for his sons, Marmaduke, Robert and Edward, see *ADB*, vol. 16, 2002.
- 27 Ramsay-Laye, p. 2.
- 28 The English and Scottish censuses and births, deaths and marriages have been accessed via Ancestry.co.uk. Arrivals and departures have been accessed via the Public Record Office of Victoria website.
- 29 The original authorship was also pointed out to me by the above reviewer.
- 30 Ramsay-Laye, Preface, p. v.
- 31 The most likely candidate for a squatter in this vicinity is F.A. Powlett, the first gold commissioner on the Mount Alexander diggings, but the biographical details do not fit.
- 32 Ramsay-Laye, pp. v–vi.
- 33 Ramsay-Laye, p. 92.
- 34 Ramsay-Laye, p. 14.
- 35 Ramsay-Laye, pp. 18–19.
- 36 Ramsay-Laye, p. 19.

37 Ramsay-Laye, pp. 70–72.

38 For the resolutions of the Castlemaine Medical Association and the list of qualified doctors and their locations, see *The Argus*, 22 August 1853.

39 Ramsay-Laye, p. 19.

40 Douglas R.G. Sellick, *Venus in Transit: Australia's Women Travellers, 1788–1930*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, n.d., p. 61.

41 Ramsay-Laye, p. 69.

42 Ramsay-Laye, pp. 69–70.

43 La Trobe's Despatches, no.166, 7 October 1853.

44 *The Argus*, 29 May 1852, 11 June 1852, 28 June 1852, 18 January 1853 and 22 August 1853.

45 Ramsay-Laye, p. 69.

46 Castlemaine Historical Society Inc. computer listing of sales of Crown lands in the Castlemaine district.

47 *The Argus*, 15 November 1853.

FREDERICK DICKSON: THE MAN WHO DEFRAUDED THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

Carole Hooper

Abstract

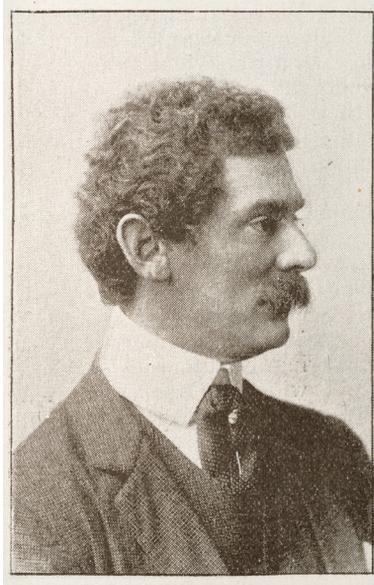
In August 1901, those associated with the University of Melbourne were shocked to learn that its accountant, Frederick Dickson, had been charged with embezzlement after 'financial irregularities' were found during a government audit of the university's books. Further investigations discovered that Dickson had systematically defrauded his employer for many years. Subsequently, he was found guilty of fraud, embezzlement and larceny, and sentenced to five years hard labour. News of Dickson's defalcations would always have been unwelcome, but were especially so at a time when the university's finances were in deficit and increased funding was being sought from the government. In their institutional histories of the University of Melbourne, Ernest Scott, Geoffrey Blainey and R.J.W. Selleck have discussed the Dickson frauds and the extent to which the defalcations negatively impacted upon the university. This article seeks to expand on these earlier accounts.

ON THE MORNING OF TUESDAY 7 MAY 1901, over 3,000 'gentlemen' swarmed towards Victoria's Government House where the Duke of Cornwall and York, heir to the British throne, was to hold a grand levee, later described as 'the most important ever witnessed in the colony'. A few guests travelled in fashionable landaus attended by liveried footmen, some in more humble equipages, while others arrived by tram or on foot. All, except those in the armed forces or members of the

clergy, were required to wear evening dress, including white tie and the ‘indispensable’ white gloves, much to the satisfaction of local shopkeepers whose sales of these items reputedly soared. Many representatives of the University of Melbourne were in attendance, including the chancellor, Sir John Madden, who accompanied the Duke on the dais in his capacity as lieutenant-governor. Also present were members of the university council, such as John Grice and Robert Ellery, as well as various professors, and two members of the administrative staff—the registrar, Edward à Beckett, and the accountant, Frederick Dickson. Among the other attendees were Arthur Morrah, a commissioner of audit, James Purves, a leading barrister, and an auditor, William Sprigg. These men were soon to meet again in the far less congenial surroundings of a Victorian courtroom—as lawyer, witness or defendant in a criminal trial that would shock both the university and the wider community.¹

This unfortunate re-assemblage was still some months away, and, meanwhile, those connected to the University of Melbourne participated enthusiastically in the various activities associated with the royal tour, occasioned by the official opening of the first federal parliament. A few days after the levee, thousands of onlookers gathered to watch the royal couple drive through the university grounds to Wilson Hall, where over 1,400 graduates, undergraduates and friends had assembled to witness the Duke receive an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws at the university’s commencement ceremony. According to various reports, the occasion was ‘the most brilliant in the history of the University’. ‘Wilson Hall never saw such a magnificent display, and possibly never again will see anything to equal the show.’²

Members of the university council were self-congratulatory in their assessment of the day’s activities and perhaps believed this visit by a member of the royal family would precipitate a much-needed improvement in the university’s fortunes, which had languished following the banking crisis of 1893 and the resultant depression. For almost a decade, the university had been accumulating a substantial overdraft, but now that the state’s financial position had improved, the council hoped the government would finally respond positively to its numerous calls for financial aid. Salvation appeared likely when, only a few weeks after the ‘great success’ of the commencement, the premier Alexander Peacock indicated the government was willing to provide £6,000 to pay off the university’s debt and to increase its annual endowment by £1,000.³ Alas, any prospect of



*Frederick Dickson, c. 1901,
published in Alma Mater, April
1901, vol. 6 no. 4.
(Courtesy of University of
Melbourne Archives, SpC/AX
378.94505 A444.)*

financial help came to nought when, a few weeks later, the university's accountant, Frederick Dickson, was accused of having defrauded his employer.

The government auditor James Ferguson informed members of the university council at a hastily convened meeting on the afternoon of Wednesday 28 August 1901 that the accounts of the past year 'were not correct' and that the accountant was suspected of having misappropriated university funds. It was estimated that the defalcations would amount to between £7,000 and £10,000, but as the bank securities had yet to be examined, further deficiencies might be discovered.⁴ The shocked members of council immediately informed the premier of the situation, an information was sworn against the accountant, and later that evening Dickson was charged with two counts of fraud.

These suspected defalcations had disastrous consequences for the university: any hope of immediate monetary relief from the government was

quashed; its financial position was far worse than believed; and questions were now being asked about the adequacy of the institution's administrative and financial management. How had the university's accountant apparently been able to systematically rob the university over a period of fifteen years without detection?

Who Was Frederick Dickson?

Frederick Thomas James Dickson was the son of Thomas and Catherine Dickson, who had emigrated from Scotland in 1852 as part of the great wave of immigration following the gold discoveries. Unlike most of the new arrivals, the couple's destination was not the goldfields, but the city of Melbourne and the commercial opportunities it offered; and where a few years earlier, two of Thomas's younger brothers—John and Warrand Dickson, together with fellow Scotsman Thomas Rae—had established one of the colony's leading mercantile houses, Rae, Dickson & Co.⁵

In the early 1850s, as Victoria experienced a rapidly increasing demand for goods, many new commercial enterprises were established, attracting men such as Thomas, who soon after his arrival formed a commission agency known as Dickson, Gilchrist and Co., together with John Gilchrist and William Sloane. After this short-lived enterprise was dissolved, Thomas worked as a shipping and estate agent, until he formed an accountancy partnership in 1861. From then on, he practised as an accountant and auditor for the remainder of his professional life, including working as a special government auditor.⁶ Thomas engaged fully in the colony's economic and cultural affairs and remained an active participant as a member of numerous boards of management and committees.

For over a decade after their arrival, Thomas and Catherine Dickson lived in the relatively well-to-do suburb of South Yarra, where, in 1860, their fifth surviving child, Frederick, was born. In April 1866, the family relocated to the less socially acclaimed suburb of Elwood—a move apparently made for financial reasons, as, in the following year, Thomas was declared insolvent, after failing to pay a debt incurred in an earlier business venture. Nevertheless, financial uncertainty did not prevent the Dicksons from sending their three eldest sons—Henry, Robert and Frederick—to the Melbourne Grammar School in 1868, where the boys remained for three years.⁷

Frederick entered for the civil service examination conducted by the University of Melbourne in 1875, passing two subjects (Latin and English)

and failing two (arithmetic and Euclid), meaning that the person later employed by the University of Melbourne as its bookkeeper and accountant had failed its own arithmetic test!⁸

In 1878, Frederick began his 'commercial life' at Sargood, Son and Company, followed by employment at several other firms, before working for eighteen months as a general clerk at the Bank of Victoria. By this time, the family's financial position had improved sufficiently for Thomas and Catherine, together with their nine children, to move to 5 Jolimont Square, a private residential area of two acres located in East Melbourne. It was from this 'most desirable address' that Frederick wrote his letter of application in March 1884 for the advertised position of bookkeeper at the University of Melbourne, stating he had 'no hesitation in saying that I could satisfactorily perform the duties attached to the position'. He was fortunate in being selected from a large field of 123 applicants, especially, as he later admitted, he lacked any experience of accountancy or knowledge of bookkeeping. Perhaps the fact that Professor Martin Irving, the head of the committee responsible for making the selection, was a first cousin of his father was not insignificant.⁹

The Registrar's Office

Frederick Dickson arrived at the University of Melbourne on 13 May 1884 to begin seventeen years of employment in the registrar's office—first as bookkeeper, then, from 1886, as accountant. At the time, the administrative staff consisted of the registrar, Edward à Beckett, two clerks and an assistant librarian. À Beckett was the son of Sir William à Beckett, first chief justice of the Victorian Supreme Court, nephew of Justice Sir Thomas à Beckett, and cousin of Thomas Turner à Beckett, one of the colony's leading solicitors. Although Edward had worked as an associate to his father after completing his legal studies, he did not practise as a lawyer and had worked at the university since 1864.

The long-serving registrar, though described as 'honorable', 'kindly', and 'trustworthy', was later acknowledged as lacking the competence required to oversee the work of the expanding institution, and, within a year of Frederick's arrival, a committee was appointed to investigate the administration of the office. À Beckett, somewhat miffed by the committee's report, offered to resign if adequately compensated. This offer was rejected by the chancellor, who questioned the legality of such an arrangement. Consequently, the council retained as its chief executive officer someone



*Officers of the University, 1894,
Frederick Dickson seated on right with Edward à Beckett beside him.
(Courtesy of University of Melbourne Archives UMA/I/1292.)*

who had never been considered ‘very efficient’, who ‘had not controlled the office’, and who did not know ‘anything about accounts’.¹⁰

A second enquiry into the organisation of the registrar’s office in 1886 resulted in the duties of the various office personnel being specified. The duties of the registrar were extended, and explicitly defined by statute, to include the keeping of all registers and books of account; preparing detailed estimates of income and expenditure for the finance committee; and certifying the correctness of the accounts. Later, in 1890, it was resolved that the registrar should present to council, at least every two months, a detailed financial statement showing the condition of the various funds. During the subsequent investigation into the Dickson frauds, it was acknowledged that the statutes and resolutions relating to the role of the registrar had not been adhered to. À Beckett, the man specifically charged with seeing they were observed, said, ‘I think too much is made of the statutes’.¹¹

According to those who knew him, Dickson was personable and friendly. A laudatory article in the student magazine, *Alma Mater*, described him as a ‘genial personage’ and students remembered him as ‘such a nice man’;

a view supported by Enid Derham, a second-year student in 1901, who wrote: 'Everyone liked the accountant, even under the greatest stress of work he was always polite, which cannot be said of the others'. Perhaps this geniality was contrived, for one who worked closely with Dickson for many years observed that he 'had a particular faculty for ingratiating himself'.¹²

Someone whom the accountant was particularly keen to please was the registrar. According to R.J.W. Selleck, it was à Beckett, who, a few years earlier, had requested the appointment of a skilled accountant who knew his work and 'not an inexperienced young man who would have to be taught'.¹³ Despite Dickson's lack of experience and training, à Beckett, abandoning his own responsibilities, allowed him to take over the financial administration of the university, including the management of various accounts; keeping the financial records; receiving and banking the moneys paid at the office; filling in the cheques for the payment of salaries and bills; managing the investments; compiling the annual estimates of revenue and expenditure; and preparing the accounts for the annual audit conducted by the government Audit Office. Dickson also attended the meetings of the finance committee, which had been established by the council in March 1883 to provide financial advice and oversee the payment of accounts. The head of the committee (referred to as 'treasurer') at the time of Dickson's appointment was Professor Irving, until he was replaced by Robert Ellery (Government Astronomer) in July 1890. This committee, like à Beckett, had allowed Dickson to do much as he wished. But the trust they had in the accountant was misplaced, for, as a contemporary Victorian judge observed, 'Against ordinary thieves the public can to some extent protect themselves, but when a robber conceals himself under a mask of respectability, trust and confidence, there can be no safeguard'.¹⁴

The University's Financial Arrangements

General confusion in the university's financial arrangements contributed greatly to the lack of scrutiny over Dickson's actions. The university had two main sources of revenue: government grants and student fees, the latter amounting to between £12,000 and £16,000 per annum—about half of the university's annual income.¹⁵ In addition, money donated by various benefactors was held in trust, and the interest from the capital, which was invested in debentures, was used for designated purposes, predominantly scholarships. The university had upwards of twenty separate accounts at

the Bank of Victoria, comprising a general account, various trust accounts, and a few special purpose accounts.

When students paid their fees at the registrar's office, if they wished to have a record of payment, they could fill out a slip of paper to be signed by Dickson or one of the other officers. But, in the majority of instances, no record was sought, nor was the transaction recorded in a receipt book or daily cashbook.¹⁶ From subsequent evidence provided by those who had worked in the office, the only records of these transactions were lists of students' names, which were copied into a lecture fees book by Dickson at the end of each year. The money collected over the counter was placed in a drawer before being taken to the Bank of Victoria by the porter, a clerk, or Dickson himself, but no steps were taken to ensure the money was banked on a daily basis. As Stirton Robertson, one of the clerks, noted, Dickson did not count the money: 'I have never seen him tot the day's takings up'.¹⁷ Therefore, in the absence of a daily cashbook or receipt book, there was no way of checking how much money was received each day. As a subsequent investigation found, the university's books 'were mere lists of payments, without dates, with isolated lists of receipts or payments for special purposes. They were not balanced from time to time, and there is no record of daily receipts or payments'.¹⁸ Other irregularities compounded the lack of due diligence: there was no ledger; the cheque book used to pay salaries and the various accounts was kept 'very irregularly'; and the debentures purchased using the capital from the trust funds were not allocated to any particular account.¹⁹

Despite these irregular practices, Dickson's responsibilities were extended periodically. In July 1890, he was given the additional duty of drawing the monthly endowment cheques from Treasury for which a fidelity guarantee of £1,000 was taken out to cover any possible loss. Then, from 1896, he had sole access to the securities, when, on his advice, they were moved from the Bank of Victoria to the Melbourne Safe Deposit Company.²⁰ After the transfer, Dickson held the only key to the safe, and it was later revealed that Ellery, as treasurer of the finance committee, had not even bothered to check the existence of the securities at the time of their removal.

To provide an assessment of its financial management, the university council relied solely on an annual audit conducted by the government Audit Office. Prior to Dickson assuming responsibility for preparing for the audit, the financial records had been forwarded to the Audit Office for

inspection and the securities examined at the bank by the auditor in the presence of the registrar. According to à Beckett, it was Dickson who had recommended that the system be changed.²¹

Yet, despite the poor accounting practices, Alfred Gates, the clerk who audited the university's books from 1887 to 1897, consistently wrote in praise of Dickson. In 1891, he reported that the books were 'in exceptionally good order and the accountant Mr Dickson deserves great praise for the completeness with which he has kept the many complicated accounts', and three years later, commended him for keeping the books 'carefully and intelligently'.²² This lack of oversight on the part of the Audit Office was later severely criticised by a royal commission, on the basis that there were 'no books of account by which an auditor or anyone else could understand the financial position of the University'.²³

It is possible that Dickson's accounts failed to receive close scrutiny from Gates, because the two men had established a close personal relationship. According to various members of the office staff, they were 'most friendly', used to see each other 'a good deal', and shared one special interest in particular (as will be revealed below). Unfortunately for Dickson, this cosy association came to a sudden end in June 1897 when Alfred Gates died from a heart attack. His replacement, James Ferguson, who first audited the university's accounts in 1898, was critical of its financial practices and recommended the keeping of cash books and ledgers; a suggestion rebuffed by Dickson, who said he was only doing what the Audit Office had recommended and the finance committee had approved—claims that were never substantiated.²⁴ The royal commission found that, had the audit been properly conducted, the frauds would have been detected from their inception, 'but owing to the immunity Dickson enjoyed he was enabled to manipulate the accounts, and steal the funds for fifteen years'.²⁵

The Discovery of the Frauds

Ferguson eventually discovered the frauds. He had almost completed the audit for 1900 (conducted in July 1901), when he queried an entry in the balance sheet for £83 6s 8d, an amount Dickson first claimed was owed by the Education Department, a claim that the auditor proved to be false. After rejecting several attempts by Dickson to reconcile the accounts, Ferguson became increasingly suspicious, and on Monday 26 August, after visiting an indisposed Dickson at his house in Parkville, went to the registrar's office at the university. When examining the bankbook for the

general account, he discovered that two instalments of the grant received from the government had not been entered. Immediately the matter was reported to Commissioner Morrah, who, with Ferguson and à Beckett, met with the manager of the Bank of Victoria and ascertained that the passbook was ‘fictitious’.²⁶

On the afternoon of Wednesday 28 August, members of the university council were called to a hastily arranged meeting where they were told that the accountant was suspected of fraud. Later that day, Ferguson swore an information against Dickson for embezzlement, a warrant was issued for his arrest, and that evening the accountant was charged at his home in Parkville. The premier was informed and the government immediately established an enquiry into the university finances to be conducted by Edwin Drake on behalf of the government, and William Sprigg on behalf of the university.

The discovery of the fraud caused ‘a great sensation in the city’ and cast ‘a general gloom over the university’. The newspapers were especially critical. The editor of *The Age* observed that the general public would be interested to hear how the university, while continually pestering the government for more money, could have allowed ‘so serious a leakage of funds’ to have gone on for more than a decade: ‘To say the least of it, an egregiously faulty system of management or non-management would appear to be a factor to the success of the unlawful operations of the defaulter’. The student paper, *Alma Mater*, however, was supportive of Dickson, berating those associated with the daily newspapers for ‘rooting out a man’s private affairs’ and ‘pulpit moralising’ on the fallibility of human nature. ‘Outsiders’ did not seem to appreciate that the university was, among other things, a school for gentlemen, and Dickson was ‘a gentleman, whatever his speculations’.²⁷

The Frauds

Drake and Sprigg reported to the government that Dickson had carried out the frauds primarily by manipulating the various accounts: he pocketed money from the students’ fees by stealing from the till, then ‘repaid’ this debt (thereby avoiding a large overdraft in the general account), by transferring funds from the trust accounts. Alternatively, he paid money received from the redemption of bonds into the general account. Furthermore, he represented ‘to those who signed the cheques that he had accounts to pay which did not exist, and having obtained the cheques, used

them for his own purposes'. Dickson also had pretended to buy securities with money taken from the trust funds and had hidden these dealings by making false entries in the accounts and supported this by creating false passbooks. 'The method by which this part of the defalcations was worked was certainly ingenious.'²⁸

Dickson had avoided detection at the annual audit by various means, including the use of the false bankbooks, which had been created by assistants employed for that purpose. John Marzorini later testified that he began working for Dickson in 1895 and had been paid half a crown an hour or five shillings a night to make entries, as dictated by Dickson, in the bankbooks. At the time, Marzorini believed he was merely making duplicate passbooks for use within the office. For the 1899 audit (conducted in mid-1900), Marzorini had also compiled a statement listing the balances in the various university accounts, which was sent to the bank manager for signature and verification. After the statement had been returned to the university, a further five entries were added—all showing false balances. At the audit, this document had been provided as a certified statement of the balances in the university's accounts and the balances, as 'verified' by the false bankbooks, were accepted as correct. Ferguson later found this document, together with other records (apparently removed from the Audit Office by Dickson), in a box marked 'Agent General' in an upstairs room used by the accountant.²⁹

Dickson's method of hiding the deficit in the various accounts by means of forged certificates and false bankbooks had been discovered by the auditors, but they were less certain as to how he had managed to get credit at the audits for bonds and debentures that did not exist. It was clear from his reports that Gates had not inspected the securities, but had merely accepted their existence based on fees purportedly charged by the bank for their safe-keeping—charges later found to be fictitious. At the audit conducted after the death of Gates, Commissioner Morrah inspected the securities on the grounds that Ferguson lacked the experience to undertake this task. But he too was later found to have been deceived by the accountant. Apparently, Dickson had been allowed to call the amounts of bonds and debentures from a balance sheet, while the commissioner ticked them on a list. It was suspected that Dickson 'only called out bonds totalling what he actually had' and it was later discovered that the Dixon debentures, worth £10,800, were not listed.³⁰

The university's accounting practices were certainly found wanting, and it was perhaps unfortunate the council had not heeded the advice offered previously by an experienced auditor in a letter to the editor of *The Argus*. The auditor recounted his own experience as a member of a financial sub-committee where all the fortnight's receipts and payments were routinely proved; the bank passbook's balance compared with the cashbook balance; the accounts due examined; and the requisite cheques signed, a process taking only a couple of hours a fortnight. Frauds, he opined,

would be nipped in the bud ... were the monthly finance sub-committees to do their duty ... It is almost useless to leave all to the annual audit. When, in nine cases out of ten, the evil done is irremediable, so far as making up the loss or lessening it are concerned.³¹

The auditor offering this sound advice was Thomas Dickson, Frederick's father!

How Much Did He Steal?

Although the actual amount stolen by Dickson can only be guessed, the total deficiency attributable to the frauds was estimated to be £23,839 6s 0d: £7,407 10s 4d from the general account, £15,494 8s 1d from the trust funds, £936 18s 10d from the Conservatorium of Music account, and 8s 9d from the bacteriological fund. By the end of 1901, the university's deficit as a result of the frauds and ongoing debt had reached £35,000, an amount greater than the university's annual income, which over the past five years had averaged about twenty-nine and a half thousand pounds.³²

As the auditors had only been required to examine the accounts as far as was necessary to bring about a conviction, no attempt had been made to discover any deficiencies prior to 1899 in the general and conservatorium accounts, as it was considered that an examination of the accounts from 1899 until the time of the audit would supply ample proof of any defalcation. But in relation to the trusts and bequests, it was necessary to investigate each account from the time of its establishment. An estimate of the balance for each trust account (had it not been defrauded) was calculated, and each credited with 'fair interest'. As Dickson had been removing the capital from these funds for many years, a large proportion of the estimated loss was due to foregone bank interest.

What Did He Do with the Money?

What Dickson did with the money was a matter of some speculation. At the time of his arrest, Frederick was married to Emilie MacCalman, a New Zealander, and the couple had three sons. They lived in the south-eastern suburb of Malvern (where Thomas was a member of the household until his death in 1896), before moving to Parkville in 1898.

Attempts made to discover whether Dickson had bank accounts in fictitious names came to naught. Ferguson, after making many enquiries, 'found out that he was not living at all too high', although John James, who worked with Dickson in the registrar's office, thought he was spending more than the £300 a year he earned on his household—and also observed he often went to the theatre, and that his wife 'used to dress particularly well'.³³

Eventually the conclusion was reached that 'All the money ... went in betting at the races'. According to *The Age*: 'It is thought that a taste for horseracing is the cause of the unfortunate situation'. Dickson was known to have been a regular attendee at race meetings, often in the company of Alfred Gates, the government auditor. The moralists were not surprised to learn of Dickson's interest in the horses, claiming that nine times out of ten when a person placed in a position of trust was charged with embezzlement, gambling in one of its forms was found 'to be at the bottom of the business'.³⁴

The Trial

As a result of auditors' investigations, additional charges were laid against Dickson, and eventually he was committed for trial at the criminal sittings of the Victorian Supreme Court on charges of making false entries in a document with intent to defraud. The two-day hearing began before Justice Hodges on 24 February 1902. Dickson was accused of making the false entries in four university accounts: in each instance, the account was recorded as having a credit balance, whereas it was actually in deficit. He 'pleaded an emphatic 'not guilty' to each charge, which was not unexpected since from the outset he had protested his innocence and claimed to be able 'to make a full and satisfactory explanation of the whole affair'. Newspaper reports indicated that throughout the trial his demeanour was 'jaunty'; he 'smiled and appeared in the best of spirits'.³⁵

The defence counsel did not challenge the evidence that entries in the accounts were incorrect. Instead, it was argued that Dickson had been so overwhelmed by his duties that the books had become muddled, causing

him to make errors unwittingly. The accused read a statement claiming to have been confused and overworked, ‘crushed by the burden of his responsibilities’, of having no intention to systematically rob the university, and having no deliberate wish to deceive. This statement was dismissed by Coldham, the crown prosecutor, as ‘almost an insult to the jury’.³⁶

The members of the jury (including two accountants) were not swayed by the defence’s arguments and took only a short time to reach the verdict that Dickson was guilty on each of the four counts; ‘practically a foregone conclusion’ according to *The Argus*. When later charged on two further charges of embezzlement and one of larceny (based on earlier charges), he pleaded guilty to each and was sentenced to five years hard labour: two years for the false entries, two for embezzlement, and one for larceny.³⁷

Justice Hodges dismissed Dickson’s argument that he had been overwhelmed by his responsibilities and maintained that the false entries were not the result of a sudden temptation yielded to under pressure, but rather were calm, calculated, carefully thought-out plans for defrauding the persons who had trusted him: ‘This was a deliberate crime, and a crime extending over a long period.’ Furthermore, the judge noted that, throughout the trial, Dickson’s attitude had been one ‘of innocence, denial, and strongest opposition’, which ‘indicated lack of repentance’, and that Dickson’s only regret appeared to be that he himself would suffer.³⁸

Rather than accepting that the frauds were the product of incompetence, as Dickson had tried to suggest, it was generally believed that they provided evidence of the intellectual prowess of the perpetrator. The editor of *The Argus* thought the methods by which the balances had been arranged ‘compelled admiration’ and showed ‘the wonderful grasp of figures that whoever was responsible for them had’. This view was shared by James Purves, counsel for the Crown at an earlier hearing, who observed it ‘was entertaining, in these days of stupid, bungling frauds—it was rather pleasing—to get a real expert example of what could be done’.³⁹

One matter raised at the trial, although not directly relevant to the fraud, was the nature of the relationship that had existed between Dickson and his superior officer, the registrar. Dickson’s barrister had been given a large bundle of IOUs and a copy of a letter written by à Beckett to his client.

My Dear Dickson—I am in a financial fix. I want £100 . . . If you cannot do it tell me so, and I will be not in the least annoyed, because you have assisted me so much, and in all your transactions have been most liberal, and but for you I should have been in a hole. I owe you now about £100. If you let me

have another £100, that will make £200, for which I propose to give you interest at the rate of 10 per cent.⁴⁰

This letter seems to have been produced by the accountant in an attempt to implicate à Beckett in the misappropriation of the funds. After his arrest, Dickson had written to the council suggesting that the registrar had borrowed money from him believing that it had been taken from university funds, an accusation refuted by à Beckett as a ‘cunning device to manufacture evidence in his own favour and against me’.⁴¹ À Beckett acknowledged he had borrowed money from Dickson, but believed this had come from the accountant’s own resources—specifically from his winnings at the races.

The registrar, although not suspected of fraud, was severely reprimanded by Justice Hodges: ‘Language was not strong enough to express his condemnation of a man occupying the position of the registrar of the University of Melbourne who proceeded to borrow from a subordinate officer’, especially ‘from a subordinate officer who had charge of the funds of the University.’⁴²

Hodges, like both à Beckett and Dickson, was an ex-pupil of Melbourne Grammar School. As president of the Old Melburnians Society, he had delivered an address in which it was suggested that remembrance of the school could act as moral guide for former students, guarding them from unworthy thought and restraining them ‘from mean and sordid action’, by responding to the prompting inner voice that said, ‘I am an Old Melburnian, I dare not disgrace them.’⁴³ But this was advice that at least one ‘old boy’ had failed to heed.

Aftermath—the University

The university council acted swiftly after the discovery of the frauds by appointing a select committee to consider a reorganisation of the registrar’s office and make suggestions ‘as to possible improvements in University management’. New arrangements were subsequently implemented, including the introduction of a receipt book and a daily cash book for all moneys paid at the office; the reconciliation of the bank and cash books on a monthly basis; weekly checks of the receipt books by the registrar; moving the debentures to the bank where they were to be checked regularly by the registrar and chairman of the finance committee; and student fee payment at the bank.⁴⁴ The accounts were reduced to two, and statements of their balances were to be forwarded (under seal) to the head of the finance

committee each month. An auditor was employed to conduct monthly and yearly audits and the accountant placed ‘under the full control of the registrar’.

But despite the recognition by the council that its financial procedures needed to be thoroughly overhauled, its members refused to accept any responsibility for the frauds, claiming that, as an advisory body, it had no possible means of knowing what went on in the office. Instead, the councillors placed the entire blame on the auditors. But not everyone agreed with this position, including the premier Alexander Peacock, who observed in September 1901 that the fraud could never have happened had any check been made by the finance committee, irrespective of the audit. Newspapers too were critical of the council, suggesting that the whole business was due to ‘intolerably bad management’, or at the very least, ‘laissez faire’ management.⁴⁵

A royal commission, appointed in February 1902, to, among other things, ‘inquire into and report upon the financial position of the University of Melbourne’, largely supported the council’s stance, stating that no evidence ‘directly fixed’ the council ‘with specific acts of neglect, contributing to the losses’. This finding was perhaps not surprising given that Theodore Fink, chairman of the commission, had, before beginning his investigation, assured both the chancellor and the vice-chancellor ‘that the work would be constructive and not fault-finding and hyper-critical’.⁴⁶

While there was no doubting Fink’s ability to conduct the enquiry, especially as he had successfully chaired another royal commission on education only a few years earlier, some doubted his moral probity in relation to financial matters. As Michael Cannon has observed of Fink: ‘Rude ambition had already snatched him up and set him down in a den of land speculators. His fame was the dubious notoriety of finding a legal escape hatch for himself and all other bankrupt financiers who had helped bring Melbourne to its knees.’⁴⁷

This ‘legal escape hatch’ was a little known clause of the Insolvency Act that allowed those owing large sums of money to avoid being made insolvent by entering into a secret ‘composition by arrangement’ with their creditors.⁴⁸ Fink had made use of the clause in January 1892 when he agreed to pay his creditors three shillings in the pound on a debt of £14,000, and a few months later had paid sixpence in the pound on a debt of £21,000. Theodore’s brother, Benjamin, described by Cannon as ‘the greatest land boomer in Australian history’, settled for a halfpenny in the pound for a

debt totalling £1,500,000, and William Sprigg (the person selected by the University of Melbourne to investigate Dickson's defalcations) paid four pence in the pound on his debt of £21,000.

Although secret compositions were not illegal, many considered them to be unfair and unethical, including Judge Molesworth, a justice of the Insolvency Court, who observed: 'I am sorry to say that in this community it is not considered a disgraceful thing for a man to enter into contracts which he cannot pay when called upon; and it is not considered a thing to be ashamed of for a man to offer his creditors one farthing in the pound, even when those creditors include tradesmen from whom he obtained goods such as groceries, meat, clothing and the like. I believe that the morality of the Insolvency Court is in some respects worse than that of the racecourse.'⁴⁹ Fink's law firm handled most of these secret compositions, which P.D. Gardner claims 'in almost every instance ... involved some matters of an illegal or fraudulent nature'.⁵⁰

Although the royal commission largely exonerated the university council from blame for not discovering Dickson's defalcations, it could not so readily dismiss the behaviour of à Beckett and Ellery. Both men were severely censured: the registrar for having ceded to Dickson the complete management of the funds, and the chairman of the finance committee for having allowed him complete control of the securities. But they could be perceived as the proverbial scapegoats. The council had left everything to the finance committee, which in turn had relied on Dickson. Despite having passed resolutions and formed statutes that specified the duties of the registrar, it had failed to check whether they were implemented, and it was aware that à Beckett 'hardly ever' attended meetings of the finance committee, in direct contravention of the regulations.⁵¹ Supporting evidence of the council's lack of probity was the refusal by the insurance company to pay compensation after the discovery of the defalcations, on the grounds that notice of the matter had not been provided within the time specified in the contract. Furthermore, the insurer added, had the employer undertaken the checks, as detailed in the form of agreement, the frauds 'must of necessity have been discovered'.⁵²

One member of the commission (Warde) dissented from the majority view on the extent to which the council was deemed culpable. While he agreed it was the 'gross neglect of duty' on the part of the treasurer and the registrar that had 'directly contributed to the perpetration of the frauds'; nevertheless, the council had 'neglected to either exercise or enforce

anything like proper supervision over its officers', despite the fact that 'the registrar's incompetence was known to the Council'. Therefore, he considered it should be asked to bear some share of the deficiency.⁵³

À Beckett was criticised for borrowing money from a subordinate officer, for it had created in Dickson's mind 'a sense of complete immunity'. That these funds were understood by the registrar to have come from winnings at the races was reprehensible, 'as any due sense of his duties should have made him alert to regard any habit of following the turf on the part of the accountant handling university moneys as dangerous and demoralizing'.⁵⁴

Although the commission recommended in its progress report, presented in 1902, that the government make good the £23,839 6s 0d attributed to the Dickson frauds, no action had been taken by the time the final report was delivered in May 1904. It was not until Thomas Bent's government came to office later that year that the university was provided with £10,000 to reduce its financial liabilities, plus a further £2,000 for the purchase of apparatus, on the condition that the university raised an equal amount by public subscription. A committee headed by Janet Lady Clarke raised the required amount within seven months. Subsequent legislation guaranteed the university a yearly endowment of £20,000, and an additional yearly endowment of £1,000, in return for various undertakings, including the provision of evening lectures.⁵⁵

Aftermath—the Audit Office

The report of the royal commission was particularly damning of the Audit Office and its commissioners, as an examination of the audit reports had revealed 'either ignorance of the elements of bookkeeping or a remarkable growth of carelessness and indifference'. Had the bank ledgers been inspected or the bank certificates obtained directly from the manager, the frauds could easily have been detected. The report concluded that the praise given to Dickson 'undoubtedly' attached 'responsibility for the whole of the losses' to the audit commissioners and to the government that employed them. Commissioner Morrah in particular was severely censured and his conduct before the enquiry described as 'most unsatisfactory'.⁵⁶

The failings on the part of the audit commissioners should perhaps not have come as a surprise, for, as Peter Yule has observed, none of the commissioners appointed in the 1880s and 1890s had any training in accountancy or experience of auditing.⁵⁷ Morrah had been described in

parliament as ‘not ... an incapable officer, but as being very near that’.⁵⁸ This lack of expertise had attracted criticism, but it was not until after the Dickson revelations that the government introduced legislation to reform the Audit Office and replace the commissioners with an auditor-general (thereby bringing Victorian arrangements into line with other states). A clause inserted in the Audit Act (at the suggestion of Theodore Fink) required inspecting officers, within twelve months of their appointment, to obtain a certificate of the Companies Auditors Board, or an equivalent qualification recognised by that board.⁵⁹

Aftermath—Frederick Dickson

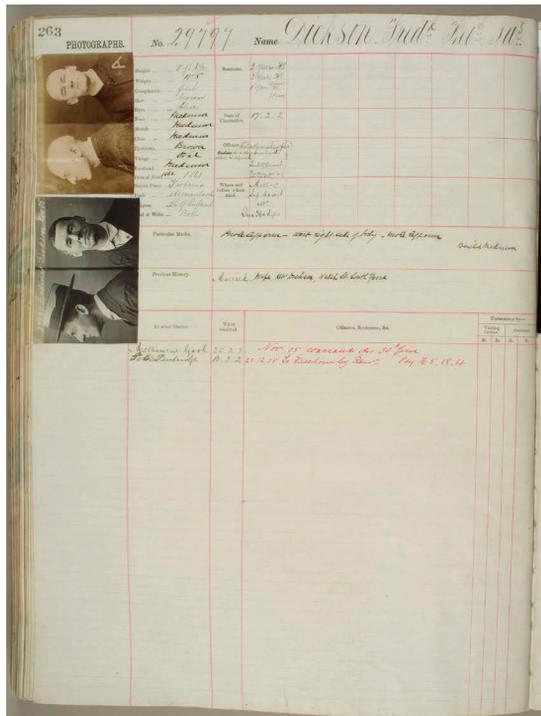
Frederick Dickson was taken to Pentridge prison on 13 March 1902, where he spent the first months of his sentence in A Division, remaining in solitary confinement for 23 hours each day. The only relief to this monotony was an hour spent in the exercise yard, where, disguised with a linen hood, he appeared as ‘a sombre object unrecognizable except for the number on his clothes’. He was released on 23 December 1905, his sentence having been reduced for good conduct.⁶⁰

Nothing is known of Dickson’s life after his release from prison. Although *Liber Melburniensis* records that he was a clerk in Western Australia, there is no evidence to support this. Geoffrey Blainey noted he was variously reported to have ended his days in Fiji or South Africa.⁶¹

What *is* certain is that Frederick died on 16 September 1935, aged 74, and that someone in Melbourne knew of his death, and a notice of the event was published in *The Argus* on 9 October, the three-week delay suggesting that the information had been received from afar. The notice made no mention of either Frederick’s wife or his children, but stated that he was the ‘loved son of the late Thomas Dickson’.⁶²

Aftermath—Dickson’s Wife and Children

At the time of her husband’s imprisonment, Emilie Dickson was living in South Yarra, where she remained until leaving for Auckland in 1905 with her three children. All three sons enlisted with the allied forces in the First World War. When Thomas, the eldest, died on 20 November 1918, aged 26 years, a notice placed in *The Argus* by Mrs von Bertouch (Emilie’s sister) mentioned only his mother, brothers, and aunt. But a second notice published in the same paper the following day, referred to Thomas as ‘the beloved son of F.T.J. Dickson and grandson of Thomas Dickson’.⁶³



Frederick Dickson's criminal record (VPRS 515/ P1, Volume 55, Item 55, Prisoner No. 29797). (Reproduced with the permission of the Keeper of Public Records, Public Record Office Victoria, Australia.)

After Thomas's death, Emilie and her youngest son, Reginald, lived first in Vancouver, and later in the USA, where Reginald became a naturalised citizen in 1932. It is not known whether they had migrated to join Donald, the second son, who had settled in the USA some years earlier. By 1936, Emilie and Reginald had returned to Melbourne, and, after residing in East Melbourne for some years, moved to Balwyn where they remained until the mid-1950s. Emilie died in January 1959, followed by Reginald just over five years later in October 1964.

Conclusion

What became known as the 'Dickson frauds' had both short- and long-term negative consequences for the University of Melbourne. The discovery

further undermined the already parlous state of the institution's financial position, and, while this was eventually rectified, the psychological impact was more profound. Raymond Priestley, vice-chancellor in the late 1930s, claimed Dickson's defalcations had had a catastrophic effect: 'It caused a severely economical administration and a suspicious outlook.'⁶⁴

The effects upon Frederick Dickson's family can only be guessed, but were possibly more profound. Emilie and her three sons left Australia before he was released from prison—only two members of the family returned, but not until after the death of Frederick some thirty years later.

NOTES

- 1 *The Argus*, 8 May 1901; *Inquirer & Commercial News*, 10 May 1901.
- 2 *The Mercury*, 13 May 1901; *Speculum*, May 1901, p. 4.
- 3 University Council Minutes (UCM), July 1901, University of Melbourne Archives (UMA).
- 4 UCM, 28 August 1901, UMA.
- 5 Thomas Dickson's cousin, Robert Dickson (later premier of Queensland), was a partner in Rae, Dickson & Co, from 1858 to 1861. *Victorian Government Gazette (VGG)*, 15 February 1861, p. 330.
- 6 *VGG*, 11 May 1855, p. 169; *VGG*, 3 April 1865, p. 866.
- 7 *The Argus*, 15 November 1867; R.W.E. Wilmot (ed.), *Liber Melburniensis, 1858–1914*, Melbourne, Arkbuckle, Waddell & Fawkner, 1914, p. 50.
- 8 Matriculation result sheets, October term, 1875, UMA.
- 9 Registrar's correspondence (RC), series 312, 1882/18/1, 1882/18/2, UMA; Winston Burchett, *East Melbourne, 1837–1977: People, Places, Problems*, Melbourne, Craftsman Press, 1978, p. 25; Royal Commission on the University of Melbourne, Progress Report (RCPR), *Victorian Parliamentary Papers (VPP)*, 1902, vol. 2, p. 82.
- 10 UCM, 17 August 1885, UMA; Minutes of Evidence (ME) Alexander Morrison Q1740–2, James Barrett Q1773, RCPR; *The Argus*, 3 February 1885 & 18 August 1885.
- 11 Minutes and report of committee re duties of registrar and organisation of the office, 8 April 1886, 3 June 1886, RC, series 312, 1886/36, UMA; UCM, 19 July 1886, UMA; evidence of E.F. à Beckett, Q2315, RCPRME.
- 12 *Alma Mater*, April 1901, p. 115; Ernest Scott, *A History of the University of Melbourne*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1936, p. 174; Enid Derham to Richard Hodgson, 1 September 1901, Enid Derham Papers, series 83/135, box 3, UMA; John James, Q2643, RCPRME.
- 13 R.J.W. Selleck, *The Shop: The University of Melbourne 1850–1939*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2003, p. 221.

- 14 Quoted in Michael Cannon, *The Land Boomers*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1967, p. 100.
- 15 Royal Commission on the University of Melbourne, Final Report, *VPP* 1904, vol. 2, p. 104.
- 16 Evidence of James Ferguson, Q484, RCPRME.
- 17 Evidence of Stirton Robertson, Q2442, RCPRME.
- 18 RCPR, p. xi.
- 19 Evidence of Edwin Drake, Q181, RCPRME.
- 20 *University of Melbourne: Standing Resolutions, 1855–1890*, p. 28; à Beckett, Q2324, RCPRME; RC, p. ix.
- 21 À Beckett, Q2062–3, 2286–8, RCPRME.
- 22 ‘Extracts from reports made annually by government auditors ...’, Appendix A, RCPR.
- 23 RCPR, p. xi.
- 24 Ferguson, Q522–4, à Beckett Q2298–9, James Q2644–5, RCPRME. Ferguson could find no evidence to substantiate Dickson’s claims.
- 25 RCPR, p. xiii.
- 26 Criminal trial brief no. 471, deposition by Ferguson, VPRS 30/1266, Public Record Office Victoria (PROV).
- 27 *The Advertiser*, 30 August 1901; *The Age*, 29 August 1901; *Alma Mater*, October 1901, pp. 305–07.
- 28 ‘Report by Mr. E.T. Drake...’, 11 March 1902, Appendix B, RCPR; *The Age*, 17 September 1901.
- 29 Criminal trial brief 574, depositions by Marzorini and Ferguson, 17 October 1901, VPRS 30/1273, PROV. The reports of university audits from 1897 onwards were missing and were believed to have been removed by Dickson. Evidence of Thomas Horan, clerk in the Audit Office, Q666–7, RCPRME.
- 30 RCPR, p. xi & 17; evidence of Drake, Q133, Ferguson, Q514–15, RCPRME.
- 31 *The Argus*, 5 February 1872.
- 32 Evidence of Drake, Q152–8, RCPRME. This included the accumulated deficit of £11,000; see ‘Statement of Legitimate Income and Expenditure for 1892 to 1900 Inclusive’, RCPR, appendix F, p. xxxii.
- 33 Evidence of Drake, Q188; evidence of Ferguson, Q659; evidence of James, Q2640, RCPRME.
- 34 Derham to Hodgson, 1 September 1901, series 83/135, box 3, UMA; *The Age*, 29 August 1901; James, Q2638, RCPR; *Otago Witness*, 18 September 1901.
- 35 *The Age*, 25 February 1902.
- 36 Criminal trial brief no. 574, VPRS 30/1273, PROV; *The Age*, 26 February 1902.
- 37 Criminal trial brief no. 574, VPRS 30/1273, PROV; criminal record book, prisoner no. 29797, VPRS 78/14, p. 263, PROV; *The Argus*, 26 February 1902.
- 38 *The Argus*, 28 February 1902; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 February 1902.

- 39 *The Argus*, 27 September 1901 & 15 November 1901.
- 40 *The Argus*, 25 February 1902.
- 41 Criminal trial brief no. 474, Dickson, 10 December 1901, à Beckett, 13 December 1901, VPRS 30/1267, PROV.
- 42 *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 February 1902.
- 43 *Alma Mater* (supplement), 6 September 1899, p. 34.
- 44 UCM, 21 October 1901, UMA; evidence of MacFarland, Q397–404, RCPRME.
- 45 Evidence of MacFarland, Q414–15; evidence of John Grice, Q1424–5, RCPRME; *The Age*, 11 & 18 September 1901; *Table Talk*, 6 March 1902, p. 21.
- 46 RCPR, p. viii; series 97/127, Fink Papers, box 8, UMA.
- 47 Cannon, p. 143.
- 48 Cannon, p. 34.
- 49 Cannon, p. 206.
- 50 P.D. Gardner, 'Brief Notes on ... the Secret Compositions of William Lawrence Baillieu and Friends 1892', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 80, no. 1, June 2009, p. 62.
- 51 UCM, 10 February 1890, UMA; RCPR, p. x; à Beckett, 82–3; trial brief no. 471, VPRS 30/1266, PROV.
- 52 F. Handley, 18 March 1902, RC series 312, 1902/16, UMA.
- 53 RCPR, p. xvi.
- 54 RCPR, p. vii.
- 55 Memo of agreement, 7 September 1904, RC, series 312, 1904/24, UMA; Geoffrey Blainey, *A Centenary History of the University of Melbourne*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, p. 126.
- 56 RCPR, pp. xii–xiii.
- 57 Peter Yule, *In the Public Interest*, Melbourne, Victorian Auditor General's Office, 2002, pp. 79 & 92.
- 58 RCPR, pp. xi & 71; *Victorian Parliamentary Debates (VPD)*, vol. 82, 19 August 1896, p. 1321.
- 59 An Act to amend the Audit Acts, No. 1768, *Victorian Statutes; VPD*, vol. 99, 19 December 1901, p. 3794, & 20 December 1901, p. 3938.
- 60 *Alma Mater*, June 1899, p. 34; John Stanley James, *The Vagabond Papers*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1969, p. 92.
- 61 Blainey, p. 119.
- 62 *The Argus*, 9 October 1935.
- 63 *The Argus*, 22 and 23 November 1918.
- 64 John Poynter and Carolyn Rasmussen, *A Place Apart: The University of Melbourne, Decades of Challenge*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1996, p. 12.

THE FORTUNES OF FREDERICK TAYLOR

Tony Edney

Abstract

The name Frederick Taylor is well-known to those who have an interest in pre-separation Victorian history, as his participation in various racial clashes of the late 1830s has been carefully documented, particularly his leading role in the 1839 Murdering Gully massacre in Western Victoria that indelibly marked him as an exemplar of the worst excesses of our state's frontier epoch. The author argues that historians have unintentionally presented an incomplete and one-dimensional picture of Taylor, concentrating on his 'dark' side, and failing to disclose that he had a much more significant part to play in the development of our state than previously understood. This article is a first attempt to present a biographical account of Frederick Taylor and to consider his life story within the context of the values of society at that time.

FREDERICK TAYLOR, according to his tombstone in St Kilda Cemetery, was born on Christmas Day in 1810. His arrival into the world took place in Scotland, at Forfar, north of Dundee, but apart from this detail, and the suggestion he had been a tea planter in Ceylon, nothing is known about his early years, and what Taylor had achieved in the twenty-four years before he ventured to Australia remains a mystery.

A Mr Taylor was on the passenger list of the *Persian* which came to Hobart out of London on 1 August 1835, and it is possible that this is the same man who landed in Port Phillip from Van Diemen's Land in April 1836. Frederick Taylor voyaged across the strait on the *Francis Freeling*

with a cargo of sheep that were landed near Port Henry, close to present-day Geelong. He is mentioned as having done good work in recovering part of the disembarked flock that had been driven off by Aborigines. Without any further details, it is conceivable that Taylor committed his first acts of violence against Aborigines on the very day of his arrival on the mainland.

The Killing of Curacoine

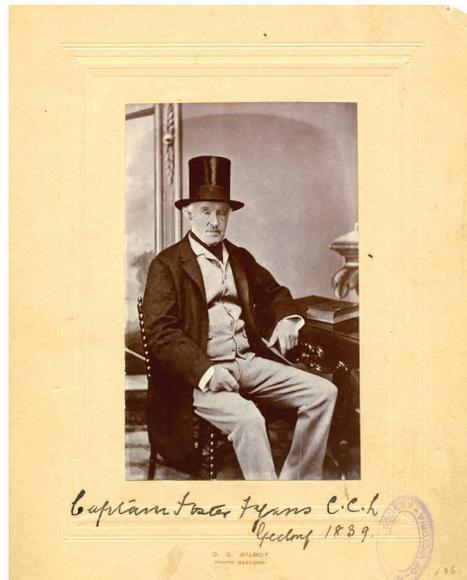
Taylor's initial engagement in the new settlement was as station overseer for absentee financiers, and Port Phillip Association members, Charles Swanston and George Mercer, on their immense land claim over the greater part of the Bellarine Peninsula. Near the present city of Geelong, on 17 October 1836, Taylor detained, by tying to a tree, a Wathaurong tribesman known as Curacoine, who was suspected of two earlier killings of white men and the attempted murder of Captain James Flitt, a close neighbour. Taylor left a ticket of leave convict, John Henry Whitehead, to stand guard over the Aborigine with instructions about how to manage this task (about which conflicting statements were later made). Jack Whitehead was a 23-year-old butcher from Lancashire, convicted of burglary and transported for life. In the face of ongoing loud vocal resistance from the Aborigine, and fearing this would attract attention, Whitehead panicked and fired at him, but missed his target. He then untied the Aborigine, hoping he would flee, but Curacoine didn't, and continued to remonstrate loudly, causing Whitehead to fire at least once again, knocking Curacoine to the ground mortally wounded. Whitehead threw the body into the Barwon River, near where Queen's Park Bridge now stands. Under an agreement made by Melbourne's first settlers in June 1836 to inform the authorities of serious racial incidents, a concession to the importance the government placed on protection of the Aboriginal inhabitants, Taylor notified newly appointed police magistrate, Captain William Lonsdale. Lonsdale conducted the investigation that resulted in Whitehead being charged with murder and sent to Sydney for trial. After taking the necessary depositions, Lonsdale commented on Taylor's evident unwillingness to give a clear account of the events, and he noted his suspicion that Taylor had encouraged Whitehead to commit the murder. This suspicion had no doubt partly arisen from another witness, Freestun, mentioning in his statement that Whitehead had said to Taylor after the killing that 'you told me to do what I liked with him'. For his part, Taylor had admitted in his statement that he was annoyed at having to detain Curacoine and had 'wished the black had been *away* rather than

the cause of stopping the work'. The trial in the Supreme Court in Sydney on 3 March 1837 resulted in an acquittal. Some later writers have claimed that this was due to an absence of witnesses, in particular Taylor, who had fled to Tasmania and did not answer a subpoena, though a different result would not necessarily have been reached if Taylor had given evidence in the case. Even the prosecution witnesses had made clear that Whitehead was entitled to fear for his life in the circumstances, and juries of that time were notoriously reluctant to send white men to their death for the killing of an Aborigine however that took place. Furthermore, Taylor was not an eyewitness to the death.

The law did not compel Whitehead to give testimony. However, in the back of Acting Chief Justice Dowling's notebook, there was a written statement from the prisoner that may or may not have gone to the military jury. In it, Whitehead claims that Curacoine was a 'ferocious character', whom he had shot after he had escaped from his bindings and came towards him with an axe. In reaction to this, he raised his firearm to scare him, but the piece went off involuntarily and killed him. This statement was very much at odds with the accounts given to both Taylor and Freestun by the prisoner. It raises the question of why Whitehead, in a fight for his life, had not, in this exculpatory statement, tried to put the blame on Taylor for supposedly giving him licence to do anything he wanted with the captured Aborigine. His not doing so may suggest that, while Taylor was to carry the blame for the killing in the view of officialdom for years to come, he may not have been a causative agent in its having taken place. Though, as he was unprepared to be cross-examined about his role in the incident, he may have felt guilty over his part in the affair.

The evidence of Freestun at Whitehead's trial contains an interesting observation of Taylor's conduct during the incident that is similar to comments made by others later on about his personality. Freestun stated that 'Taylor walked about as if much agitated'. Taylor himself admitted in his second statement of 19 December 1836 that 'he was very much agitated throughout the proceeding', so much so that he could not remember the exact sequence of events. Curiously, in this deposition, Taylor also admitted that he was too frightened to look at the body of Curacoine as it was dragged from the river, and this reaction was confirmed by a witness. Within a matter of months after the killing, even before Whitehead's trial, Taylor was reported as a passenger on a ship travelling between Launceston and Port Phillip. He had brazenly recrossed the strait and resumed his role

as overseer for Swanston. And while the Colonial Secretary of New South Wales, Edward Deas Thomson, noted reports of Taylor's reappearance, and forwarded these on to the Attorney-General, no consequences evidently flowed to Taylor as a result. Clashes with Another Police Magistrate
Taylor was still at work around Corio Bay in September 1837, when a second police magistrate was appointed, this time at Geelong. Arriving at the Barwon, Captain Foster Fyans announced his presence at Taylor's camp and was there initially accorded 'hospitable kindness' and, 'hearty goodwill', but after later coming across Fyans' party in the process of setting up a permanent base on his run, Taylor boldly warned them off. Fyans was not the type to brook interference in the execution of his duties—he had in the past brutally repressed convict rebellions on the infamous Norfolk Island. Perhaps for the sake of civility he did not press his case, and following directions from Taylor, compliantly moved upstream to the Barwon's junction with the Moorabool. After reaching this location, his men set about clearing the new site and erecting shelter. Sometime later,



Capt. John Foster Fyans, photograph presented to the RHSV by A.C. Macdonald, with a biography of Fyans on the reverse, handwritten, probably by A.C. Macdonald, dated 21 July 1911.

(RHSV Collection: P-59.)

to their great surprise, Taylor reappeared and insisted that Fyans was still within his pastoral realm and should shift further on to unclaimed territory, a concession Fyans was unprepared to make.

Fyans clashed with Frederick Taylor again in late 1837, when the overseer refused to comply with his orders to desist in allowing an unlicensed merchant to trade on his land, and this time, Fyans was damning about Taylor's reputation and character, writing to the Colonial Secretary of NSW to complain that the country was rapidly filling with 'the lowest and worst of persons', a direct appraisal of Taylor himself, whom he recalled as having been involved in the shooting of Curacoine. Whether Taylor carried any actual responsibility for that incident, his reputation was certainly marked for a time as a result of it, and he was beginning to accumulate, if not enemies, certainly unsympathetic officials in high places.

On Mt Emu Creek

In March 1839, Taylor relocated to the west, taking 8,000 sheep onto Strathdownie, a station beside a waterway that would, for a long time, be known as Taylor's River, and now as Mt Emu Creek. Taylor was once again serving the interests of wealthy, well-connected, absentee investors, George McKillop and James Smith. During his brief time at Strathdownie, Frederick Taylor made complaints about Aborigines stealing sheep. A letter from George Robinson, Chief Protector of Aborigines, to his assistant protector Charles Sievwright, dated 11 July 1839, refers to one of these complaints, and is sceptical about the gravity of the complaint, suggesting it was 'trivial'. Reports and complaints had also been made of Taylor's actions and attitude towards the Aborigines. George Robinson later said that these complaints had been 'numerous'. Shortly after the establishment of Strathdownie in March 1839, Sievwright visited the station, possibly to follow up Taylor's complaints, or else those made against him, and in the process of doing so, he had the chance to form an impression of its manager. He believed that Taylor had 'been guilty of inhuman treatment towards them' [the Aborigines]. This conclusion was based on the observation of 'his inveterate remarks against them, his constant excitement and apprehension, and his unwillingness to accompany me to a native encampment which we descried at a short distance from the station'.

It was in the late winter or early spring of 1839 that the Murdering Gully massacre took place, when under cover of darkness, a body of men led by Taylor on horseback approached a clan of sleeping Djargurd wurrung

Aborigines and commenced shooting. A fearful slaughter ensued. Estimates of fatal casualties, including women and children, vary between thirty and fifty, thirty-five being a common figure. There were survivors, and again the figures are unclear, though, on the basis of later accounts, it can be concluded that at least twelve escaped. Reports of this massacre eventually reached Charles La Trobe, who was insistent that it be investigated immediately, directing Henry Fyshe Gisborne, a fresh appointment as Commissioner of Crown Lands, to assist with the inquiries. Taylor must have been able to display an uncharacteristically cool demeanour to Gisborne during Gisborne's visit to the station in December 1839, for Gisborne concluded his investigation by saying that 'he was unable to obtain any further information on the subject, after having made every inquiry after the alleged authors of the massacre'. Taylor never faced trial over this bloody incident. On the other hand, George Robinson was not in any doubt about the part that Taylor took in the killings. In a letter to La Trobe on 11 December 1841, he made this assessment:

Taylor was overseer of a sheep station, in the Western district, and was notorious for killing natives. No legal evidence could be obtained against this nefarious individual. The last transaction in which he was concerned was of so atrocious a nature, that he thought fit to abscond, and has not been heard of since. No legal evidence was attainable in this latter case. There is no doubt the charges preferred were true, for in the course of my inquiries on my late expedition, I found a tribe, a section of the Jancoorts, totally extinct, and it was affirmed by the natives that Taylor had destroyed them. There were other reports of Taylor's actions against local clans. In early 1840, Charles Gray, who had taken up a sheep run west of Mt Emu Creek was riding across his land when he 'came upon one of the *numerous* conflicts Fred Taylor was said to have had with the natives'. The site was an Aboriginal camp that had been rapidly vacated, the inhabitants having discarded all their weapons, these having been broken and thrown into a fire. Even on the most cursory appraisal, what happened at Murdering Gully appears totally indefensible. No record exists that white men had been harmed in any way, or property damaged. There were no thefts of the scale or repetitive nature that had driven other squatters to brutal reprisals. No element of self-defence would seem to have been raised. Further adding to the evident culpability of the parties was the apparent fact that the station was on the market, making it very likely that everyone would be leaving anyway. In a very short space of time, their livelihoods would no longer depend on Strathdownie and the wages and sustenance it provided. Taylor's Flight

Henry Gisborne would have relayed to Taylor and his men that the assistant protector of Aborigines, Charles Sievwright, was on his way to conduct an even more extensive investigation of the killings, and this intelligence was sufficient to frighten Taylor deeply. At some point between Boxing Day 1839 and 4 January 1840, he was in his comfortably appointed hut, eating his evening meal, when he heard a voice calling out from the eastern bank of the creek, some six hundred metres away. Fearing that the investigative zeal of Sievwright was about to be unleashed upon him, he immediately fled. The possibility of his own death by hanging drove him to Portland, where he boarded what was said to be an American whaling ship, which took him to India. A warrant was subsequently issued for his arrest. It was while in India or in Ceylon that Taylor encountered London-born John Michael Loughnan, once a captain in the 10th Bengal Cavalry, but, since 1837, resident in Tasmania. One source has it that Taylor was related to Loughnan. In circumstances unknown, Taylor and Loughnan together agreed to take up land in Australia on behalf of John Davison Smith, a successful merchant and ship's master, who lived or had lived in Calcutta. Gippsland

The Sydney Morning Herald of 18 February 1845 carried a notice asking for Frederick Taylor, 'who came to this colony as a passenger in the *Lady Macnaghten*, Captain Doughty, from Calcutta, in the year 1841' to make contact with a certain business. By 1842, Taylor was certainly back in Port Phillip, in the area that came to be called Gippsland. The Gippsland region may have been pointed out by his former employer, George McKillop, who passed through the Snowy Mountains to the rolling plains of Omeo in early 1835, naming his chosen run Strathdownie. Taylor travelled overland from NSW in the company of the first wave of squatters into the Lakes region of East Gippsland. To avoid drawing attention to the re-appearance of the fugitive Taylor, Loughnan became licensee of their land claim, and took over nearly 40,000 acres on the Mitchell River, near where Bairnsdale now stands, on behalf of John Smith. They called the run Lindenow. In a strange reversal of events, in 1842, two of Taylor's shepherds were killed by Aborigines. This was Taylor's third recorded involvement in fatal racial violence.

Taylor had brought with him to Australia some Indian labourers, described as 'coolies', and he mistreated them on the journey south through the Australian Alps, failing to provide suitable clothing and shelter from the weather, and after arrival in Gippsland, he continued this mistreatment.



George Augustus Robinson
(RHSV Collection: P-330.)

Eventually they fled from him back across the mountains to Sydney, without having been paid for their services. While on tour in the region in 1844, George Robinson encountered one of the fleeing coolies and recorded his complaints against Taylor, a name well-known to him, and whom he had determined to be 'a bad character'. He passed these complaints on to Superintendent La Trobe. To impose order in the notably lawless new district of Gippsland, the surveyor Charles Tyers was appointed Commissioner of Crown Lands, and ex officio magistrate. He had arrived at Port Albert in January 1844. On 29 April 1844, he refused Taylor the right to manage a pastoral run, ostensibly on the basis of allegations of offences relating to illegally encroaching upon neighbouring landholders and failing to comply with Tyers' orders. Tyers was well aware of Taylor's past misdeeds and labelled him 'a highly improper person' to run a station. He directed Taylor to remove himself from Lindenow. This act of disqualification from squatting was approved by Governor Gipps in July 1844, though he challenged Tyers' authority to force Taylor to vacate his home. Loughnan vigorously objected to the removal of his overseer and called for an inquiry that turned into a protracted exchange of letters and was a bane

to officials over a period of years. As he awaited the outcome, Frederick Taylor ran a hotel and store in Tarraville, inland from Port Albert, but he seemed determined to pursue pastoral interests and relentlessly sought an opportunity to clear his name. In March 1846, after further reviewing the evidence at the insistence of Taylor and his friends, Tyers backed down from his previous views on Taylor and sought to withdraw his earlier correspondence declaiming against him. He concluded that Taylor was 'not guilty' of the charges he was said to have committed against his neighbours, or of failing to comply with Tyers' directions. Gipps and La Trobe were dismayed at this about-face and initially disassociated the government from the decision. Gipps thought that Tyers must have become frightened at a threat of legal action that had been made against him by Loughnan, but a review of the correspondence would suggest that Tyers had in fact made a mistake in initially accusing Taylor of the encroachment.

As the longwinded matter drew to a close, even La Trobe was forced to concede that there was insufficient evidence of illegal acts to show that Taylor should be disqualified from holding a pastoral licence, and that the case against him had 'ended in satisfactory disapproval'.

No mention had been made of the Curacoine killing in the investigations and, importantly, Taylor would not seem to have evaded the execution of a warrant when he fled overseas, as the warrant may not have been issued until his absence was noted. The question of whether his character qualified him from holding a squatting licence would appear to be less in doubt, but for some reason, the government, even though it was well entitled to, chose not to use this as a basis for exclusion.

In the end, Taylor's dogged persistence paid off, and he obtained a squatting licence, with J.M. and Henry Loughnan, for Lindenow in 1846, and then for himself alone, and in various partnerships, at Deighton No 2 station, on Tom's Creek, Lake Victoria, in Gippsland. He farmed there or retained a commercial interest, and also at Emu Vale, right through until 1857. Taylor and J.M. Loughnan were holding at least some of their land holdings for England-based John Davison Smith, who had funded the joint enterprise, and Smith had become concerned as to how his Australian property interests were being looked after by his colonial agents. An envoy was dispatched to look into his affairs in East Gippsland. Lawyer Frederick Gray came to Australia, but Taylor 'summarily dismissed' him. Smith resorted to sending his son, whose youth and inexperience turned out to be a subject of mockery in those wild parts. Smith was ultimately forced to

emigrate with his family to resolve the matter, suing Loughnan to get his land back, and eventually obtaining a notice to quit that was served upon the managers. Loughnan and Taylor refused to leave and bitter feelings developed. Two opposing armed forces evolved, those in possession and those wanting to eject them, and this tense state of affairs escalated into serial rounds of violence, described by Hal Porter, in his history of Bairnsdale, as ‘Capulet and Montague skirmishes’. Around 1850, Smith eventually secured possession of Lindenow, but not of the peace. Disputes over sheep followed. Then Loughnan and Taylor demanded compensation for improvements—a wool shed said to have cost £1,700, as against Smith’s estimation of £200. They were saved having to litigate over this when the building was, probably not so mysteriously, burned down. As a permanent reminder of his time in the far east of Victoria, Taylor left his name on a mountain north of Bairnsdale—Mt Taylor. Central Victoria and the Riverina Taylor has been principally dealt with by writers in regard to his dealings with the Aboriginal people of the Port Phillip District. And historians who have covered the early incidents in Taylor’s career, such as Clark and Cannon, do not pursue his career much beyond the mid-1840s, and so have missed the opportunity to consider his later exploits; to learn that he played a prominent part in both the Gold Rush era, and in the development of fine wool-growing in the Riverina; and that he ultimately came to a position of some importance in the wider social spheres of two colonies. The following information may, therefore, be seen as an introduction of fresh material into the historical narrative concerning Frederick Taylor that expands considerably our understanding of his personality and his part in Victoria’s history.

In the early 1850s, Frederick Taylor established another area of pastoral endeavour in central Victoria. In May 1854, he was noted as owning the pre-emptive rights to an original squatting run, Strathloddon, close to Guildford on the Loddon River.

The land at Strathloddon became the subject of intense interest from miners who had previously swarmed into the district upon the discovery there of gold in late 1851. Taylor’s 640 acres of pre-emptive land had turned out to be ‘one square mile of highly auriferous ground’. The rush onto Taylor’s holding seems to have coincided with his taking possession in May 1854 and saw some 300 men sinking shafts on ‘the lower part of Pennyweight Flat’, in what would become known as the Taylor’s Paddock (Yapeen) goldfield. Taylor was able to have them removed with the

assistance of the Gold Commissioner, but he must have quickly seen the possibilities for personal enrichment in this sudden mad focus of interest on his landholding, for, by June 1854, he was advertising blocks between ten and 300 acres for lease. In December 1855, he was mining for gold on his own land and at the same time, selling sheep and cattle to hungry miners. Clearly a man of enormous energy and ambition, in 1855, Taylor developed further pastoral interests, this time north of Bendigo, where he purchased the 52,000-acre holding of Piccaninny Creek Station. Then, in 1856, he took on what was to become the famed Burrabogie Station near Hay on the Murrumbidgee, with his old friends, the Loughnans. Interest in the Riverina as highly suitable country for raising fine wool sheep was in the ascendant, and Taylor had picked the trend. He became involved in selling both sheep, in considerable volume—10,000 in one sale notice—and pastoral properties to run them on, sometimes in conjunction with the Loughnan brothers. In 1858, Taylor subdivided the title to his old pre-emptive right at Strathloddon, by now known as the ‘celebrated Taylor’s Paddock’, into hundreds of individual titles, and sold them off at very high prices. It was claimed that he had received £40,000 out of the sales. Apart from making large sums of money from the goldminers, and from his pastoral operations, lodging complaints, and bringing suits over the miners’ unauthorised entry on to his land, it is uncertain if Taylor was in any other way actively contributing to the community he was living in. Though it would appear he was later to become a trustee of the Scots Church in Castlemaine. Whatever the extent of his wider civic role, on 26 June 1855, in a remarkable turnaround of public fortune, Frederick Taylor of Strathloddon, a man known to be more pursued by the law than its upholder, was appointed a magistrate for the colony of Victoria.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of an appointment to the magistracy in colonial Australia, its desirability and its impact on the appointee’s social status. ‘The bestowal of a commission of the peace was akin to the granting of aristocratic titles in England’ is how one writer described the honour of being elevated to the local bench. So some mystery arises as to how a man of Taylor’s background could have acquired this coveted personal distinction. The author would argue that Taylor’s growing wealth and influence, allied with what must have been a commanding personality, cancelled out any earlier questioning of his character, which surely only few would, in any case, have known about. Practical competence, personal confidence and financial success were the

benchmarks of gentlemanly character in the burgeoning new colony of Victoria.

Becoming a justice of the peace was, however, not enough to keep Taylor out of trouble and in July 1858, he became a defendant in the Supreme Court at Castlemaine facing an action brought against him for assault, malicious prosecution and false imprisonment by William, 'Billy' or 'Boss', Aberdeen, a highly colourful, and litigious, Castlemaine identity. Taylor was represented by both the Solicitor-General and other counsel. The rather amusing situation giving rise to the suit occurred in Mostyn Street, Castlemaine, on 2 November 1857. Aberdeen, returning from the market with a large number of live hens draped over his person, spotted Taylor and approached him, wishing to convey his best wishes for the squatter's upcoming return to Britain. Aberdeen expressed himself in this way: 'Old Boy, I hear you are going home to old Scotland again. I hope you will enjoy yourself, that you will live long, and have a pleasant voyage—give us a shake of your flipper, old boy.' He then held out his hand for Taylor to grasp. Taylor was not impressed, and felt his dignity was being imposed upon. He called Aberdeen a scoundrel or a scamp and commanded that he be gone, otherwise he would have him arrested. Aberdeen exclaimed that he thought they were friends, which Taylor vigorously denied, before walking off and looking for a policeman. One turned up fairly shortly and Taylor directed him to arrest Aberdeen for being drunk and using insulting language. Aberdeen was arrested, kept overnight and brought before the court the next day, then cautioned and discharged without penalty, despite the evidence of Taylor. Aberdeen then commenced a civil suit against Taylor and successfully argued his case that he was not drunk, and certainly not disorderly, and that he had only the best feelings towards Taylor at the time. As was observed by Aberdeen's counsel during the trial, 'a man's friends often discover a great many excellences previously unnoticed', when he announces his intention to leave the district; in this way cleverly explaining why his client had approached Taylor, whom he had often clashed with. Aberdeen was awarded £50 in damages. Shortly before the incident on Mostyn Street, Aberdeen had annoyed Taylor by outbidding him at an auction and it was mentioned by a witness in the case that Aberdeen owed Taylor £100. Taylor also well knew that Aberdeen readily displayed a 'hatred of squatterdom', a class that Taylor epitomised. He, therefore, had cause to dislike Aberdeen, but rather than disengaging from the encounter in a diplomatic manner, as might be expected from a public figure, he chose

to exercise his authority and punish Aberdeen for his unwanted greetings, or as Aberdeen's counsel so nicely put it, for coming 'between the wind and his nobility'. A number of informative sidelights come out of the case. The defendant called T.B. Naylor, who was noted as living with him at the time, as a witness. Thomas Beagley Naylor was also a magistrate who sat on the Castlemaine bench. The never-married Taylor was to share his house with gentlemen on other occasions. Unfortunately for Naylor, he was later to have a rather spectacular fall from grace and be sentenced to four years hard labour for stealing gold while employed as sub-treasurer in Castlemaine. Once more, the division between gentlemanly and disreputable behaviour was exposed as being a very thin one in colonial Victoria.

During the Aberdeen trial, while under cross examination, Taylor admitted that he got 'excited' at land sales, but not apparently at the horse races. A witness, when asked if Taylor had been drinking, said that he may have 'had a glass or two of wine but was sober'. And so we learn, not unexpectedly for that era, that Frederick Taylor was a drinker and a follower of the turf. By chance, in March 1858, Taylor and Aberdeen ran into each other again after the incident on Mostyn Street, and they discussed the proceedings that had commenced by this time. Aberdeen offered to settle his action if Taylor would provide 100 guineas to the hospital and make a public apology in the newspapers. It might be imagined that Taylor would haughtily dismiss this kind of overture, but according to Aberdeen, 'he thought it was sufficient to say that he was sorry'.

In July 1859, Naylor himself was sued by Aberdeen for using threatening language against him. At this date, Taylor may have been overseas or out of the district as Naylor was described as managing his estate for him. A vivid character description of Taylor is provided in *The Argus* of 23 September 1858, in a piece taken from the *Mount Alexander Mail*. The article concerned land auctions at Strathloddon, owned by Taylor, and fated to be inundated with miners under the spell of gold fever.

He is the very embodiment of the squattocratic spirit. He regards wool as better than gold; a shepherd holds a stronger hold on his affections than a digger; he mourns the loss of the pastoral Arcady over which he ... reigned supreme ... and finds no solace in the presence of the powerful genii who have converted the solitudes of Strathloddon into a busy haunt of men and commerce. Strongly and sternly, and steadily he resisted the mighty tide of humanity which set in upon him. Like all autocrats he despised the warning that from time to time came from apparently insignificant oracles

... Mr Frederick Taylor, the squatter, has ceased to exist—let us hope that Mr Frederick Taylor, the landowner, who by breaking up his land, has laid the foundation of a large and prosperous township, will live to see it grow to its full proportions, and that in his new character he will learn the true value of that element which, beyond all else has given Victoria a place amongst the nations of the earth. In 1860, there was a new rush in the Strathloddon area and Taylor was leasing claims to Chinese miners. Six hundred men were reported to be digging on his land. Taylor's commercial speculation extended beyond the pastoral industry. In April 1860, *The Sydney Morning Herald* announced by a classified notice that Frederick Taylor of Castlemaine was appointed a provisional director of the Australian Stage Company. The notice lists a number of prominent colonists engaged in this venture to float an ultimately successful stage coach line in Victoria. Taylor was domiciled in Victoria during the 1850s, yet his interests in the Riverina led him to take up residence in New South Wales at some point around 1860. On 23 May 1863, His Excellency the Governor of NSW, with the advice of the Executive Council, appointed Frederick Taylor, of Burrabogie, Hay, as a magistrate of the colony, allowing the one-time alleged murderer of Aborigines to have magisterial status in two colonies. Melbourne

In 1859, Taylor was elected to membership of the Melbourne Club. A person becoming a member of the Melbourne Club 'outwardly demonstrated that he was a gentleman in good standing'. So there is cause to wonder how some prominent members, knowing Taylor's background, would have felt at the proposal to admit him. There were certainly individuals in the club in 1859 who could have recalled the questioning of his character at the highest levels. Taylor's membership was proposed by W.F.H. Mitchell, who later rose to become President of the Legislative Council and to be knighted for his contributions to public life. Mitchell was noted as an extreme conservative, a political stance no doubt shared by his nominee. It can be seen that Taylor had managed to acquire some important and influential friends and connections, as well as enemies, over the course of his life in Australia, and some were of less than democratic temper, not unusual for men who arrived before gold was officially discovered. It may give a hint of Taylor's social position that fellow Melbourne Club member Robert O'Hara Burke, who would have known Taylor from Castlemaine while posted there as a policeman, had sufficient confidence in Taylor's integrity and honesty to request that he deal with one of Burke's apparently numerous creditors, before the explorer set off on his epic cross-country expedition in 1860. That Taylor had not been able to arrange this successfully was a

cause of considerable distress to Burke as he rested at Swan Hill before moving northwards. On 14 May 1864, a partnership between R.J. and H.N. Loughnan and Frederick Taylor was dissolved. This was presumably the structure for ownership of Burrabogie station in the Riverina, and the ending of that partnership may have signified Taylor's move back to Victoria.

Along with throngs of other prominent Victorians, Taylor had obtained a card of entree to a levee at the Exhibition Buildings to celebrate the visit of the Duke of Edinburgh to Melbourne on 26 November 1867, the first royal visit to Australia and certainly the most important social event in the colony's history. Whether Taylor was present in Victoria at this time and able to accept the invitation is unclear as the *Mount Alexander Mail* noted in April 1867 that he had returned to Scotland 'some two years ago ... and is seriously ill at Edinburgh, and despairs of returning to the colony'. Taylor did come back to Victoria, and in the later 1860s, he retired to the Victorian coast after purchasing a stately seaside mansion that still proudly stands on the Brighton foreshore. The property Bonleigh, at 4 Bonleigh Avenue, has the year 1862 on its facade, suggesting that Taylor may not have erected the building, but purchased it, then extended and improved it, after taking possession. He lived here until his death, of 'nervous debility and exhaustion', on 14 January 1872.

Noting Frederick Taylor's passing, the *Mount Alexander Mail* provided a short account of his life in Central Victoria, mentioning how he had held land at Strathloddon in the early goldfield days, and had had 'many a scrimmage with the miners'. The paper records him as having some years back visited Scotland in an enfeebled state, so enfeebled and so affected by the climate in his native land that he returned to Australia, 'a confirmed invalid'. According to probate documents, Taylor left an estate of nearly £25,000. He granted life annuities to a sister and a female friend. The residue was to go to Henry Loughnan and Octavius Sparks. Sparks was a fellow squatter from his Gippsland days and had been living with Taylor at Brighton before his death. The *Mount Alexander Mail* reported in 1872 that Taylor's Scottish relatives were considering contesting the will, believing that evidence would show he was not in his right mind when it was made. The outcome of this challenge, if it was ever made, is unknown.

Conclusion

An intrepid pioneer in various districts of Victoria, yet a perpetrator of inhuman acts—branded by officialdom, but respected and welcomed by

his well-connected peers, Frederick Taylor became a financial and social success despite a very questionable past, and he remains an intriguing historical example of how the values and fluidity of our early frontier society allowed an individual to move quietly from being an outlaw to being a member of the social elite.

Whatever was known of his early record by those who socially promoted him, it offered no disqualification in the face of Frederick Taylor's undoubted capacity, energy and determination to achieve material goals in a frontier setting. His ultimate triumph speaks clearly about the values that were considered important by society's leaders in the foundation years of our state, and the divergence between these and government policies and practices of the time that were clearly devised to protect and support the Indigenous inhabitants. In the eyes of the pastoral elite, mistreatment and murder of Aborigines cast no serious reflection on the character of the white perpetrators, a view they managed to hold while professing Christian principles, and even occasionally, publically decrying and lamenting the injury inflicted upon Aboriginal victims of white crimes. Most understood, as Niel Black, who took over the Strathdownie run, acknowledged that the likes of Taylor had done them a favour by securing the land, and in some cases, saved them the trouble of getting involved in evil deeds themselves. Taylor was not the only colonist to recover and improve his fortunes after allegations of murder had been made against him. As a leading participant in the 1838 Myall Creek Massacre, station superintendent John Fleming effectively disappeared after the government had pursued, sent to trial, and eventually hanged, a number of the perpetrators of this particularly ghastly incident that took the lives of over thirty Aborigines. Fleming returned to the district two years later, climbed the social register and himself became a magistrate, living peacefully until 1894. The author would like to acknowledge the research work of Geoff Palmer, Michael Sturmfels, Florence Charles and Alycia Nevalainen.

NOTES

- 1 Victorian Death Certificate no. 1383, 14 January 1872.
- 2 John Adams, *Path Among the Years—History of the Shire of Bairnsdale*, Bairnsdale Shire Council, 1987, p. 16.
- 3 *Hobart Town Courier*, 7 August 1835.

- 4 Garryowen (Edmund Finn), *The Chronicles of Early Melbourne 1835–1852*, Melbourne, Ferguson and Mitchell, 1888, p. 566.
- 5 Foster Fyans, *Memoirs by Captain Foster Fyans*, Geelong, The Geelong Advertiser P/L, 1986, p. 208.
- 6 Statement of Taylor, 19 December 1836, in Michael Cannon (ed.), *The Aborigines of Port Phillip 1835–1839*, Historical Records of Victoria (HRV), Foundation series, vol. 2A, Melbourne, Victorian Government Printing Office, 1982, p. 59.
- 7 Statement of Taylor, 25 October 1836, Cannon, *The Aborigines of Port Phillip 1835–1839*, p. 56.
- 8 Geoff Palmer, *Geelong Advertiser*, 5 March 1988.
- 9 Michael Cannon, *The Aborigines of Port Phillip 1835–1839*, p. 57.
- 10 Geoff Palmer, *Geelong Advertiser*, 5 March 1988.
- 11 Minutes of residents' meeting, 1 June 1836, in Michael Cannon (ed.), *Beginnings of Permanent Government*, Historical Records of Victoria, Foundation series, vol. 1, Melbourne, Victorian Government Printing Office, 1981, p. 36.
- 12 A.G.L. Shaw, *A History of the Port Phillip District- Victoria before Separation*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1996, p. 112.
- 13 Statement of Freestun, 3 November 1836, in Cannon, *The Aborigines of Port Phillip 1835–1839*, p. 58.
- 14 Statement of Taylor, 25 October 1836, in Cannon, *The Aborigines of Port Phillip 1835–1839*, p. 56.
- 15 Lindsey Arkley, *The Hated Protector: The Story of Charles Wightman Sievwright— Protector of Aborigines, 1839–42*, Melbourne, Orbit Press, 2000, p. 35.
- 16 R v Whitehead 1837, NSW Sup. C. 10, Decisions of the Superior Courts of NSW, 1788–1899, Sydney, Macquarie University, www.law.mq.edu.au/research/colonial_caselaw/nsw/cases.
- 17 R v Whitehead.
- 18 Statement of Taylor, 19 December 1836, in Cannon, *The Aborigines of Port Phillip 1835–1839*, p. 59.
- 19 Statement of James Flitt, 25 October 1836, in Cannon, *The Aborigines of Port Phillip 1835–1839*, p. 57.
- 20 Diary of Victoria, 1999, R and L. Fletcher, Diary 3, .
- 21 Fyans, *Memoirs by Captain Foster Fyans*, p.209.
- 22 Lonsdale to Attorney-General, 29 January 1837, in Cannon, *The Aborigines of Port Phillip 1835–1839*, p. 60.
- 23 Cannon, *Beginnings of Permanent Government*, p. 218.
- 24 Fyans to the Colonial Secretary, 1 January 1838, in Cannon, *Beginnings of Permanent Government*, p. 234.
- 25 Stuart Sayers, *Captain Foster Fyans of Portland Bay District*, Victorian Historical Magazine, vol. 40, Melbourne, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, 1969.

- 26 Fyans, *Memoirs by Captain Foster Fyans*, p. 208.
- 27 Fyans, *Memoirs by Captain Foster Fyans*, p. 207.
- 28 Fyans to the Colonial Secretary, 1 January 1838, in Cannon, *Beginnings of Permanent Government*, p. 235.
- 29 T.F. Bride (ed.), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, Melbourne, Lloyd O'Neil P/L, 1983, p. 144.
- 30 Ian Clark, *Scars in the Landscape: a register of massacre sites in Western Victoria 1803–1859*, Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1995, p. 109.
- 31 G.A. Robinson to C. La Trobe 11 July 1839, in Clark, *Scars in the Landscape: a register of massacre sites in Western Victoria 1803–1859*, p. 113.
- 32 J. Orton, *Journal*, vol. 2, 1840–41, Mitchell Library A 1715, p.143–144.
- 33 Clark, p. 106.
- 34 Clark, p .107.
- 35 La Trobe to Gisborne, 20 November 1839, in Michael Cannon (ed.), *Aborigines and Protectors 1838–1839*, Historical Records of Victoria, Foundation series, vol. 2B, Melbourne, Victorian Government Printing Office, 1983, p. 662.
- 36 H. Gisborne to C. La Trobe, 29 December 1839, in Cannon, 1983, *Aborigines and Protectors 1838–1839*, p .663.
- 37 Clark, p. 111.
- 38 Charles Gray, *Reminiscences of a Pioneer—The Western District in the 1840s*, Hamilton, Hamilton Spectator, 1932, p. 5.
- 39 Dr Officer to G. Russell, September 1839, P.L. Brown (ed.), *Clyde Company Papers*, vol. 2, London, Oxford University Press, 1952, p. 267.
- 40 Journal of Niel Black, 1839-1840, MS. 11519, La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.
- 41 Michael Cannon, *Who Killed the Koories?*, Melbourne, Heinemann, 1990, p. 175.
- 42 Statement of Frederick Taylor, 5 March 1846, VPRS 19, Unit 80, File 449, handwritten notes made by Charles La Trobe on a document recording that Robinson had told him that Sievwright had issued a warrant.
- 43 Don Watson, *Caledonia Australis*, Sydney, William Collins P/L, 1984, p. 137.
- 44 Journal of Rev. J.J. Westwood, 10 October 1863, Melbourne, Clarkson, Shallard and Co., 1865, p. 358.
- 45 Adams, p. 20.
- 46 *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 February 1845.
- 47 Adams, p .15.
- 48 R.D. Boys, *First Years at Port Phillip*, Melbourne, Robertson and Mullen, 1959, p. 38.
- 49 Adams, p. 15.
- 50 *Port Phillip Patriot*, 5 September 1842.

- 51 G. Robinson to C. La Trobe, 14 December 1844, in Clark, *Scars in the Landscape: a register of massacre sites in Western Victoria 1803–1859*, p. 113.
- 52 Adams, p. 16.
- 53 C. Tyers to H. Loughnan, 29 March 1844, VPRS 19, Unit 62, File 1508, Melbourne, Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV).
- 54 C. Tyers to C. La Trobe, 20 May 1844, VPRS 19, Unit 62, File 1508, Melbourne, PROV.
- 55 E. Deas Thomson to C. La Trobe, 7 April 1846, VPRS 19, Unit 138, File 565, Melbourne, PROV.
- 56 J. Loughnan to C. La Trobe, 23 June 1844, VPRS 19, Unit 61, File 1257, Melbourne, PROV.
- 57 Adams, p. 18.
- 58 C. Tyers to C. La Trobe, 5 March 1846, VPRS 19, Unit 80, File 449, PROV.
- 59 G. Gipps to C. La Trobe, 3 April 1846, VPRS 19, Unit 80, File 565, Melbourne, PROV.
- 60 C. La Trobe to C. Tyers, 27 April 1846, in Clark, p. 117.
- 61 Statement of Frederick Taylor, 5 March 1846, VPRS 19, Unit 80, File 449, Melbourne, PROV.
- 62 R.V. Billis and A.S. Kenyon, *Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip*, Melbourne, Stockland Press, Melbourne, 1974, p. 148.
- 63 Ross Johnson, *Sentenced to Cross the Raging Sea—Story of Sam Johnson, Victim of Oldham's Bankside Riot of 1834*, Openbook Publishers, 2004 p. 171.
- 64 Hal Porter, *Bairnsdale—Portrait of a Country Town*, Sydney, John Ferguson, 1977, p. 147.
- 65 Adams, p. 17.
- 66 Porter, p. 147.
- 67 Raymond Bradfield, *A Century of Schooldays—1877–1977*, self pub., Vaughan, Victoria, 1977.
- 68 *Mount Alexander Mail*, 28 September 1855.
- 69 *MAM*, 27 May 1854.
- 70 *MAM*, 10 June 1854.
- 71 *Records of the Castlemaine Pioneers*, *MAM*, 29 August 1896, Melbourne, Rigby, 1972, p. 49.
- 72 Billis and Kenyon, p. 148.
- 73 Robert Ronald, *The Riverina: People and Properties*, Melbourne, F.W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1960, p. 88.
- 74 *The Argus*, 14 April 1858.
- 75 *Taylor's Paddock*, Rex Nan Kivell Collection Map NK 2456/323, National Library of Australia.
- 76 *MAM*, 19 February 1858 and 14 April 1858.
- 77 *MAM*, 29 August 1896.

- 78 *MAM*, 22 February 1856.
- 79 *The Argus*, 13 March 1856.
- 80 *The Argus*, 27 June 1855.
- 81 James Rangelov, *The Port Phillip Magistrates—1835–1851*, PhD Thesis, Melbourne Victoria University, 2005, online access.
- 82 *MAM*, 14 July 1858.
- 83 *MAM*, 14 July 1858.
- 84 *MAM*, 14 July 1858.
- 85 *MAM*, 14 July 1858.
- 86 *MAM*, 4 July 1859.
- 87 *MAM*, 14 July 1858.
- 88 *MAM*, 14 July 1858.
- 89 *The Argus*, 28 July 1862.
- 90 *MAM*, 14 July 1858.
- 91 *MAM*, 14 July 1858.
- 92 *MAM*, 4 July 1859.
- 93 *The Argus*, 23 September 1858.
- 94 *MAM*, July 1860.
- 95 *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 May 1860.
- 96 Mining surveyors' monthly reports, Castlemaine Mining District, Castlemaine.
- 97 *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 May 1863.
- 98 Ronald McNicoll, *The Early Years of the Melbourne Club*, The Hawthorn Press, Melbourne, 1976, p. 115.
- 99 Paul de Serville, *Rolf Boldrewood*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2000, p. 87.
- 100 Personal communication with the Melbourne Club, 2010.
- 101 'Mitchell, Sir William Henry Fancourt (1811–1884)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mitchell-sir-william-henry-fancourt-4214/text6789>.
- 102 De Serville, p. 25.
- 103 *The Argus*, 6 February 1926, containing letter from Burke dated 6 August 1860.
- 104 *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 July 1850.
- 105 *The Argus*, 27 November 1867.
- 106 *MAM*, 25 April 1867.
- 107 Personal observation.
- 108 Victorian Death Certificate no. 1383, 1872.
- 109 *MAM*, 30 January 1872.
- 110 Probate file, VPRS 7591, Consignment no. P0002, PROV.

111 Taylor's will dated August 1868, Probate file, VPRS 7591, Consignment no. P0002, PROV.

112 *MAM*, 23 October 1872.

113 Personal diary 1838-39, Records and Personal Papers of Niel Black, MS 8996, State Library of Victoria.

114 Peter Stewart, *Demons at Dusk*, Melbourne, Temple House, Melbourne, 2007, p. 297.

THE DEATH OF A HUTKEEPER NEAR GEELONG IN 1840: A NEW INVESTIGATIVE APPROACH

Beth D. Kicinski, Ian D. Clark and Teigan Arthur

Abstract

In February 1840, Assistant Protector Charles Sievwright investigated the murder of a hutkeeper—a ticket of leave man (a parolee restricted to a particular geographical location) named Michael ‘Micky’ Wilson—at an outlying hut on the Derwent Company’s Weatherboard Station near Geelong. Four years later, the murder was included in an official return sent from Superintendent La Trobe’s office of the number of European settlers killed by the Aborigines in the Port Phillip district since its occupation. The death received little attention in historical studies until it was listed in a 1974 publication of a table of suspected deaths of Europeans at the hands of Aborigines. This case study highlights the often discontinuous chain of evidence underpinning historical interpretations and demonstrates how earlier conflation of cultural collisions and frontier violence—in explorations of the nature of murder in Victoria’s early colonial history—may be overcome.

R. H. W. REECE, in his 1974 publication *Aborigines and Colonists*, included the death of a hutkeeper named Wilson, near Portland Bay in February 1840 (actually January 1840), among a list of possible interracial murders in Victoria in the 1830s and 1840s. This inclusion was drawn from an official list compiled by the Superintendent of the Port Phillip District in 1844.¹ Given the brevity of Reece’s entry, it is not surprising that awareness of Wilson’s fate and the circumstances of

his death have faded into obscurity. This is seen in the fact that his death is not discussed in local histories of the Geelong district, or in regional Aboriginal histories, with the exception of Critchett's study of frontier violence in western Victoria.²

In a recent polemical work, *The Invention of Terra Nullius*, Michael Connor accused historians who had researched frontier violence in colonial Australia of a one-sided engagement with Aboriginal massacre: they 'love massacre, that is, the killing of blacks by whites. The reverse doesn't interest them particularly'.³ Here is not the place to engage in a discussion with Connor as to the validity of this assertion, rather it is a first step to begin to examine, systematically, the purported killings of Europeans and other non-Aboriginal people in colonial Victoria by Aboriginal people. In this article, we take this case of a hutkeeper killed near Geelong in early 1840. Very little is known about this killing, but as will be revealed in this article, through conducting an empirical case study, in police-like fashion, we have been able to show reasonable doubt that Michael Wilson was killed by Aboriginal people.

In pursuing the case of the death of Michael Wilson, this article will follow the research framework developed by historical sociologist Jacques Semelin. Semelin's methodology applies to the investigation of massacre, but it can just as readily be applied to a single killing, because many of the same underlying issues apply.

Conducting empirical case studies on a particular massacre constitutes a preliminary and indispensable line of enquiry, to free the researcher from ideological and normative approaches. The facts need to be reconstructed almost as they would in a police investigation. Nevertheless this task is a difficult one because massacre is often carried out in secret. Also, the basic questions are always the same: who did the killing and gave orders to kill? Who is dead? Who can act as witness to what happened? This triptych of aggressor, victim and witness comprises the 'basic triangle' for any study of massacre, an inquiry that must clearly avail itself of the socio-historical background to oral accounts of events in addition to rounding up the written material available.⁴

To facilitate massacre research, Semelin developed a questionnaire that could also prove useful for undertaking this investigation into a purported event of interracial conflict resulting in the death of a single individual. Semelin's work *Purify and Destroy* was dedicated toward identifying a common line of inquiry through which the political uses of massacre could

be discovered. It seems unlikely that the death of a hutkeeper in Victoria in 1840 was the result of some larger, deliberately hidden political scheme. But like the larger and more recent events that Semelin's work was intended for, Michael Wilson's death is shrouded in secrecy and knowledge of the event survives in the public arena as a bare mention of something that may have occurred. The difficulty in establishing the factuality of any claim of an interracial murder is exacerbated by the time that has elapsed between the event and this investigation. Indeed, any records generated at the time of Wilson's death may not have survived. Therefore, it may be impossible to determine accurately the triptych of aggressor, victim and witness for this particular case. Allowing Semelin's questions to guide this investigation from its inception is no greater guarantee of success, but the structure his questionnaire provides will focus the search and help to restrict any discussion of the findings (and possible subsequent objections) to particular lines of inquiry. Thus, the ideological purpose of this work (to identify and weed out false notions of what is obvious about supposedly interracial murders in colonial Victoria) is restricted to addressing 'facts' contemporary to the case under review, rather than becoming embroiled in the already long-running debates about the fabrication of stories about Victoria's frontier massacres and killings.

Frontier violence in Victoria, in particular the death of Europeans and other non-Aboriginal people at the hands of Aboriginal people, has been considered by Christie, Nance, and Broome.⁵ Their estimations of the numbers of non-Aboriginal deaths range from 59 (Nance and Broome) to 200 (Christie).

The Victim—Michael Wilson

Semelin's guiding questions are: Who is the victim? Was the victim killed at random? How can we assess the victim by age, gender or occupation? Is it possible to produce a cartographic representation of the killing?

Michael Wilson was employed by the Derwent Company, whose holdings included a station (later known as Weatherboard Station) with the main house situated 'on the north side of Barwon Terrace, facing the Barwon River and east of Moorabool Street', near to where the Barwon Bridge was built.⁶ According to the New South Wales Convict Index, Michael Wilson was sentenced for an unascertained crime in 1826, transported to Van Diemen's Land aboard the *Mangles* and received his Certificate of Freedom in 1833.⁷ Yet the official records for the *Mangles* hold no reference to a

‘Michael Wilson’, nor to a male with the surname ‘Wilson’ transported in 1826.⁸ No other records have been found to explain his activities between that time and his murder. Curiously, beyond the official documents of the Aboriginal Protectorate, there is no record of his death.⁹

From all accounts, Michael Wilson was unremarkable. None of the major publications of documents from that time holds any information to suggest his murder may have been politically motivated or an act of revenge. His position as victim appears to be a random occurrence—suggesting that the killer, or killers, acted from desperation or sudden anger. Anyone can be pushed to the point of acting beyond the normal bounds of society. Regular ‘tales of depredation and of hostile and wanton attack’ made this frontier society an insecure one—for Aborigines and strangers alike.¹⁰ This, combined with a desperate need for food and supplies, provides the most likely motive for murder, with Michael Wilson being an unfortunate victim of circumstance and nothing more.

Modus operandi

Semelin’s guiding questions are: Can we break down the criminal procedure into clear-cut stages? What can be learned from the nature of the weapons used? Are the victims killed coldly and rationally or with savagery?

The description of the actions on the day of the murder places the crime at an outstation of Weatherboard, but no further clues have been found that enable us to locate the position of the hut. It is likely—because the depredations of the ‘natives’ had caused them to consolidate their stock for ease of security—the event occurred at Native Creek Hut No. 3, an outstation of Weatherboard. This hut was located near the confluence of Native Hut Creek and the Barwon River, probably somewhere to the north of the town now known as Teesdale.¹¹

Reconstructing the event from the two sworn statements only serves to underscore an interpretation that this was a random event. About the Saturday before the murder, two bushrangers had visited Anderson’s station and been promptly turned away. A break then occurs in the known timeline and reported ‘facts’ begin from two o’clock in the afternoon on 25 January 1840. At that time, Michael Wilson, Stephen Cassidy, John Dale, and a ‘Wardy Yallock’ Aboriginal man and two Aboriginal boys were present at the hut. Cassidy and Dale left to graze the sheep nearby. Not long after, William Shaw delivered rations to Wilson and left the outstation. Approximately four hours later—about one hour before sunset—John Dale



S. Prout.

J. Godfrey.

AUSTRALIAN SHEPHERD'S HUT.

'Australian Shepherd's Hut', (Skinner Prout & J. Godfrey) from Australia Illustrated, Edwin Carton Booth, London, Virtue and Company Ltd, c. 1873, vol. 1 division 3, facing p. 39. (RHSV Collection: BK6-0021.)

returned to the hut to fetch his coat. At speed, maybe five minutes later, he was back and told Cassidy that 'Micky' had been murdered. They headed the sheep for the home station, with Dale going on ahead to report the event. Cassidy and the flock had not yet reached the home station, when he was joined by a man named Myers, and they returned to the outstation hut with the sheep. It was dark when they arrived, and Cassidy saw Wilson's body for the first time. Sometime after that, he reports, he recovered a 'leangville' (or club) just 'a couple of yards from the body'. There is, then, another break in the records and the account is resumed from the memories of the overseer, Thomas Anderson. He first became aware of the murder sometime between nine and eleven that evening, when informed by Thomas Bailly, a man who had travelled from the home station to find

Anderson in Melbourne. They returned to the station that night, having left Melbourne around midnight, and arrived the following morning at daybreak. Anderson reported:

I found the body near the hut with the face downwards completely covered with blood the head being completely fractured he had one cut over his right eye, and one under one over his left eye, quite broached in and over and under the left ear—one on the top of the head—two behind the head—one of them through the skull and two cuts on the left arm. Every thing [sic] was taken away but three mattresses—his gun, ammunition rations blankets clothes etc. were carried off they (the murderers) left part of the flour a few yards from the hut about 60 pounds.¹²

At this point, Cassidy and the men searched for, but could not find ‘any foot marks or appearance of the Natives’.¹³ After this, the body was taken to the woolshed, which served as the local church, and buried.¹⁴

From Anderson’s account of Wilson’s corpse, this was a particularly gruesome and violent attack. Cassidy, too, observed many cuts to Wilson’s head and ‘one or two’ upon his arms, adding that they ‘appeared to have been made with a blunt instrument’. These injuries may be considered consistent with the reported weapon—the ‘leangville’ (or leangle).¹⁵ In 1894, anthropologist R. Etheridge jun. wrote about the ‘lesser known weapons’ that the Victorian version of the club differed from those found in other parts of Australia, because it had an obtuse end, rather than a sharply honed edge.¹⁶ Usually killing blows were delivered in an over-the-head action. But in the same article, Etheridge includes a reference to a report by Norwegian explorer and ethnographer Carl Lumholtz, who, during his travels in Australia, had seen fighters ‘try to hit the kidneys of their opponents’—as is consistent with the Aboriginal belief that a person’s soul rests within the kidney, so rendering this their most vulnerable point. Indeed, the removal of kidney fat from European victims was often a clear sign that Aboriginal people had participated in a retributive killing.

But the discovery of an Aboriginal weapon at the scene does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that Wilson was murdered by the ‘Wardy Yallock’ Aborigines—though there are some contemporary accounts of murders perpetrated by Aborigines that show similarities with the method of his killing. The descriptions of wounds to Peter Codd, murdered near Mt Rouse in May 1840, are eerily familiar:

One wound in the left ear, penetrating the brain; one wound immediately under the left eye; one wound on the left cheek; one wound above the left

eyebrow; one wound on chin; one wound across bridge of nose, severing the lower part, and cutting the upper lip; a wound along each side of nose; one wound into right eye; one wound with a ragged spear, entering the back of neck and penetrating through right breast; one wound on left knee; the whole of the back of skull beaten in, the bones protruding.¹⁷

Yet the murder of Peter Codd displayed one significant difference—a spear wound. And when Thomas Hayes was killed at one of Thomson's outstations at Lake Kielambete in June 1840, his neck was 'disjointed' and there were 'two deep cuts in his skull'.¹⁸ Again the Hayes story differs from that of Wilson's, because James Abbott witnessed the vicious attack by six Aboriginal men and—although he was momentarily incapacitated by them—after they had killed Hayes, they left without stealing any provisions. When Mr Chisholm's man was murdered at Mr Cropper's heifer station near the King River in April 1840, his 'skull was fractured by the blow of a tommyhawk', and he had wounds upon his hand—presumed to be defensive wounds. Yet the method was significantly different from the murder of Michael Wilson in that this victim was speared through the back and his killers had cut a circular piece of flesh from his abdomen.¹⁹ From the hut, they stole ammunition, flour and tea. When Donald McKenzie and Frederick Edinge were killed at McKenzie's station on the Crawford River in the Portland district in May 1842, both shepherds had spear wounds and McKenzie sustained a severe beating to his 'private parts'. Again the perpetrators stole provisions from the station.²⁰

While all of this information draws parallels to the gruesomeness of the attack on Michael Wilson, it does not suggest that Aborigines performed the awful deed. All it does is emphasise the nature of the weapon used to create the wounds described. The killer may have used a leangle, or a tomahawk or some other blunt and heavy object. Even if a leangle was used, there is no evidence that it was wielded by an Aborigine—for example, evidence in the form of other weapons used or ritual actions performed upon the corpse. In none of the descriptions of the killings listed above did the Aborigines leave behind their own tools or weapons. Only the knife used to cut the flesh from Mr Chisholm's man—a weapon not of Aboriginal manufacture—was left at the scene. It is curious, if Cassidy was correct in his statement that a leangle was left behind, that something so valuable and requiring time to replace would simply have been discarded.

Time Frame of the Killing

Semelin's guiding question is: Were there any premonitory signs or indicators of a break in the social tie between victims and their immediate environment?

The Derwent Company had experienced numerous collisions with the Aborigines during the time of operation before Wilson's murder. In an earlier incident in February/March 1836, whilst on their way with 'a pack-bullock laden with provisions' for the Derwent Company's Werribee Station, two unnamed station hands disappeared, but all of the stock and rations remained untouched.²¹ Their bones were found approximately one year later, at which time an old Aboriginal named 'Woolmurgen' (a clan head of the Wathawurrung balug clan) recounted to the Derwent Company manager and co-owner the manner of their death at the hands of a 'tribe of Aborigines near the Marradock Hill'.²² Then, on 8 May 1838, Aborigines stole, from the main station, a flock of 1,000 ewes—of which more than 50 were slaughtered or died from injuries. The Aborigines returned on 14 May and killed eight ewes and lambs. They returned on 19 May and again killed many of the lambs. As a consequence, five of the European station hands left the station and refused to return, because of their fear of the escalating violence displayed by the Aborigines on each subsequent visit.²³ Two soldiers were sent for protection, but the 'native' assaults continued further out on the Derwent Company's runs.²⁴ On 20 May 1838, a 'vast number of natives' attended an outstation on the River Leigh and were responsible for the theft, slaughter and maiming of a large number of sheep.²⁵ Again, on 30 May, 'about 50 natives' returned and slaughtered many lambs.²⁶ Then, after an attack on an outstation over the two days of 17–18 July 1839, a hutkeeper named Isaac Hall claimed, under oath, that one of the Aborigines had said 'that he would tomahawk the shepherds', and that the situation had become so threatening that he had run from the outstation, never to return.²⁷ (Although, in another sworn statement to Assistant Protector Charles Wightman Sievwright, he admitted he 'was always afraid of the Natives'.)²⁸ When the overseer went to the hut, he discovered the rations strewn about, but only a 'frying pan', 'three pint pots' and 'some of the blankets' were actually missing.²⁹ None of the stock had been harmed. Presumably, although no further incidents are mentioned in the texts consulted, the Aborigines did continue to harass the Derwent Company outstations.

Although the Derwent Company was managed and co-owned by a respectable gentleman named David Fisher, who had been ‘brought out from Midlothian by the Mercers’ and was held in high esteem by the local establishment, the company was conspicuous in a number of high profile cases of grievous actions by Aborigines. Fisher claimed to know an Aborigine who could ‘show where the bones of Messrs Gellibrand and Hesse are’ and identify the murderers, as well as ‘the native that murdered Mr Learmonth’s shepherd’. And a hutkeeper by the name of George Turvey bore witness to the drowning death of a young Aboriginal man in questionable circumstances.³⁰ Surprisingly though, Fisher’s name does not appear in the September 1839 published report of a ‘PUBLIC MEETING, GEELONG’, regarding ‘the purpose of taking into consideration the necessity of petitioning His Excellency Sir George Gipps to adopt some measures for the prevention of the aggressions of the Aborigines’.³¹ In fact, it was a common theme of statements by Derwent Company employees that they were instructed to never harm the ‘natives’, making the expressed sentiments of David Fisher very different from those of his closest friends in the Geelong District.

As early as 1836, dire predictions were being made by pillars of the community, such as George Mackillop, that ‘if some effectual steps be not shortly taken by the Government to put a stop to [murders of Europeans], there will be a war of extermination at Port Phillip’.³² Sentiments continued in this vein throughout the ensuing years. But the year 1839 brought about unprecedented change within the Western District of Port Phillip when the British government established the Aboriginal Protectorate—a small group of men empowered to act in a capacity that blended social work (bringing ‘heathen’ Aborigines to a Christian way of life) with general policing of the settler population. Assistant Protector Sievwright arrived in the Western District on 24 September 1839, basing himself at Geelong police magistrate Foster Fyans’ hut at Fyansford, near Geelong.³³ Later that month, Protectors Sievwright, Thomas and Dredge took charge of five men each in an attempt to form an Aboriginal Protectorate Police force, a situation which led to increased conflict between the Aborigines and the Europeans, as the protectors were seen by the wider European community to be acting against their best interests.³⁴ The situation became so volatile towards the end of the year that the Governor took the unprecedented step of authorising Sievwright to ‘hire a horse’ to facilitate investigation of a reported outrage—an action previously refused to all the protectors.³⁵

Who Has Done the Killing?

Semelin's guiding questions are: Can we establish a killer profile in greater detail? What were their motives? What economic stakes might be involved?

Although the murder of Michael Wilson was briefly investigated by Assistant Protector Sievwright, resulting in two witness statements and one official report about the 'enquiries made', there appears to have been no search to determine the killer and submit them to the legal system.³⁶ However, from the statements, it has been possible to establish that many people had the opportunity to murder the hutkeeper.

Two shepherds were detailed to work with Wilson at the outstation where he died. These men were shepherding that afternoon and were never 'further from the hut than four or five hundred yards'.³⁷ Stephen Cassidy was a former convict, deported from Lancaster to Van Diemen's Land on 25 June 1830 aboard the *Royal George*, who became a free man in 1834—after serving a seven-year sentence.³⁸ The other shepherd, John Dale, may have arrived in the Australian colonies in either 1820 (aboard the *Marquis of Wellington*) or 1828 (aboard the *Boyne*).³⁹ He, also, was a former convict who had received a Certificate of Freedom. Both, being free men, would likely have been programmed to want to avoid trouble by years of heavy-handed treatment by the zealous authorities. They would have seen the harsh treatment proffered to the assigned men and sought to avoid a new conviction.⁴⁰ Dale was the one to report the 'discovery' of the body. This alone is reason enough to consider the possibility that he committed the murder. By today's standards, it seems curious that no witness statement was taken from Dale, suggesting that important details may be missing from the record about the state of the scene before any subsequent, unthinking interference.

It was stated that three Aborigines were in Wilson's presence the last time he was seen alive. These three, a man and two boys, lived along the 'Wardy Yallock' Creek.⁴¹ This claim is vague and no stories have been recorded to suggest that Wilson had given any Aborigines reason to kill him—and, amongst the Aborigines, it was commonly held that violence should occur only with proper reason.⁴² Although, by this time, the Derwent Company already had a considerable history of problems with the local Aboriginal population, it had strictly remained an issue of stock losses and not injuries to people. Katherine Kirkland, in her well-known record of her travels through the district, wrote of January 1839:

... we saw some of the natives; they are very ugly and dirty. Some of them wore skins sewed together, and thrown over their shoulders; a few of them had some old clothes given them by the settlers; and some were naked. They kept peeping in at the windows to see us, and were always hanging about the huts. Mrs Fisher called them civilised natives, and said they were always about the place.⁴³

So, although a military presence had been maintained on the station for months before the murder, it does not seem to have been out of fear that the local Aborigines would harm the European settlers, further advancing the unlikelihood of the Aborigines being the perpetrators of Wilson's death.⁴⁴

Another person present that day, a man named William Shaw (possibly the station's storekeeper), was said to have delivered rations to Wilson 'about two o'clock' and then left the outstation.⁴⁶ As with John Dale, there was no witness statement procured—so it can only remain an assumption that Shaw actually delivered the goods and that Wilson was alive when last he saw him. No further record has been found to explain Shaw's movements after 25 January 1840; he apparently played no part in any further outrages, and this could be taken as an indication of the man's lawful nature.

One more possibility remains. The overseer, Thomas Anderson, in his statement to Sievwright reported that approximately one week prior to the murder, bushrangers, one 'acknowledging himself' as a late servant of Captain Fyans, had been at the station asking for handouts.⁴⁶ The Port Phillip District had been frequented by bushrangers for quite some time. In 1839, the mounted police captured 322 bushrangers and absconders in the Port Phillip District—a large number of these around Geelong.⁴⁸ Significantly, only three weeks after the Wilson murder, C.J. Tyers, surveyor, recorded in his diary that several 'runaway prisoners are stated to have passed [Mr Wedge's] station lately on their way to Adelaide, among others Captain Fyans' servant', giving credence to Anderson's claim, as Wedge's station lay westerly of the Derwent Company station on the route from Port Phillip to Adelaide.⁴⁸ Benjamin Cross had been Captain Fyans' assigned servant—a man sentenced to life imprisonment and transportation, who had become the trusted servant of Fyans' predecessor in command of Norfolk Island, and then apparently Fyans' own trusted confidant.⁴⁹ (All this, despite the fact that he continued in his occupation of thievery.)⁵⁰ Then, late in January 1840, Cross had conspired with a government blacksmith and assigned servant named John Lomax to steal £300 worth of property from Fyans and escape to South Australia.⁵¹ The next officially confirmed knowledge

of Cross's whereabouts occurred with his apprehension in Adelaide on 25 March 1840.⁵² On consideration of the timeline alone, Ben Cross and the bushrangers with whom he travelled become strong suspects for murder.

Considering the nature of the crime—as demonstrated in the *Modus operandi* discussion—the murder occurred without typical signs of ritual death. If it was perpetrated by the Aborigines, it was done so without the usual indications of *why* it was done. Similarly, if the murder was perpetrated by Europeans, there were no obvious signs of a personal reason for the killing. Perhaps more telling than the murder or the identity of the victim is Stephen Cassidy's description of the scene of the crime.

Upon entering the hut, it was all in confusion most of the things taken away, bedding blankets etc. gone. In the hut there were 250 lbs of flour about half a sheep, about two lbs of tea and seven lbs of sugar, which were taken away. Next day we found a short distance from the hut about 100 weight of flour in a bag, with a pannikin near it, I endeavoured with the other men to discover if there were any marks upon the ground of struggling by the deceased, but could see nothing nor could we discover any foot marks or appearance of the Natives.⁵³

Thus theft would seem to be the primary motive for the crime. Which is not surprising, when a 'distressing drought' had been afflicting the district for over a year; many Aborigines had been forced from their land towards settlements; harsh punishment had ticket of leave men and women running away; and rations for workers were often inappropriately meagre and sporadically supplied.⁵⁴ It would be easy, at the mention of the Aborigines and the added detail of a leangle being seen at the scene, to suggest that this was a murder committed by them. Such assumptions were common, as in the example recorded in the *Journal* of William Thomas:

9 August 1839 / Made a report on Mr James Smith, overseer, said to be killed at Geelong. Proved false rumour. See Mr Smith who evidently has unfavourable opinion of the Aborigines, although he acknowledged to have never received any injury from them, but on one occasion when lost had been kindly treated by them.⁵⁵

With the added knowledge that bushrangers had been present in the district, corroborated by Tyers' diary entry, the likelihood that the Aborigines were responsible decreases and men who had already shown themselves disposed to criminal activity may become the major suspects. Anderson's added detail that part of the flour that was stolen had been left

a few yards from the hut adds weight to the argument against suspecting the Aborigines; for it seems unlikely that people who were used to having to carry everything themselves—no pack horses or carts at their disposal—would take something they would not be able to haul all the way to their destination.

Political and Media Effects

Semelin's guiding questions are: Was there a desire to hide the killing or to make it public? How does news of the killing spread? Was the killing committed in order to frighten potential victims? Or to make them flee a coveted territory?

The murder of Michael Wilson failed to elicit the interest of the local press. Unlike with other murders, no editorial column inches were spared to expound theories of likely culprits. Instead, the spread of news was restricted to official documents and hearsay or gossip.⁵⁶ On 8 February 1840, a notice appeared in the *Port Phillip Gazette* for a 'MEETING of the settlers in the District of Geelong ... for the purpose of considering the best means of remedying the evils arising from the aggressions of the Aborigines'.⁵⁷ This time, David Fisher's name was attached to the notice. Perhaps this was an indication that Michael Wilson's murder had finally given him reason to consider the threat posed by the Aborigines. Or he may have been motivated by a desire to mitigate expressions of violence by other colonists towards the Aborigines. Or he may have been motivated by the simple need to protect his stock from further depredations. No notes for the meeting were published, so it is only possible to speculate about his intentions. Yet such was the import of the meeting that, two weeks later, Chief Protector Robinson heard about it during a visit to the Loddon Protectorate district.⁵⁸

Aftermath Narratives

Semelin's guiding questions are: On the part of witnesses, who knows what really happened? What does structural analysis of official accounts and newspaper accounts reveal? On the part of any survivors, who can speak? Who can recount the horror? How best to separate reality from distortion, or sheer fabrication? On the part of the perpetrators, is there negation and denial, or justification for the crime?

A number of local histories have been written that could reasonably be expected to include mention of this event. The murder of Michael Wil-

son is not discussed in any of the local histories: *The History of Geelong and Corio Bay; Mysteries, Motives and Murders of Early Geelong and District, 1839–1887* and *Tales from Old Geelong*.⁵⁹ The Wilson murder also makes no appearance in *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria 1835–86*.⁶⁰ Curiously, though, in their 1994 publication, Lakic and Wrench included the Michael Wilson murder in a chapter titled ‘Aggressions Committed by Aborigines’.⁶¹ It seems that the murder held so little interest for the local population that, not only did it fail to elicit journalistic attention, but it also did not earn a place in the local mythology, which suggests that, at the time, there was nothing about the event that warranted undue interest. Rumour and innuendo were guaranteed to lend a legendary status to some frontier happenings: as, for example, with never confirmed stories of a man named George Robinson, who became notorious in the district for ‘brutal and violent behaviour’ towards the Aborigines, including an instance where he is purported to have ‘deliberately placed [an Aboriginal] child on a fire and kicked another to death’. Although many enquiries were made by Chief Protector Robinson, no proof was ever found that these claims were true.⁶² Yet, though this murder seems so insignificant in the grander scheme of Victorian colonial history, it must surely have had serious implications for some of those involved.

As overseer of the property, it could be expected that Thomas Anderson would provide witness to the murder. Being a gentleman—he was a brother-in-law of the well-known station-owner Henry Anderson and co-partner in a Port Phillip stock-management firm—he had a certain standing within the community and would have made every effort to maintain the respect of his peers.⁶³ He would also have had to negotiate the tensions inherent in his position—between increasing the profitability of the business and ensuring conditions were conducive to a stable workforce. The Government’s increasingly difficult rulings about appropriate land allotments and uses—a reflection of the fact that land in the Port Phillip District was, at that time, the most valuable land in the colony of New South Wales—were already moving some ‘distinguished settlers’ towards insolvency, as it became more difficult and costly to run the large flocks of sheep they had become accustomed to during the less regulated years of the early arrivals.⁶⁴ At the same time, the Derwent Company had experienced increasing pressure from Assistant Protector Sievwright to perform the difficult task of exemplary interactions with the Aborigines. Anderson would have been aware that any scent of trouble could bring unwanted repercussions for

the station—as Sievwright had sent Fisher a letter reminding him that the protector’s power as magistrate meant that he could revoke the Company’s depasturing licence.⁶⁵

All manner of questions could be raised about the validity of Stephen Cassidy’s statement. To answer any of them would require a better knowledge of the man. To know what crime he was convicted of might suggest an obvious reason to believe him, or not. When other, more immediate witnesses were not presented to Sievwright, it suggests that Anderson (and maybe even Fisher) had reason to supply him as a witness and not the others. It may have been simply because the others were unavailable—having left the station by the time Sievwright arrived. Or it may have been an honest attempt to be helpful by providing a more reliable witness. Or it may have been a more sinister attempt to provide a witness who would say what they needed him to say. The reasons will probably always remain unknown.

Perhaps strangest of all is the seeming inaction on the part of Assistant Protector Sievwright. Despite all of the rumours of weak character which accompanied him throughout his short career as a Protector of Aborigines, he remained a man dedicated to the discipline and ‘rightness’ he had learned during his military career—as attested in a letter from Sir George Arthur to Lord Glenelg.⁶⁶ This same dedication had brought him to loggerheads with other officials on a number of occasions.⁶⁷ Particularly where he felt that investigations had not been thoroughly carried out to determine the exact nature of events and the guilt of the accused—as in the murder at Keilambete of Thomas Hayes and the trial of Thomas Hunt.⁶⁸ The Aborigines considered him a ‘good’ man, and he had good reasons to suspect that the Derwent Company men were acting against the wellbeing of the Aborigines.⁶⁹ It seems unlikely that, if the Aborigines were suspected, he would simply walk away from the case. Possibly a letter he wrote to Chief Protector G.A. Robinson ‘[r]elative to enquiries made at an out station of the Derwent Company regarding the death of one of their servants’ might explain why he didn’t follow through, but the research for this article has been unable to uncover a copy of the text, only an index entry about the letter’s existence.⁷⁰ So inconsistencies and curiosities about his actions have to remain unexplained.

Conclusion

This case study is an example of an event that has been included in official headcounts of deaths of Europeans and other non-Aboriginal people at the hands of Aboriginal people in colonial Victoria, yet, when carefully examined, it becomes less certain whether the 1840 death of Michael Wilson, hutkeeper near Geelong, legitimately belongs on such lists. Through a careful application of Semelin's research methodology for empirical analysis of massacres and killings, we have shown that comparative evidence suggests reasonable doubt that the victim was killed by local Aboriginal people and that it seems equally likely he was killed by fellow Europeans.

The *modus operandi* of the crime supports the conclusion that theft and robbery was the primary motive. The goods that were stolen included a gun, ammunition, rations, blankets and clothes—all items that would be attractive to people who needed supplies and a fast getaway. Three mattresses, for example, were left behind.

However, this alone does not preclude Aboriginal involvement in the alleged crime. A careful analysis of the social context of Michael Wilson's death has identified two assigned servants, Benjamin Cross, a servant of Captain Foster Fyans, and John Lomax, a government blacksmith, who had motive and opportunity for the murder of a lone hutkeeper. After robbing Fyans of a relative fortune, they absconded and fled to South Australia—apparently visiting the Derwent Company's station asking for handouts, a week prior to the murder. Although an Aboriginal weapon, a leangle, was purportedly found at the crime scene, the testimonies fail to state whether the weapon was used in the attack—it is not stated if it is bloodstained, thus its presence at the scene may simply be coincidental or possibly carefully placed by the perpetrators to shift the blame to local Aboriginal people. Indeed, the object concerned may not have been an Aboriginal weapon, but simply a wooden item that looked like a leangle.

The leangle serves to remind us that, as with any historical reconstruction of past events, appearances may not always be what they seem. Indeed, we argue here that this is one death that is unlikely to have been at the hands of Aboriginal people. It raises the question of how many other purported deaths of non-Aboriginal people in colonial Victoria that have been attributed to Aboriginal people are able to withstand careful scrutiny.

NOTES

- 1 R.H.W. Reece, *Aborigines and Colonists: Aborigines and Colonial Society in New South Wales in the 1830's and 1840's*, Sydney, University of Sydney Press (USP), 1974, p. 220; *NSW Votes & Proceedings of the Legislative Council*, 1844, vol. 1, pp. 717–19.
- 2 Jan Critchett, *A 'Distant Field Of Murder': Western District Frontiers 1834–1848*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press (MUP), 1990, p. 90.
- 3 M. Connor, *The Invention of Terra Nullius: Historical and Legal Fictions on the Foundations of Australia*, Sydney, Macleay Press, 2005, p. 128.
- 4 J. Semelin, *Purify and Destroy: the Political Uses of Massacre and Genocide*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2007, p. 336; L. Ryan, 'Settler massacres on the Port Phillip Frontier, 1836–1851', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 34, no. 3, 2010, pp. 257–73. Ryan applies Semelin's typology in an analysis of written records and concludes that massacres of Aboriginal people in colonial Port Phillip were widespread.
- 5 M. Christie, *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria, 1835–1886*, Sydney, USP, 1979; B. Nance, 'The level of violence: Europeans and Aborigines in Port Phillip 1835–1850', *Historical Studies*, vol. 19, no. 77, 1981, pp. 533–52; R. Broome, 'The statistics of frontier conflict', in B. Atwood & S.G. Foster (eds), *Frontier Conflict—the Australian Experience*, Canberra, National Museum of Australia, 2003, pp. 88–98.
- 6 C.E. Sayers (ed.), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers: Being a Series of Papers on the Early Occupation of the Colony, the Aborigines, etc.*, Melbourne, Heinemann, 1969, p. 46; P.L. Brown (ed.), *The Narrative of George Russell of Golf Hill with Russelliana and Selected Papers*, London, Oxford University Press, 1935, p. 166.
- 7 Elizabeth Janson, 'Isaac Wilson', *Came to Port Phillip by 1849*, <http://vic1847.com.au/w/w21.html>, 13 August 2011; State Government of New South Wales, 'Michael Wilson—Births 1789 to 1841', *NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages—Historical Index Search*, <http://www.bdm.nsw.gov.au/cgi-bin/IndexSearch?form=IndexingSearch&SessionID=29129717&sname=wilson&gname=michael&fname=&mname=&event=births&frange=1789&trange=1841&place>, 12 August 2011; State Gov. NSW, 'Wilson — Births 1789 to 1841', *NSW Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages—Historical Index Search*, <http://www.bdm.nsw.gov.au/cgi-bin/IndexSearch?form=IndexingSearch&cgiurl=%2Fcgi-bin%2FIndex%2FIndexingBirth.cgi&sname=wilson&gname=&fname=&mname=&event=deaths&frange=1840&trange=1840&place=&SessionID=29113412&x=52&y=13>, 11 August 2011; State Gov. NSW, 'Convict Index: Michael Wilson', *Search our Indexes Online—State Records NSW*, <http://srwww.records.nsw.gov.au/indexsearch/searchhits.aspx?table=ConvictIndex&ID=65&query=michaelwilson&frm=0>, 10 August 2011.
- 8 State Library of Queensland (SLQ), 'Transported on ship Mangles (1–4)'.
- 9 Geelong Cemeteries Trust, 'Michael Wilson', *Deceased Search*, <http://www.gct.net.au/Mapping/Default.aspx>, accessed 14 August 2011; Dianne Hughes, *Lone Burials*, <http://zades.com.au/gandd/images/stories/pdfs/LoneB.pdf>, 10 August 2011.

- 10 Michael Cannon (ed.), 'Aborigines and Protectors 1838–1839', *Historical Records of Victoria: Foundation Series: The Aborigines and Protectors 1838–1839*, vol. 2B, Melbourne, Victorian Government Printing Office (VGPO), 1982, p. 647.
- 11 Cannon, pp. 83–84; Google, 'Native Hut Creek, Teesdale, Victoria', *Google Maps*, <http://maps.google.com.au/maps?hl=en&tab=wl>, 19 September 2011.
- 12 Mira Lakic & Rosemary Wrench (eds), *Through Their Eyes: an Historical Record of Aboriginal People of Victoria as Documented by the Officials of the Port Phillip Protectorate 1839–1841*, Melbourne, Museum of Victoria, 1994, p. 80.
- 13 Lakic & Wrench, p. 81.
- 14 Brown, p. 166.
- 15 Ian D. Clark (ed.), *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector, Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate, Volume One: 1 January 1839–September 1840*, Beaconsfield, Heritage Matters, 1998, p. 61; R.M.W. Dixon, W.S. Ramson & M. Thomas in *Australian Aboriginal Words in English: Their Origin And Meaning*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 178.
- 16 R. Etheridge Jr, 'On a Modification of the Australian Aboriginal Weapon, Termed the Leonile, Bendi, or Buccan, &c.', *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. 23, 1894, p. 317.
- 17 Critchett, p. 90.
- 18 Lindsey Arkley, *The Hated Protector: The Story of Charles Wightman Sievwright Protector of Aborigines 1839–42*, Mentone, Orbit Press, 2000, pp. 65–66.
- 19 Clark, *Journals*, p. 273, p. 280.
- 20 Critchett, pp. 90–93.
- 21 Sayers, p.39.
- 22 Ian D. Clark, *Aboriginal Languages and Clans: an Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria, 1800–1900*, Melbourne, Department of Geography and Environmental Science, Monash University, 1990, p. 281, p. 333; Sayers, p. 39.
- 23 Cannon, vol. 2B, pp. 643–644.
- 24 Cannon, vol. 2B, p. 645.
- 25 Michael Cannon (ed.), 'Aborigines of Port Phillip 1835–1839', *Historical Records of Victoria: Foundation Series: The Aborigines of Port Phillip 1835–1839*, vol. 2A, Melbourne, VGPO, 1982, p. 304.
- 26 Cannon, vol. 2A, p. 306.
- 27 Cannon, vol. 2B, p. 648.
- 28 Lakic & Wrench, pp. 74–75.
- 29 Lakic & Wrench, pp. 74–77.
- 30 A.G.L. Shaw, *A History of the Port Phillip District: Victoria before Separation*, Carlton South, MUP, 1996, p. 87; Cannon, vol. 2A, p. 280, pp. 290–91.
- 31 *Port Phillip Gazette 1838–1841, vol. 2*, Mona Vale, Stephen Lansdown & Company, 1979, p. 2156.

- 32 Cannon, vol. 2A, pp. 40–41.
- 33 Cannon, vol. 2B, p. 432.
- 34 Cannon, vol. 2B, p. 490; I.D. Clark, 'Antecedent force: the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate Domestic European Constabulary, 1840–1843', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 76, no. 1, 2005, pp. 68–82.
- 35 Cannon, p. 661.
- 36 Lakic & Wrench, p. 80; Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV), 1168138885, *Public Record Office Victoria online catalogue*, [http://access.prov.vic.gov.au/public/component/daPublicBaseContainer?Component=daViewItem&breadcrumbPath=Home/Access the Collection/Browse The Collection/Item Details&entityId=1168138885](http://access.prov.vic.gov.au/public/component/daPublicBaseContainer?Component=daViewItem&breadcrumbPath=Home/Access%20the%20Collection/Browse%20The%20Collection/Item%20Details&entityId=1168138885), 14 August 2011.
- 37 Lakic & Wrench, p. 80.
- 38 SLQ, 'Stephen Cassidy', *Convict Records*, <http://www.convictrecords.com.au/convicts/cassidy/stephen/106919>, 16 August 2011; State Government of Tasmania, 'Stephen Cassidy', *Archives Office of Tasmania—Portal*, 2011, <http://portal.archives.tas.gov.au/menu.aspx?search=11>, 16 August 2011.
- 39 State Gov. Tas., 'John Dale', *Archives Search Portal*, <http://portal.archives.tas.gov.au/menu.aspx?search=11>, 30 August 2011; State Gov. NSW, 'Convict Index: John Dale', *Search our Indexes Online—State Records NSW*, [http://srwww.records.nsw.gov.au/indexsearch/searchhits.aspx?table=Convict Index&ID=65&query=john dale&frm=0](http://srwww.records.nsw.gov.au/indexsearch/searchhits.aspx?table=Convict%20Index&ID=65&query=john%20dale&frm=0), 30 August 2011.
- 40 Frank Crowley, 'Colonial Australia 1788–1840', *A Documentary History of Australia*, vol. 1, Melbourne, Thomas Nelson Australia, 1980, pp. 564–67.
- 41 Critchett, pp. 98–99.
- 42 Critchett, pp. 98–99.
- 43 K. Kirkland, 'Life in the Bush. By a Lady.' *Chambers's Miscellany of Useful and Entertaining Tracts*, vol. 1. No. 8, pp. 1–39, London, William and Robert Chambers, 1845, p. 4.
- 44 Cannon, vol. 2B, p. 645.
- 45 Lakic & Wrench, p. 80.
- 46 Lakic & Wrench.
- 47 Shaw, pp. 91–92; although in Michael Cannon (ed.), 'The Crown, the Land and the Squatter 1835–1840', *Historical Records of Victoria: Foundation Series: The Aborigines of Port Phillip 1835–1839*, vol. 6, Melbourne, VGPO, 1982, p. 202, the introduction to Chapter 9: 'The First Mounted Police in Port Phillip' states 322 was the total captured for NSW, not Port Phillip.
- 48 Cannon, vol. 6, p. 365; P.L. Brown (ed.), *Memoirs Recorded at Geelong, Victoria Australia by Captain Foster Fyans (1790–1870) Transcribed from his Holographs Manuscript Given by Descendants to the State Library Melbourne 1962*, Geelong, Geelong Advertiser, 1986, pp. 157–161.
- 49 SLQ, 'Convict Records: Benjamin Cross', *Convict Records*, <http://www.convictrecords.com.au/convicts/cross/benjamin/103100>, 17 November 2011; Paul Mullaly, *Crime in the Port Phillip District 1835–51*, Melbourne, Hybrid Publishers, 2008, pp. 604–605.

- 50 State Records NSW, 'Balcombe, W to Balfour, J', *Colonial Secretary Index, 1788–1825*, http://colsec.records.nsw.gov.au/indexes/colsec/b/F03c_ba-05.htm, 27 February 2013; SRNSW, 'Sabbath to Sallows', *Colonial Secretary Index, 1788–1825*, http://colsec.records.nsw.gov.au/indexes/colsec/s/F50c_sa-sf.htm, 27 February 2013; SRNSW, 'Cronin, John to Cross, C', *Colonial Secretary Index, 1788–1825*, http://colsec.records.nsw.gov.au/indexes/colsec/c/F14c_cr-cy-06.htm#P2794_83310, 27 February 2013.
- 51 Mullaly, pp. 604–605.
- 52 'Robbery of Captain Fyans...', *South Australian Register*, 28 March 1840, p. 4; 'Robbery of Captain Fyans...', *South Australian*, 2 April 1840, p. 4.
- 53 Lacic & Wrench, p. 81.
- 54 *Port Phillip Gazette 1838–1841*, vol. 1, Mona Vale, Stephen Lansdown & Company, 1979, p. 1102.
- 55 Cannon, vol. 2B, p. 534.
- 56 PROV, VPRS 13172/P0001/1/105 & VPRS 13172/P0001/1/106; Clark, *Journals*, p. 197.
- 57 *Port Phillip Gazette 1838–1841, Volume 3*, Mona Vale, Stephen Lansdown & Company, 1979, p. 3154.
- 58 Clark, *Journals*, p. 178; Shaw, p. 127.
- 59 W.R. Brownhill, *The History of Geelong and Corio Bay*, Melbourne, Wilke & Co., 1955; *Mysteries, Motives and Murders of Early Geelong & District 1839–1887*, Geelong, Geelong Family History Group, 2001; James Leslie Blake, *Tales from Old Geelong*, Belmont, Neptune Press Pty Ltd, 1979.
- 60 M.F. Christie, *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria 1835–86*, Sydney, USP, 1979.
- 61 Lacic & Wrench, pp. 80–81.
- 62 Critchett, p. 33.
- 63 Brown, *Narrative*, p. 191.
- 64 Cannon, vol. 6, pp. 58–60; Shaw, pp. 163–165.
- 65 Cannon, vol. 2B, pp. 657–658.
- 66 Cannon, pp. 368–373, p. 383, p. 445; Clark, *Journals*, p. 15, p. 55, p. 163; Cannon, vol. 2A, p. 33.
- 67 Arkley, pp. 26–27; Clark, *Journals*, p. 33, p. 45, p. 53; Shaw, p. 122.
- 68 Arkley, pp. 82–83; Cannon, vol. 2B, pp. 654–657.
- 69 Clark, *Journals*, p. 160.
- 70 PROV, VPRS 13172/P0001/1/107.

**SCOTTISH IDENTITY IN STONE:
STATUES OF ROBERT BURNS AND WILLIAM WALLACE IN
19TH CENTURY BALLARAT**

Ben Wilkie

Abstract

The statues of both Robert Burns and William Wallace, erected in the provincial Victorian gold mining town of Ballarat in the late-nineteenth century, are a unique entry point into the world of diasporic Scottish culture. They were physical icons of identity—designed, executed, and interpreted to reflect hybrid Scottish, British and Australian ethnic identities. The intellectual and ideological re-imagining of both Burns’ and Wallace’s positions in Scottish tradition and history enabled Scots to present their lives and works in ways that accommodated both Scottish and British loyalty in an Australian colonial setting.

Introduction

EXPRESSIONS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY in the Scottish diaspora have been marked by dynamism and diversity. Historians have explored a variety of manifestations of Scottish culture in Australia, including religion, literature, sport, dancing, food and drink, and ethnic associations and celebrations. An emerging field of interest in Australia is the way in which Scottish culture has been ‘written’ on the built environment.¹ The statues of both Robert Burns and William Wallace, erected in the provincial Victorian gold mining town of Ballarat in the late-nineteenth century, are a unique entry point into the world of diasporic

Scottish culture. Importantly, the Burns statue in Ballarat was one of the first in Australia, while the Wallace statue was the first to be built outside Scotland—the second was a monument in Baltimore’s Druid Hill Park.²

There are over 160 statues of Robert Burns around the world and eight were erected in Australia between 1883 and 1935: in Camperdown (1883), Ballarat (1887), Adelaide (1894), Melbourne (1904), Sydney (1905), Brisbane (1929), and Canberra (1935), while Bendigo has a bust (1911). In other areas of Scottish settlement, the United States has sixteen Burns statues, Canada has nine, and New Zealand, four.³ The Ballarat case provides a useful example because it is home to two statues of Scottish heroes. Both were erected in the same decade at the height of Burns memorialisation, and the same Scot—John Nimmo—unveiled both and spoke at the opening ceremonies. On the statues and in the speeches accompanying their unveiling in Ballarat, we find the manifestation of hybrid Scottish, British and Australian identities. What makes this case interesting is the intellectual and ideological positioning of both Burns’ and Wallace’s positions in Scottish tradition and history, and how the cultural identities manifested in these statues compared to other similar memorials in Australia and around the world. Such monuments are physical icons of identity, designed, executed and interpreted in a way that reflects national and regional identities. In Ballarat, the perceived universality of Burns and Wallace enabled some Scots to interpret their lives and works in ways that accommodated both Scottish and British loyalty in an Australian colonial setting.

Scottishness, Britishness and Symbols of Ethnicity

Statues such as those examined in this article are, in Pierre Nora’s words, *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory where ‘memory crystallises and secretes itself’, because there are no longer *milieu de mémoire*, or real environments of memory.⁴ In a sense, these particular statues are static symbols of a faraway homeland. Public monuments and statues commemorating figures from Scotland’s past are representative of the process by which migrants create or recreate symbolic traditions of ethnicity in their adopted countries, often disconnected from the historical realities of their homeland and set apart from their everyday lives.⁵ Sometimes, however, symbolic traditions do intersect with a migrant’s social and political environment. As suggested in Max Weber’s concept of ‘social closure’, ethnicity can be instrumental in itself for a migrant group. The invocation of ethnicity—and

the establishment of rules, practices and boundaries—in the process of self-identification can be a strategic choice made by migrants for social, economic, or political security.⁶

As lasting and highly visible statements of culture and identity, statues and monuments are particularly pertinent examples of social closure. As Kirk Savage has observed, monuments are integral to understanding the creation and negotiation of cultural identity, because they ‘impose a permanent memory on the very landscape within which we order our lives’. Monuments provide public and enduring credibility and legitimacy to particular groups, although they must necessarily marginalise others in the process.⁷ Monuments are especially useful entry points into the nature of group identity, because the process of their creation is far more democratic, representative, and collective compared to other arts such as painting and literature; we can recognise monuments as both products of, and stimulus for, the public imagination.⁸

In the monuments erected across the world to commemorate figures from Scotland’s past, historians have found very specific constructions of Scottish identity.⁹ Scottish history has been embodied in a variety of emotional and sectarian heroes—figures such as Robert the Bruce, Mary, Queen of Scots, William Wallace, Bonnie Prince Charlie, Walter Scott and Robert Burns.¹⁰ In North America and Britain, Burns statues and memorials were selective, romantic visions of Scotland’s past. Historian Christopher Whatley notes a tendency to present Burns as a poet or a ploughman, ‘but never as a man of liberty or a democrat’.¹¹ While monuments in Australia reflected the romanticising tendency in the global diaspora, interpretations of both Burns and Wallace in Ballarat displayed, in contrast to the transatlantic tendency, a promotion of universalism and individualism present in Australian colonial politics at the time.¹² Thus, although externalised and largely symbolic ethnic traditions could easily exist apart from everyday life, in this case, they also reflected the adoption of colonial social and political outlooks by Scots—an important observation given that it is often the case that symbolic identities do not overlap with a migrant’s everyday life.¹³

The particular political outlook reflected in the events surrounding the Ballarat statues, and the statues themselves, represented the worldwide re-imagining of Scottish identity within the framework of the British Empire in the nineteenth century. As numerous historians have observed, Scottish and British identities became increasingly convergent as Scots

and Scotland drew benefits from their inclusion in, and administration of, the British Empire. Linda Colley, for instance, notes that, in the nineteenth century, Scots learned to wear more than one ‘hat of national identity’ concurrently—a Scottish one and a British one.¹⁴ The hybridisation of Scottish and British identities in Australia has also been the subject of much discussion and has been a common theme in histories of the Scots for many years.¹⁵

The British element of Scottish identity and culture in Australia extended at least back to the late 1840s, when annual Scottish festivals were held in Melbourne to celebrate both Robert Burns and William Wallace.¹⁶ The occasions were at first explicitly political and assertive, and anti-English sentiment was especially rife (in 1847, the organisers even refused to invite Melbourne’s mayor because he was English).¹⁷ These festivals were exemplars of the broader evolution of Scottish culture and identity in Australia during the nineteenth century.

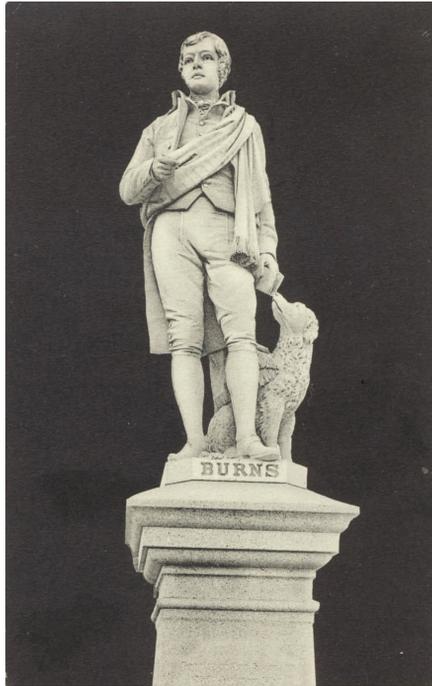
Gradually, the exclusivity of the events was replaced by the promotion of ‘unionist nationalism’—a hybrid form of British loyalty and Scottish nationalism.¹⁸ By 1850, non-Scots were allowed to attend, representing a growing confidence among Scots of their (real or imagined) proliferation in the social élite and a growing sense that Scots were the key factor in the success of the Empire and its colonies. As the 1850s drew out, the celebrations, though becoming more ostentatious in their ‘Balmorality’ and romanticisation of Scotland’s past, began to exhibit an unabashed sense of British patriotism and made assertions that the Scots were the supreme component of the British Empire. Throughout that decade, numerous Caledonian societies and St Andrew’s associations were founded where there had been none before—a development assisted in part by the immigration of thousands of Scots to the colonies in the 1850s. Their activities, too, were tinged with a unique combination of romanticised Scottish culture and British loyalty.¹⁹ In the middle of the nineteenth century, therefore, an imperial culture emerged among Scots in Victoria and Australia that harmonised with the numerous connections they had forged throughout the Empire. This article complements the body of literature by addressing these themes as they developed towards the end of the nineteenth century in another colonial city, Ballarat, but also adds a new dimension to these discussions by examining their relevance to public monuments of Burns and Wallace.

The reinvention of Scottish identity for a British world extended specifically into celebrations of Robert Burns, which became less combative and increasingly marked more by universalism and pro-imperialism. Burns' Scottish nationalism was 'cancelled out' by increasing emphasis on his British patriotism, and the reinvention of Burns for colonial society provided a resilient symbolic focus for Scottish identity.²⁰ In addition to this British patriotism, individualism pervaded understandings of Scottish identity, and such notions also extended to the re-imagining of Robert Burns. In Scotland, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the concepts of freedom and liberty were more associated with middle class individualism and anti-aristocratic sentiment than Jacobinism. The values of self-help, thrift, diligence, independence and respectability became central to Scottish identity at this time.²¹ Such values were projected onto Burns. Ralph Waldo Emerson himself said in Boston in 1859: 'Robert Burns, the poet of the middle class, represents in the mind of men today that great uprising of the middle class against the armed and privileged minorities.'²²

This study confirms findings that indicate a reinvention of Burns for the British colonial world in the nineteenth century, but extends this process to encapsulate William Wallace, a figure in Scotland's history whose mythological tradition arguably required far more negotiation to accommodate British imperial patriotism. While the Wallace statue in Ballarat has been noted in the broader context of Scottish nationalism in Scotland and abroad, this article places it in a comparative framework alongside Burns and the development of Britishness in Scottish culture abroad.²³ In Ballarat, we find an exemplary statement of the dominant concept of culture and identity in the Australian Scottish diaspora at this time, one that promoted individualism and British loyalty while retaining a distinctly Scottish character.

Robert Burns in Ballarat, 1887

The statues of Robert Burns and William Wallace, and their prominence in the landscape, hint at the achievements of the Scots and their relative comfort in Ballarat society. Indeed, since the early days of settlement in the Port Phillip District, Scots had been successful settlers, and this was especially so in the Western District.²⁴ Ballarat was no exception. In 1857, there were 5,735 Scottish-born residents in Ballarat, and around 3,800 were men—Melbourne was the only place in the colony with more Scottish residents, although parts of the Western District were still, proportionally,



*Burns Statue, Ballarat, c. 1900,
postcard, H.J. Summerscales.
(RHSV Collection: PC-0943.)*

overwhelmingly Scottish.²⁵ Over the second half of the nineteenth century, the number of those born in Scotland dwindled, and their settlement patterns showed a shift from Ballarat East to Ballarat West, towards the more prosperous and stable part of the growing city. In 1871, there were 4,296 Scots living in Ballarat and the ratio of men to women had become more even—3,123 of these Scots lived in the west, while 1,173 lived in the east. In 1881, the east-west division is clear again, with 1,339 in Ballarat West and 654 in Ballarat East. Similarly, in 1,891, the numbers had dropped, but there were around 1,300 in the west and 426 in the east.²⁶

Weston Bate has argued that the overall division of Ballarat between east and west was also evident in the demographics of each area. The low-lying flats of the east were prone to floods and fire, and thus affluent residents moved towards the more physically stable west; the east's geography was unsuited to the needs of a growing metropolis, while the west offered more appropriate sites for the buildings and institutions of Ballarat. Moreover, the

west was closer to rich, gold-bearing quartz deposits deep in the earth, and was also oriented towards the fertile pastoral lands of the Western District. Bate notes that the West's residents were often affluent merchants, bankers, retailers, investors, and architects.²⁷ Jan Croggon has argued that the Scots' trend towards residing in the west over the second half of the nineteenth century, a more pronounced shift than for other migrant groups, reflected their 'pattern of quiet achievement'.²⁸ She observes that the Scots were 'builders—men who left their mark'.²⁹ Indeed, their mark was indelible and undeniably 'Scottish'.

On 30 September 1884, the Melbourne newspaper *The Argus*, reported briefly that in Ballarat: 'A movement is on foot for the erection of a marble statue of Burns in the Botanical Gardens by a number of admirers of the poet.'³⁰ Subsequent reports indicate that Scots and other residents of the Ballarat district warmly took to the cause. The Burns Memorial Committee was established (with one Thomas Stoddart as its president). They opened a subscription list, and funding arrived from private contributions and proceeds from various charitable events—including a large St Andrew's Day concert. Contemporaries suggested that the largest donation was made by the Ballarat City Council—perhaps because of its ongoing commitment, funded largely by Scottish money, to the 'beautification' of Ballarat.³¹ In 1935, one historian indicated that the total cost of the statue was approximately £1,000.³² In any case, by August 1885, the committee had raised enough money to commission John Udny, in Italy, to sculpt the statue.³³

The Burns Memorial Committee of Ballarat decided on the final design for the statue in mid-January 1886. One of seventeen submissions in a competition organised by the committee, the design was prepared by Thomas Thompson, a local woodcarver and architectural designer.³⁴ The nine-foot-high statue, sculptured from Italian Carrara marble, stands on a pedestal of Harcourt granite, with a substructure of bluestone and concrete. One observer described 'the poet, standing erect, holding a book in the left hand and a pencil in the right. The head is uncovered, but the dress and plaid mark the poet's nationality. The figure of a shepherd's collie, sits at the feet'.³⁵ Well into the twentieth century, many people believed the statue to be the first of Robert Burns in Australia. However, the *Camperdown Chronicle* asked readers in 1937: 'But what of Camperdown's statue of the poet with his dog?', a statue originally sculpted in Scotland in the 1830s and purchased for Camperdown in the early 1880s. The *Chronicle*

went on to observe that residents of Camperdown 'could not help but feel indignant' about claims that Ballarat's statue was the first in Australia.³⁶

Initial proposals from the Committee suggested that the Ballarat statue was to be located in Ballarat's Botanical Gardens.³⁷ The location was later changed to the site of an existing monument of Burke and Wills, although this met with opposition from the public, perhaps revealing the extent to which notions of Australian identity had already permeated colonial society by the early 1880s. Newspapers reported: 'The dissenters consider that as the present erection [of Burke and Wills] is so essentially Australian, it is more appropriate than the statue of a man who has never seen Australia.'³⁸

The Ballarat Burns statue was unveiled on 21 April 1887 at its present site on the corner of Sturt and Lydiard Streets. Burns was the first statue to be erected on the small strip of gardens running along Sturt Street and occupied a significant position. Contemporaries described the site at which Burns is located thus:

These narrow gardens crest the hill on which the Post office stands, an eminence known now as Post office-hill, but in primitive days as Camp-hill. The brow of this eminence immediately in front of the Post office has been appropriated to the statue, and a finer site could not be found.³⁹

The unveiling of Burns coincided with a trades procession on Sturt Street in commemoration of the Eight Hour Day. Of this date, one writer said: 'no day could have been more appropriately chosen than those of the Eight Hours Day [sic], because Burns was essentially the Bard of Labor'.⁴⁰ At its unveiling, observers noted that the statue faced westward, and right into a willow tree, which stood a few feet away. *The Argus* reported that the City Council had been asked to allow the removal of the willow, 'but a sentimental desire to retain it as it was planted by one of the city fathers now deceased, has so far prevented their complying with the request. The tree is, however, so manifestly in the way of the statue that it will have to be cut down if the statue is to be visible at its best'.⁴¹ Another observer wrote: 'Many years ago, Mr Thomas Lang ... brought out some slips of Kilmarnock willow, which he planted in Ballarat ... The tree beside which the statue of Burns is erected is thus a lineal descendant of one of the willows under which Burns often reclined.'⁴²

Newspaper reports at the time suggested a crowd of between 15,000 and 20,000 people in attendance. John Nimmo, the state Minister of Public Works, gave the main speech. Nimmo was a surveyor by trade,

a businessman and a parliamentarian. He was born in 1819 at Catrine, Ayrshire, the son of a mason, and trained in Glasgow. He arrived in Australia in 1853. In business, he was a produce merchant specialising in coffee and spices. As a politician, Nimmo was at various times a local government councillor, a mayor, a Member of the Lower House from 1877, and later a staunch protectionist.⁴³

‘As the veiling was drawn away from the figure,’ reported *The Argus*, ‘the assemblage cheered enthusiastically’ and the Phoenix Foundry Band played Burns’ egalitarian song, ‘A man’s a man for a’ that’. The speech given by John Nimmo after the unveiling of the Burns statue was reproduced in full in *The Argus*. The speech indicates Nimmo was a man well versed in the life and works of Burns, as well as those of other poets and writers. Indeed, Lord Aberdeen, in apologising for his absence at the unveiling, wrote: ‘I doubt if any man in the colonies or in our own native land could more accurately and effectively interpret and convey the true spirit and force of Burns’ poetry than Mr Nimmo.’⁴⁴ Throughout the speech, Nimmo compared and contrasted the life and writings of Burns with those of other literary greats. He said of Burns:

but for his span of life having been cut short by a premature death, he would have developed results equal to the greatest poets on earth; and that the little that he did produce proved conclusively that he possessed a keen, penetrating intellect, a lively and fertile imagination, a poetic faculty, with inventive genius and descriptive powers that placed him on a qualitative level with Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton.⁴⁵

Noting the affective power of Burns’ poetry, Nimmo paid particular attention to the universality of Burns. He said that, in addition to admiration and pride, Scots ‘love Burns, whose songs are the sympathetic links that bind [them] not only to Scotland, but to the world. Those songs crystallise almost every emotion of the human heart, and that is the secret of their power’. Additionally, revealing his interpretation of the poet as an exemplar for individualism, Nimmo epitomised Burns as the Ayrshire ploughman—the hardworking, humble worker, focussed on self-improvement and the attainment of prosperity and success in this life and the next. He told the crowd:

The life and writings of Robert Burns furnish cheering and conclusive evidence to the sons of toil in every land that humble birth, association with poverty, and hard manual labour, do not form insuperable obstacles in the way

of a man who is bent upon self-improvement and attaining to a distinguished position in the world.⁴⁶

The universalism and individualism attributed to Burns by Nimmo was reflective of deeper understandings of Scottish identity in the nineteenth century. The ideals of freedom and liberty were at the heart of the middle class, while independence, frugality and diligence were espoused as the core elements of the Scottish 'national character'.⁴⁷ There was a strong sense in which Burns was interpreted in Ballarat as rising above Scottishness to embody values, ideals, and a morality common to the public of a colonial community in the nineteenth century. Although acting as a reference point for Scottish identity, rather than intensifying a migrant's sense of Scottish ethnicity, Burns represents the transcendence of Scottishness in ways that accommodated converging Scottish, British and Australian identities in a colonial setting. While appealing to the public at large, by retaining a semblance of Scottishness, such an interpretation of Burns also demonstrated the place of Scots as members of the community. Indeed, the pomp and ceremony surrounding the unveiling, and the prominence of the site itself, may indicate the permeation of Scots into the social elite, echoing the cultural confidence exhibited in Melbourne in the 1850s.⁴⁸ Explaining the importance of Burns to Scots, Australian poet Henry Lawson wrote of the Ballarat statue:

One of Caledonia's sons,
Coming lonely to the land.
Well might think he'd met a friend
Who would take him by the hand,
And the tears spring to his eyes,
While his heart for friendship yearns;
And from out that heart he cries,
'Heaven bless ye, Bobbie Burns.'

Robert Burns was, therefore, represented at the unveiling ceremony as being at once universally relevant and recognisably Scottish. As a public icon of identity, the statue and the events surrounding it reflected internal constructions of Scottishness as well as externalised and public symbols of ethnicity. The monument itself further reflected the way in which those who had a hand in its design and construction understood Burns, and how they chose to represent him, their cultural ambassador, to the public. Lawson described the statue in a way that evokes a mischievous Burns:

Round the corners of the lips
 Lines of laughter seem to run;
 From the merry eye there slips
 Just a twinkle as of fun.

This characterisation of Burns extended to other features of the monument. The statue has passages from four of his poems inscribed on its plinth. The north-facing side features passages from the 1786 poem ‘Address to the Unco Guid, or the Rigidly Righteous’. On the eastern face is ‘To a Mouse, on Turning Her up in Her Nest with the Plough’ from 1785. Facing south is ‘To a Louse, on Seeing One on a Lady’s Bonnet at Church’ from 1786. Finally, facing west are passages from 1787’s ‘There was a lad’ or ‘Rantin’, Rovin’ Robin’.

The northern inscription—or, at least, the poem from which it was drawn—indicates a tacit acknowledgement of Burns’ irreverence towards the self-righteous. ‘Address to the Unco Guid’ condemns the ‘uncommonly good’ among us, and was written in response to his suffering at the hands of those who smugly held him to account for his love affairs and illegitimate children. ‘O you, who are so good yourself,’ writes Burns, ‘So pious and so holy, You have nothing to do but mark and tell, Your neighbours’ faults and folly.’ Later, Burns writes: ‘gently scan your brother man, Still gentler sister woman; Though they may go a little wrong, To step aside is human.’ Similarly, in the poem, ‘To a Louse’, from which the southern inscription is taken, Burns focuses on class, humanity, and equality. In a satire of social pretence and a warning against vanity and pride, Burns feigns outrage as he chastises a louse for not recognising how important its host is. Ultimately, he writes, ‘O wad some Pow’r the giftie gie us, To see oursels as ithers see us!’ (And would some Power the small gift give us, To see ourselves as others see us!). The monument in Ballarat, therefore, embodied criticism of social pretence and moral self-righteousness.

Yet acceptance of the poet was not necessarily unanimous. In 1885, while the Burns Memorial Committee was collecting funds for the statue, a letter of protest appeared in *The Horsham Times*. The author complained of Burns’ alleged disreputable character, and wrote:

I enter my protest, as, in my opinion, Burns left a sufficient monument of his fame, or rather of his notoriety. . . . I would recommend a perusal of Principal Sharp’s [sic] ‘Life of Burns’ or the still better ‘Life and Writings of Burns’ by R. Chambers. They will learn from those high authorities the number of his illegitimate children was not known with certainty, but eight were well

known; that he was a drunken lewd, and licentious libertine, and that he lampooned those ladies and gentlemen at whose table he dined.⁴⁹

This criticism of Burns did not feature in the speech given at the unveiling ceremony. As a temperance advocate, Nimmo was vice-president of institutions such as the Victorian Alliance for the Suppression of the Liquor Traffic, the Victorian Band of Hope Union and the International Temperance Conventions of 1880 and 1888. In his capacity as Member for Emerald Hill (Albert Park after 1889), he was vital to the success of legislation to curtail retail trading in alcohol in the 1880s.⁵⁰ If the poet's disrepute was widespread, or his misdemeanours interpreted as being unredeemed, it seems unlikely Nimmo would have approved of the statue and its inscriptions. Indeed, it seems instead that the statue's inscriptions approve of Burns' lampooning of 'those ladies and gentlemen at whose table he dined'.

While the western inscription features lines of 'Rantin', Rovin' Robin', a simple ode to the poet's home and origins, anti-aristocratic sentiment is expanded upon in the poem featured in the eastern inscription, 'To a Mouse'. This poem is dedicated to a 'Wee, sleekit, cow'rin, tim'rous beastie', whose home has been upturned. In it, Burns bewails the plight of the mouse and condemns the disruption of nature caused by the dominion of men. He sympathises with lowly creatures and imagines their loss, destruction, insecurity and personal anxiety. The poem features Burns' most often and ill-quoted line, 'The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men, Gang aft agley,' or 'The best laid schemes of mice and men, Go often awry', which is a final lament over the tyranny of both man and nature over the weak and the poor.

'To a Mouse' is one of the poet's most poignant defences of individual freedom, and was, therefore, popular among Scots, who saw equality of opportunity as a core principle of a Scottish nation. Taken as a whole, the selection of poems for inscriptions on the Ballarat statue leaves an impression of Burns as the champion of liberty and democracy, and someone who believed social pretence should be eliminated in favour of the meritocratic recognition of real excellence. The statue and the unveiling were part of a rebirth of Scottishness throughout the Empire that reflected the reinvention of Scottish identity at home. While these notions were highly popular in Scotland in the nineteenth century, as Finlay and others have noted, they were certainly not out of place in Australian colonial society, which was itself an amalgamation of Anglo-Celtic cultural

and political identities.⁵¹ Thus, the Robert Burns monument in Ballarat publicly embodied and expressed a cultural identity that accommodated the growing convergence of Scottish, British and Australian identities in a colonial setting.

Yet the accommodation of different identities does not mean that the Scots were, or became, ‘invisible ethnics’ in this part of Australia, as scholars such as David Armitage have argued, describing Scots in North America as ‘stalwart supporters of Empire, predominantly Protestant and eager to assimilate’.⁵² Eric Richards adopts this position for Australia and argues Scots quickly disregarded their ethnic origins after settlement as the forces of integration and assimilation intensified.⁵³ On the other hand, historians such as John Mackenzie and Tom Devine have rejected these views.⁵⁴ Devine notes that one striking feature of the Scots in the diaspora is that they were often identified by others as a specific ethnic group and were not merely described as members of a generalised British diaspora, ‘moulded into uniformity ... by the experience of settlement in distant lands’. He argues that the maintenance of Scottish identity was, in fact, complementary to British loyalty: ‘the British empire did not so much dilute the sense of Scottishness but strengthened it’.⁵⁵ Indeed, John Nimmo hinted at such hybridisation of cultural and political allegiances (the phenomena that Morton has termed ‘unionist nationalism’) at the unveiling of the Burns statue. In his only reference to the British Empire, Nimmo said that the ‘noble, heroic, and soul stirring song of ‘Scots wha’ hae wi’ Wallace bled’, has nerved the arm of the British soldier to turn the tide of battle in many a hard fought field, when the fate of our glorious empire was trembling in the balance’.⁵⁶

Unionist nationalism, however, was more salient in the case of Ballarat’s unique statue of William Wallace. The case of Robert Burns in Ballarat tapped into broader sentiments about core Scottish values and the values of the society in which the statue was erected. Focusing more on unionist nationalism, the following example provides an exemplar of the dynamic between British and Scottish political identities and loyalties in the diaspora, the kind that required a comprehensive revision of Wallace’s place in Scottish culture and tradition.

William Wallace in Ballarat, 1889

The cult of Wallace in the nineteenth century had little resemblance to the Wallace legend of the late-twentieth century as represented in popular films



Wallace Statue, Ballarat, c. 1890-92, photograph from an album compiled by Albert Dubucand. (State Library of Victoria: H20001.60/5.)

such as Mel Gibson's *Braveheart*. Devine notes that Wallace was 'one of the supreme Victorian icons', and that the Wallace cult in the nineteenth century was 'not designed to threaten the union or inspire political nationalism'. Instead, the story of Wallace was seized upon to remind Scots of how the Union of 1707 had been achieved precisely because of his struggles for freedom and liberty: since Scotland remained unconquered, it could form a beneficial and equal union with England in the eighteenth century. Devine observes that the devotion in Scotland to Wallace was evidence that 'pride in Scottish nationhood and loyalty to union and empire could be reconciled'.⁵⁷ This munificent cultural nationalism was reflected in Australia in the late-nineteenth century. Additionally, the Australian context complicates what

we know about Scottish identity, because unionist nationalism survived longer in the diaspora than in Scotland itself, where, Whatley notes, ‘service to unionist-nationalism was less obvious by the 1860s, and coincides with the demise of unionist-nationalism itself’.⁵⁸

The statue of William Wallace in the Ballarat Botanical Gardens was bequeathed to the city by James Russell Thompson.⁵⁹ Thompson was a successful businessman from Airdrie in Scotland. He had arrived in Ballarat in 1853 after finding gold on the Ovens goldfields. Deafness caused by an early career in mining prevented Thompson from becoming involved in public life in Ballarat but, dying a wealthy man in May 1886, he was able to leave significant bequests to relatives and also request that his remaining estate be put towards the purchase of statues for the Ballarat Botanical Gardens. Fellow Scot, Thomas Stoddart—president of the Ballarat Burns Committee—was executor of Thompson’s estate, and was able to procure for the gardens numerous monuments and statues made of Italian Carrara marble.⁶⁰ The most notable of Stoddart’s procurements, however, was the statue of Scottish hero William Wallace. *The Ballarat Star* noted that ‘the statue of Wallace was decided on as a compliment to Mr. Thompson’s love for the country he came from—an effigy of the greatest character treated in Scottish history or legend’.⁶¹

Sculpted by Melbourne artist Percival Ball, the statue is made of marble and rests on a granite base. It was unveiled on 24 May 1889, the day of both Queen Victoria’s and Thompson’s birthdays. The monument represents Wallace standing on Abbey Craig, waiting to give the signal to his army to descend upon the English forces crossing Stirling Bridge. *The Ballarat Star* describes Wallace as being:

[of] heroic size, standing, as the great patriot is said by legend to have stood, over eight feet in height. His powerful figure is clad in a close-fitting suit of chain armor, which well displays the muscular development of the stalwart frame. The arms are bare to just above the elbow, and the large muscles stand out in cords through the armor. Both hands are grasping a representation of the immense sword that in Wallace’s hands wrought such havoc amongst his foes. Over the figure is a light surcoat, with [the] lion of Scotland emblazoned on the breast, and on the head is a simple morion, so that the features are not hidden by a vizor. These are most expressive, representing a stern resolve to do or die, not unmixed with anxiety, and full of vigilance and observation. The pose is natural and effective, and the *tout ensemble* is pleasing to the eye.⁶²

Much like the Burns ceremony, the unveiling of the Wallace statue was a festive occasion. Approximately one hundred members of the Caledonian Society of Melbourne came to Ballarat by rail. It was reported that at least twenty of them were in full Highland regalia, and the party was led by four pipers. They were joined by members of the local St Andrew's Society, also in Highland dress, and various other Ballarat dignitaries. Overall, newspapers estimated that around three thousand people were in attendance at the event. John Nimmo was again called upon to present the monument to the public, and as he unveiled the statue, 'in all its beauty', the militia band played 'Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled'.⁶³ As at the unveiling of Burns, the occasion, support and prominent location of the statue suggested the cultural confidence and the permeation of Scots in the social elite.

Nimmo gave a brief history of Wallace, and noted that in Ballarat he could observe thousands of 'public-spirited and high-minded citizens met to do honour to the memory of that brave man who struggled, fought, suffered, and died as a patriot martyr in the cause of national liberty'.⁶⁴ Implicitly acknowledging the difficulties involved in reconciling Wallace with British loyalty in a mixed Anglo-Celtic community, Nimmo attempted to remove any sense of national enmity that the monument may have embodied:

I am proud to see amongst the audience Englishmen and Irishmen mingling with Scotchmen ... I thank God that England and Scotland have shaken hands, and for many years have united in fighting for that tight little island side by side. I pray that this state of things may long continue, and that the noble and glorious Queen who now reigns over us may long continue to do so ... The Irish, too, I am pleased to see here. They are a brave and noble race—a little impulsive, perhaps, but amongst them I have found as much genuine manliness and real good feeling as I have amongst the Scotch.⁶⁵

What was most striking about Nimmo's speech on this occasion was the extent to which he defused the national and political antagonisms that exist within the Wallace tradition. William Wallace had become not only a patriot of Scotland, but also a Unionist hero. The narrative, of course, required some adjustment. Of Edward Longshanks, or the 'Hammer of the Scots', who features so prominently as the antagonist in the modern Wallace tradition, Nimmo pronounced:

I have long been of the opinion that Edward I was not a true Englishman, and I am sure he did not represent the English character truly. I have always found in my dealings with the English that they are, as a body, high-souled and honourable men. I am sure they were misled by Edward ... I have found

the English one of the first nations in the world as regards fair and honourable dealings between man and man, and for bravery and generosity.⁶⁶

Indeed, while Burns and his poetry held affective power and was perceived as universally appropriate to all men and women, Wallace's narrative was easily read as one of unambiguous political nationalism. For Nimmo, the tradition required contortion in order for it to become palatable to the public audience in Ballarat, and, indeed, appropriate to the unionist nationalism that began to define Scottish identity in the nineteenth century. Yet this was not the only way in which Wallace was interpreted at the time, though the Victorian cult of Wallace was arguably the dominant understanding. At the time of the statue's unveiling, the socialist writer and polemicist Francis Lauderdale Adams wrote a poem dedicated to Wallace and had it published alongside a series of anti-English, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist poems in the volume 'Songs of the Army of the Night'.⁶⁷ The poem (dedicated specifically to the statue in Ballarat) represents a more familiar, post-*Braveheart* reading of Wallace's position in Scottish history:

This is Scotch William Wallace. It was He
Who in dark hours first raised his face to see:
Who watched the English tyrant Nobles spurn,
Steel-clad, with iron hoofs the Scottish Free:

Who armed and drilled the simple footman Kern,
Yea, bade in blood and rout the proud Knight learn
His Feudalism was dead, and Scotland stand
Dauntless to wait the day of Bannockburn!

O Wallace, peerless lover of thy land,
We need thee still, thy moulding brain and hand!
For us, thy poor, again proud tyrants spurn,
The robber Rich, a yet more hateful band!

In 1969, British historian H.J. Hanham associated the Wallace statue with the poem written by Adams, suggesting Adams' interpretation was the most representative.⁶⁸ Echoing Hanham's understanding of the statue's significance for Ballarat, historian Edward Cowan has linked the Wallace statue with the Eureka Stockade at Ballarat in 1854. Although the linkage of the poem and the statue rests on the incorrect placing of the Adams' poem on the statue itself, it is easy to see how Adams' interpretation of Wallace could resonate in a city so strongly linked with the rise of democratic

institutions in Australia.⁶⁹ The actual inscription is from Robert Burns' 'The Cotter's Saturday Night'. Adams' sentiments were not echoed in Nimmo's speech, although it is important to recognise that interpretations of both Burns and Wallace were not homogenous.

While Nimmo retained some assertiveness in his imagining of Scottishness, he nevertheless adopted a kind of pragmatism suitable to an environment in which Scots had to live alongside the English, Welsh and Irish. Furthermore, Nimmo's and Adams' contesting interpretations of Wallace were reflective of similar trends elsewhere. For example, the National Wallace Monument on the Abbey Craig near Stirling in Scotland was subject to similarly competing interpretations at the end of the nineteenth century—unionist nationalism on the one hand, and a more radically political and nationalistic reading on the other. Ultimately, the monument at Stirling was intended to stress a peaceful union with England and was broadly accepted as such at the time—historian James Coleman describes the Wallace monument at Stirling as 'unionist-nationalism in stone'.⁷⁰

While the Wallace tradition was made relevant to British, Scottish and colonial contexts, such negotiations were unnecessary in other parts of the world. In the nineteenth century North American context, speechmakers did not have to negotiate their way around British loyalty at opening ceremonies. Set high on the stone plinth of the Wallace statue in Druid Hill Park in Baltimore are the unambiguous words: 'Wallace, patriot and martyr for Scottish liberty, 1305'. The core values of liberty and individualism were retained without the need to explicitly realign Wallace with the British Empire, which was a sometimes awkward task, as Nimmo's speech showed. At the unveiling of the Wallace statue in Baltimore in 1893, the principal benefactor, William Wallace Spence, said:

It was this man who, by his precept and example, implanted in Scotland that indomitable and inextinguishable love of freedom which has been a distinguishing characteristic of Scotchmen in every quarter of the globe. This was abundantly manifested by them in this, their adopted country, for which they so freely shed their blood in the trying days of the American Revolution.⁷¹

Although the emphasis on freedom and liberty is recognisable, Spence's interpretation is in contrast to those offered in the colonies and Britain, which purposefully avoided placing stress on Wallace's political Scottish nationalism. The cultural identity reflected in Nimmo's interpretation of Wallace suggests the popularity of unionist nationalism and the

compatibility of Scottish identity with British loyalty and reflects the broader Wallace cult in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, it should be clear that, as competing interpretations from the likes of poet Francis Adams attest, the realigning of Wallace with British patriotism was not as simple a task as it had been with Burns.

After the unveiling of Ballarat's Wallace statue, tributes were paid to the sculptor, Percival Ball, and the artistic merits of the monument. Three cheers were called for the mayor, the trustees and the artist. The militia band played 'God Save The Queen', and the gathering followed this with a verse of Burns' 'Auld Lang Syne'. After the unveiling ceremony, visitors were invited to a banquet at the City Hall, at which more speeches were given. One speaker James Lambie spoke of his pride in Ballarat being linked with his native country. *The Ballarat Star* reported Lambie as saying:

Some people wondered why they should bother about heroes of the past, but even if the tales of the heroes were not true they were of extreme value if they gave inspiration to the young. They should cherish the heroes of the past, and all people who enjoyed English liberty should honor the Scottish hero and join in his praise. He was just as ready to bow down before a hero of Southern England as a Scottish hero. It was Wallace who first discovered the value of the masses of the people, and the best blood of the Scottish people came from the lonely farmers in the distant moors and the small villages outside the towns.⁷²

Here, we see a clear exposition of symbolic ethnicity and the nostalgic connections made by diasporic Scots to the traditions and myths of Scotland. We also see the ways in which identity is transformed in response to the immediate social environment. Much like Nimmo had attempted to defuse national antagonisms inherent in the narrative, Lambie is pragmatically re-imagining Wallace as a universal hero, appropriate to a group of migrants living in a British colonial world. In essence, it is a call for sectarian Scottish and English heroes to be incorporated (but not assimilated) into a broader middle-class British cultural and political identity that claimed individualism and liberty as its core values. Finally, as if to extend the inclusiveness of the event to all, the final song sung at the banquet was 'Steer my bark to Erin's Isle', a popular folk song that fittingly ended with the lines:

If England was my place of birth, I'd love her tranquil shore;
If bonny Scotland was my home, her mountains I'd adore.

But pleasant days in both I've passed, I'd dreams of days to come;
Oh! steer my bark to Erin's Isle, for Erin is my home.

Conclusion

As an emerging field of interest in Australia, further investigations of the way in which Scottish culture has been 'written' on the built environment will add new dimensions to our understanding of migrant identities. Monuments such as the Ballarat Burns and Wallace statues reflect cultural and political identities. The rituals attached to the unveiling of public monuments, and the dynamics of their reception, can assist us to identify their specific role and place in the public consciousness. Taken as a whole, the statues themselves, the ceremonies surrounding them, and their public reception help us to investigate, as Nuala Johnson notes, the 'symbolic, ritualistic, and performative dimensions of identity formulation'.⁷³ The statues of Robert Burns and William Wallace, erected in Ballarat in the late-nineteenth century were physical icons of identity—designed, executed and interpreted in a way that reflected hybrid Scottish, British and Australian ethnic identities. The intellectual and ideological re-imagining of both Burns' and Wallace's positions in Scottish tradition and history enabled their lives and works to be presented in ways that accommodated both Scottish and British loyalties. They reflected and stimulated a Scottish cultural identity that was at once nationalistic and munificent, and thus appropriate to an Australian colonial setting in which populations were ethnically and culturally diverse.

Monuments provide public and enduring credibility and legitimacy to particular groups, and so necessarily marginalise others in the process. Francis Adams' interpretation of Wallace was representative of a strand of Scottish political nationalism that was less pervasive in Australia in the late nineteenth century than the culturally centred unionist nationalism expressed at the unveiling of William Wallace in 1889. This dominant, 'imperial' notion of Scottish identity was reflected succinctly in statues of both Burns and Wallace in nineteenth century Ballarat.

NOTES

- 1 In addition to this paper, see also Malcolm Prentis and Ben Wilkie, "'Coming lonely to the land', or 'crawlers round the bardie's name': Memorials to Robert Burns in Australia', conference paper, *Australian Historical Association Conference*, University

- of Adelaide, Adelaide, 2012; Leigh Straw, 'Landscapes of the Scottish Dead: Headstones and Identity in Colonial Tasmania', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, vol. 14, 2012, pp. 89–106.
- 2 Prentis and Wilkie; Graeme Morton, 'Caledonian Societies', in Michael Lynch (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Scottish History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 60.
 - 3 Prentis and Wilkie, p. 1.
 - 4 Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: les lieux de mémoire', *Representations*, vol. 26, 1989, p. 7.
 - 5 Phillip Cohen and Harwant S. Bains (eds), *Multi-racist Britain*, London, Macmillan, 1988, pp. 24–25; J.A. Fishman, *The Rise and Fall of the Ethnic Revival: Perspectives on Language and Ethnicity*, Berlin, Mouton, 1985, p. 4; A.D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1986, p. 27; Herbert J. Gans, 'Symbolic Ethnicity: the Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol.2 , no. 1, 1979, p. 9.
 - 6 Max Weber, *Economy and Society: an Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, New York, Bedminster Press, 1968, p. 342; N. Glazer and D.P. Moniyhan, 'Introduction', in Glazer and Moniyhan (eds), *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1975, pp. 1–28; D. Bell, 'Ethnicity and Social Change', in Glazer and Moniyhan (eds), *Ethnicity*; S. Wallman, 'Ethnicity and Boundary Processes', in J. Rex and D. Mason (eds), *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 229.
 - 7 Kirk Savage, 'The Politics of Memory: Black Emancipation and the Civil War Monument', in John R. Gilles (ed.), *Commemorations: the Politics of National Identity*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996, p. 143.
 - 8 Nuala Johnson, 'Monuments', in Derek Gregory, Ron Johnson, Geraldine Pratt, Michael Watts, Sarah Whatmore (eds), *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, London, John Wiley & Sons, 2009, p. 478.
 - 9 John Rodgers, 'The Burnsian Constructs', in John Rodgers and George Carruthers (eds), *Fickle Man: Robert Burns in the 21st century*, Dingwall, Sandstone Press, 2009, p. 66. More generally, see Marinell Ash, *The Strange Death of Scottish History*, Edinburgh, Ramsay Head Press, 1989; Murray Pittock (ed.), *Robert Burns in Global Culture*, Lewisburg, Bucknell University Press, 2011.
 - 10 Rodgers.
 - 11 Christopher A. Whatley, 'Robert Burns, Memorialisation, and the "Heart-beatings" of Victorian Scotland', in Pittock (ed.), *Robert Burns in Global Culture*, pp. 222–223.
 - 12 Prentis and Wilkie, p. 9.
 - 13 Herbert J. Gans, 'Symbolic Ethnicity', p. 9.
 - 14 Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2005, p. 6; see also Alex Tyrrell, 'Scottishness and Britishness: from Scotland to Australia Felix', *Humanities Research*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2006, pp. 24–25; Malcolm Prentis, *Scots in Australia*, Sydney, UNSW Press, 2008, p. 217.

- 15 The literature on this topic is vast. See Margaret Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday: a Social History of the Western District of Victoria, 1834–1890*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1961, pp. 99–100; Richard Broome, *The Victorians: Arriving*, Melbourne, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, 1988, p. 105–106; Eric Richards, ‘Australia and the Scottish Diaspora’, in Hardy, *Stories of Australian Migration*, Sydney, 1988, p. 56; Eric Richards, cited in Donna Hellyer, ‘“The Humblies”: the Emigration of Highland Scots to Victoria in the 1850s via the Highland and Island Emigration Society’, MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1983, p. iv; Donna Hellyer, ‘“The Humblies”’, pp. 63–67; Jan Croggon, ‘“Strangers in a strange land”: Converging and Accommodating Celtic Identities in Ballarat, 1851–1901’, PhD thesis, University of Ballarat, 2002, p. 294; Cliff Cumming, ‘The Celtic Presence: Scots in Port Phillip, 1838–1851’, *Australian Celtic Journal*, vol. 3, 1990–1991, pp. 14–15; Alex Tyrrell, ‘Scottishness and Britishness’, pp. 24–25; Prentis, *Scots in Australia*, p. 217; Cliff Cumming, ‘Scottish National Identity in an Australian Colony’, *The Scottish Historical Review*, vol. 72, no. 1, April 1993, p. 22; Angela McCarthy, ‘Scottish National Identities among Inter-War Migrants in North America and Australasia’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2006, p. 201.
- 16 Alex Tyrrell, ‘“No common corrobbery”: the Robert Burns Festivals and Identity Politics in Melbourne, 1845–59’, *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 97, no. 2, December 2011, p. 175 & p. 186.
- 17 Tyrrell, ‘“No common corrobbery”’, p. 175 & p. 186.
- 18 The standard introduction to unionist nationalism is Graeme Morton, *Unionist Nationalism: Governing Urban Scotland, 1830–1860*, East Linton, Tuckwell Press, 1999.
- 19 Tyrrell, ‘“No common corrobbery”’, pp. 172–175.
- 20 Richard Finlay, ‘Heroes, Myths and Anniversaries in Modern Scotland’, *Scottish Affairs*, vol. 18, Winter 1997, pp. 5–6; Nigel Leask, ‘“Their Groves of Sweet Myrtles”: Robert Burns and the Colonial Experience,’ in Pittock (ed.), *Robert Burns in Global Culture*, pp. 172–188.
- 21 Finlay, pp. 4–5.
- 22 R.W. Emerson, ‘Robert Burns Speech Delivered at the Celebration of the Burns Centenary, Boston, January 25, 1859’, in Edward Waldo Emerson (ed.), *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson: Miscellanies*, vol. 11, Boston, Houghton, Mifflin, 1903, p. 440.
- 23 H.J. Hanham, *Scottish Nationalism*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1968, p. 79.
- 24 Kiddle, p. 14. See also Wilkie; ‘Evolving Identities: the Scots in Hamilton, 1830–1930’, Honours thesis, Monash University, 2010, ch. 1.
- 25 *Census of Victoria, 1857*.
- 26 *Census of Victoria, 1857, 1871, 1881, 1891*.
- 27 Weston Bate, *Lucky City: The First Generation at Ballarat, 1851–1901*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1978, ch. 10.
- 28 Jan Croggon, p. 257.

- 29 Croggon, p. 274.
- 30 *The Argus*, Melbourne, 30 September 1884, p. 6.
- 31 *The Argus*, Melbourne, 22 April 1887, p. 7; *Traralgon Record*, Traralgon, December 7, 1886, p. 3; Croggon, 'Strangers in a strange land', p. 243; Tom Griffiths, 'Country Towns' in Graeme Davison and Chris McConville (eds), *A Heritage Handbook*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1991, pp. 142–143.
- 32 Nathan F. Spielvogel, *History of Ballarat: Ballarat Centenary Home-coming Celebrations, March 1935*, Ballarat, Centenary Celebrations Executive, 1935, p. 51.
- 33 *The Argus*, Melbourne, 5 August 1885, p. 6.
- 34 *The Argus*, Melbourne, 16 January 1886, p. 12.
- 35 *The Argus*, Melbourne, 22 April 1887, p. 7.
- 36 *Camperdown Chronicle*, 3 August 1937.
- 37 *The Argus*, Melbourne, 5 August 1885, p. 6.
- 38 *Traralgon Record*, 1 November 1886, p. 2.
- 39 *The Argus*, Melbourne, 22 April 1887, p. 7.
- 40 *Kilmore Free Press*, 12 May 1887, p. 1.
- 41 *The Argus*, Melbourne, 22 April 1887, p. 7.
- 42 *Kilmore Free Press*, 12 May 1887, p. 1.
- 43 Ann Mitchell, 'Nimmo, John (1819–1904)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/nimmo-john-4305/text6975>, accessed 14 June 2012.
- 44 *The Argus*, Melbourne, 22 April 1887, p. 7.
- 45 *The Argus*, Melbourne, 22 April 1887, p.7.
- 46 *The Argus*, Melbourne, 22 April 1887, p.7.
- 47 Finlay, pp. 4–5.
- 48 Tyrrell, "'No common corrobbery"', pp. 172–175; Malcolm Prentis, 'The Scottish Recruitment to Australian Elites', in James Jupp (ed.), *The Australian People: an Encyclopedia of the Nation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 659–665.
- 49 *Horsham Times*, Horsham, 26 October 1885, p. 3.
- 50 Mitchell.
- 51 James Jupp, 'The Making of the Anglo-Australian', in Jupp (ed.) *The Australian People*, pp. 796–803.
- 52 David Armitage, 'The Scottish Diaspora', in Jenny Wormald (ed.), *Scotland: a History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 297.
- 53 Eric Richards, 'Scottish Australia 1788–1914', in Richards (ed.), *That Land of Exiles: Scots in Australia*, Edinburgh, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1988, pp. 11–12.
- 54 John Mackenzie, *Scots in South Africa*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2007, p. 7; Tom Devine, *To the Ends of the Earth: Scotland's Global Diaspora, 1750–2010*, London, Penguin, 2012, pp. 167–168.

- 55 Devine.
- 56 *The Argus*, Melbourne, 22 April 1887, p. 7.
- 57 Tom Devine, *The Scottish Nation: A Modern History*, London, Penguin, 2012, pp. 294–295.
- 58 Christopher Whatley, ‘Memorialising Burns: Dundee and Montrose Compared’, *Memory and Material Culture in Focus*, University of Glasgow—Centre for Robert Burns Studies, October 2010, pp. 1–18, located at <http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_183298_en.pdf>, accessed 11 June 2012.
- 59 *Ballarat Star*, 25 May 1889.
- 60 W.B. Kimberly, (ed.), *Ballarat and Vicinity: a Condensed but Comprehensive Account of her Financial, Commercial, Manufacturing, Mining, and Agricultural Enterprises; Her Progress and Population in the Past and Possibilities in the Future*, Ballarat, F.W. Niven, 1894, pp. 166–167.
- 61 *The Ballarat Star (BS)*, 25 May 1889.
- 62 *BS*, 25 May 1889.
- 63 *BS*, 25 May 1889.
- 64 *BS*, 25 May 1889.
- 65 *BS*, 25 May 1889.
- 66 *BS*, 25 May 1889.
- 67 S. Murray-Smith, ‘Adams, Francis William (1862–1893)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/adams-francis-william-2865/text4085>, accessed 8 May 2013.
- 68 Hanham, p. 79.
- 69 Edward J. Cowan, ‘William Wallace: the Choice of the Estates’, in Cowan (ed.), *The Wallace Book*, Edinburgh, John Donald, 2007, p. 20.
- 70 James Coleman, ‘Unionist-nationalism in Stone? The National Wallace Monument and the Hazards of Commemoration in Victorian Scotland’, in Edward J. Cowan (ed.), *The Wallace Book*, pp. 151–168.
- 71 Cited in David R. Ross, *On the Trail of William Wallace*, Edinburgh, Luath Press, 1999, p. 137.
- 72 *Ballarat Courier*, 25 May 1889.
- 73 Nuala Johnson, p. 478.

**A CULTURAL CONFLICT?
BELONGING FOR GREEK CHILD MIGRANTS IN 1960S AND
1970S MELBOURNE**

Alexandra Delliios

Abstract:

Exploring the dynamic processes involved in cultural adaptation by child migrants requires sensitivity to personal and situational expressions of belonging, as well as the social and cultural context of child migrants' experiences. With that in mind, this article aims to address some of the shortcomings of early sociological research on post-war child migrants and make a contribution to more recent cultural studies of migration and belonging. I do this via a case study of the school experiences of a dozen Greek child migrants, who arrived and settled in Melbourne in the 1960s and 1970s. Specific attention is given to schools, with the aim of scrutinizing the monolithic application of the 'cultural conflict thesis' and its attendant separation of Anglo-Australian and ethnic cultural expectations.

[Australia] is the only society where I feel relatively at ease, safe and comfortable ... Yet I cannot claim to belong here fully ... To say that it is a lack or a vacancy is an approximation approaching truth, yet not quite touching it. Nor is it a matter of substitutions: I yearn for Europe, but it is a Europe that no longer exists, and may never have existed. The closest I can get to a description of this condition, dilemma, perplexity, or whatever term may be put upon it, is to say that it is an existence between two worlds. IN THIS PASSAGE, Andrew Riemer provides poignant insight into what has often been described in sociology and social psychology from the 1960s onwards

as a 'cultural conflict'. Similar sentiments can be found in what is classified as 'migrant literature' in Australia: expressions of being torn between two often incompatible cultures, of belonging 'between' two homelands. Perhaps 'cultural conflict' and the 'softer social science concept' of belonging are difficult (and perhaps impossible) topics for the type of 'empirical' analysis sought in the social sciences. On the other hand, migrant literature and personal narratives, such as Riemer's, provide insight into the subjective and constantly evolving processes child migrants undertake when constructing belonging. One of the faults of the earliest academic studies of child migrants—conducted under the disciplines of sociology, social psychology, and demography—is the lack of credence given to the child migrant's own articulation of belonging and the ever-changing and situational nature of ethnic identity.

This article attempts to address the lack of nuance contained in the earliest empirical studies of child migrants, through a specific historical analysis of cultural conflict, adaptation and belonging amongst a group of twelve Greek migrants who arrived as children and settled in Melbourne during the 1960s and 1970s. In the last two decades, cultural historians and anthropologists have published widely on the issue of belonging and adaptation, and with due attention to subjective experiences. They implicitly undermine the simplicity of the cultural conflict thesis. I hope to add to this evolving field of literature with my own case study. I examine how these Greek child migrants negotiated the cultural expectations of Anglo-Australian society and the cultural expectations of their ethnic family and community to arrive at a sense of belonging in the school. Additionally, this article also examines the idea of 'Anglo-Australian' and 'ethnic' cultural expectations as residing in two discrete spaces—the school and the home.

Cultural Conflict

Early studies of child migrants have been implicitly or explicitly shaped by the 'cultural conflict' thesis—an often simplistic explanation of the child migrant's process of cultural adaptation and identity construction in a new country. As Bosworth and Wilton argue, historians before the 1980s have been 'strangely disdainful' in their ignorance of European migration to Australia, and, by default, the earliest research was conducted by demographers, sociologists, psychologists and social scientists. Bosworth and Wilton also argue that these researchers, while contributing significantly to the field of migrant studies in Australia, have been 'flawed in their scientific objectivity'. They have typically been interested in

computing ‘levels of assimilation’.

Cultural conflict refers specifically to the presumed pressures of an assimilationist era. The school and its attendant authority figures—the child’s main source of socialisation—are seen as creating the pressure to ‘fit in’ with the prescribed Anglo-Australian ‘way of life’. This world is said to be markedly different from the one the child encounters in the home or the ethnic community, a world isolated from mainstream Australian society due to collective and institutional discrimination. The contrast between the ‘two worlds’ creates the potential for a clash, an ‘ethnic confusion’ in the vulnerable child migrant. The child is said to experience a conflict of allegiance between two static and given entities (the ethnic culture and the host culture), which are, in most instances, conceived as two irreconcilable worlds. Versions of the cultural conflict thesis have their earliest roots in the work done by American social psychologist Irvin Child in the 1930s. He studied Italian-American adolescents and explained their cultural adaptation by devising a typology of three clearly defined categories: the rebels that rejected their ethnicity; the in-groupers who guarded their ethnicity; and the apathetic who oscillated between the ‘two worlds’ without identifying with either. His ideas are also evident in the seminal works of social psychologist Erik Erikson. In 1965, Erikson’s *Childhood and Society*, and his 1968 *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, developed a theory for identity crisis that relied on tracing the child’s sense of ‘consistent communality’. Child migrants ‘acculturated’ in two opposing worlds (communities) were seen as inevitably experiencing identity-confusion. Examples of this framework of duality, or conflict between two worlds, abound in the subsequent literature, and are even peripherally present in the language used to describe more recent arrivals to Australia. In Australia, more historical work remains to be done on particular communities of post-war migrants, despite developments in cultural history of more nuanced and post-structuralist approaches to the long-term difficulties of adaptation and the complexities of identity formation. None of this is to deny that some child migrants testify to experiencing an ‘identity crisis’, which they often conceive as a conflict between cultures. Adaptation to a new life in a foreign country can be difficult and distressing, especially if cultural and institutional discrimination exists and the pressure to assimilate is not assuaged by the presence of a supportive ethnic community. These variables must be incorporated into any analysis of child migrants. As indicated, I question the cultural conflict thesis on the basis of its simple dichotomy of

‘two worlds’; its division of ethnic and host cultures; its conceptualisation of culture as an unchanging and given entity; and its universal application of this model to very specific circumstances. Furthermore, the thesis does not consider the capacity of these children to act as independent agents, or their ability to create their own sense of belonging within their given circumstances.

The testimonies analysed in this article reinforce the value of studies conducted by scholars like Amanda Wise and Fethi Mansouri, and, in the field of diaspora studies and long-distance nationalism, Zlatko Skrbis. They offer a more nuanced approach to cultural adaptation by child migrants. Rather than seeking to provide a single answer to the complex question of how child migrants construct belonging, I have adopted a similar approach that considers the subjective experience of being different. Rather than understanding belonging through imposed categories of cultural conflict, this approach gives weight to an individual’s agency within a given situation. Belonging, therefore, becomes a ‘moment of strategic articulation’—that is, a moment in which an individual develops their own strategies to belong. Within the school, my interviewees practised a dynamic synthesising of cultural codes and communicated a provisional sense of their ethnicity. This depended to some degree on the strength and importance of community networks at home, their active use of available cultural spaces, and language as a powerful tool in asserting identity.

My Interviewees

What is meant by ‘child migrants’? In this article, the term covers those who arrived with their families before the age of fourteen and after the age of six, and so attended primary or high school in Australia. My interviewees needed to be of school age when they arrived in Melbourne, in order for me to explore and interrogate the cultural conflict thesis, which identifies the school as a place of Anglo-Australian socialisation and, therefore, a place that often created ethnic confusion. In this new environment, the child migrant—presumably unlike the second-generation Australian-born Greek—had to re-evaluate and reconstruct their sense of belonging in a new place. Child migrants’ experiences were also different from those of their parents. The children’s development occurred in Melbourne and places there became their own, a familiar cultural geography with understood codes of behaviour, codes that often remained unknowable and potentially alien to their parents. Their parents, isolated from Australian society and



*Migrant school boys at a South Melbourne school.
(Courtesy of Gary Kyriakos Dellios.)*

working in factories with a high migrant workforce, socialised with a small circle of extended family and close friends from their village or region in Greece.

Representative of many Greeks who settled in Melbourne in the post-war era, almost all twelve interviewees came from rural parts of northern Greece. Their parents were tobacco farmers or pastoral workers and chose to migrate to Australia for economic reasons. They entered jobs in the booming manufacturing sector, while their children entered the local state schools. Following patterns of chain migration, seven of my interviewees originally settled in the inner-city suburbs of Melbourne, and the remaining six settled in the Oakleigh area (in Melbourne's south-east). By the late 1960s—when my interviewees arrived in Australia—these suburbs contained a high Southern European migrant population. What's more, they arrived during a transitional period of Australia's past: the abandonment of assimilation from the 1960s, and the ideological and structural foundation of what would become, in the late 1970s, the policy of multiculturalism.

For my interviewees, the school was not an exclusively 'Anglo-Australian' realm always at variance with the world they encountered at

home. The school featured in their memories as another space in which they developed their interpersonal relationships and enacted their various identities. Furthermore, momentary (and often cross-cultural) exchanges with their peers influenced my interviewees' subjective identification of themselves as Greeks and their construction of belonging in Melbourne. The headings featured in this article—finding friends; discrimination and ethnic otherness; language use; sport and fitting in—were chosen based on my interviewees' own identification of a number of exchanges and activities central to their belonging.

I had one informal meeting with each interviewee, after all twelve responded either to an advertisement within the regional ethnic press or to word-of-mouth, and then held a formal one-hour interview.

A Note on Using Oral History

Since the 1980s, oral history has occupied an important place in the historiography of Australian immigration. These early projects aimed to give a voice to previously, sparsely documented cohorts of people. Migrants have traditionally been represented via official sources, which examine demographic or economic issues in relation to the implementation of either assimilation or multiculturalism. Oral history, therefore, provides a means of exploring the experiences of the marginalised and has consequently been heavily used in immigration studies.

The use of oral testimonies—the personal narratives that make stories of migration and adaptation palpable and human—is integral to my intention of scrutinising sociological models and categories of cultural conflict. Oral history can also illuminate the long-term and ongoing nature of adaptation and identity formation. Eric Richards considers this one of the advantages of oral history—its ability to capture the 'lifelong trajectories of personal migration'. Demographers, sociologists and even cultural studies academics do not have access to—or do not give credence to—the long-term outcomes of migration. Migration, settlement and adaptation should be seen as lifelong processes. Oral testimony provides access to these processes, the personal trajectories of a specific group—in this case, post-war child migrants. Accounting for these lifelong trajectories and allowing individuals to articulate their own sense of belonging, to perform the retelling of their lives, has the effect of readdressing the simplistic assumptions of the cultural conflict thesis. Of course, the limitations of using oral testimony have been the focus of much criticism. Nonetheless,

they have significant implications. We know that memories are mediated by the passage of time. The act of remembering brings the individual past into the present; therefore, we must consider the ‘time of the telling’ when analysing oral testimony. The methodological question then is: can I have access to a separate past from which to make interpretations? Can I form a hypothesis about the child’s experience of adaptation in 1960s and 1970s Melbourne? These memories are reworked and negotiated by present circumstances in complicated, and often indecipherable, ways. An individual or collective story may be influenced by other stories in circulation and subject to popular modes of storytelling—i.e. the ways we are *expected* to speak about a particular past. For example, a common narrative regarding post-war migration in Australian news media and popular fiction is the ‘migrant success story’. This is a story to which many former migrants ascribe in order to make sense of their lives within a wider historical (and often nationalist) story.

These limits to oral testimony, however, are not a limitation in the context of this article. Oral testimony lends itself well to inquiries into subjective identification and the ongoing process of identity formation. This article does not claim to be a comprehensive history of Greek child migrants in Melbourne during the 1960s and 1970s. I am not taking this limited sample as representative of the entire group. Rather, their testimonies offer a means to contribute to the development of more nuanced methods of assessing and understanding the child migrant’s construction of belonging.

Finding Friends

The Greek migrants who arrived in Melbourne from the late 1960s encountered a well-established, larger and more assertive Greek community than those who arrived in the immediate post-war era, especially within the industrial suburbs of the inner-city. In many of the schools my interviewees attended, there was a large migrant (and often Greek) student population. Furthermore, the ideology of assimilation was slowly but surely being broken down, replaced by an ambiguous ideology of ‘integration’. While integration assumed the same end result as assimilation, it also symbolised the collective acceptance of public expressions of cultural difference. Students at Melbourne’s state schools came from a tightly defined geographical zone. Accordingly, the ethnic community networks my interviewees established in their suburbs, on their streets and in their homes, were replicated within the school. These relationships were helpful



*Gathering of families who arrived on the Patris in 1969.
(Courtesy of Gary Kyriakos Dellios.)*

in easing them into the Australian school, alleviating the possibility of alienation and the pressure to abandon familiar cultural mores. Helen Strangos, who arrived in Australia and settled in Fitzroy in 1965 at the age of six, makes this clear:

There were about a hundred and ten kids all up [at George Street State Primary]. About thirty of us were the village [Kozani] kids. So the vice-principal, Mr O'Brien, used to call us the Kozani kids. We ran the school. We had people from prep level—who was my brother—up until Grade 6, all attending from the village. So when we hung out it was such a big group, we didn't feel intimidated or anything like that. We settled in really, really well. Melbourne's such a big Greek place anyway. There were Greek-speaking families everywhere. Even at the school the majority were [Greek]. Our neighbours were all Greek. So I didn't feel out of place ... I didn't feel foreign because I still had so much of back home here. In her effort to oppose my initial suggestion that the child migrant experienced a cultural conflict within an Australian school, Helen repeatedly insisted she 'didn't feel foreign'. Knowing that I am not a Melburnian, Helen also adopted the task of educating me about her city. She promoted the view of Melbourne as a 'big Greek place' or 'really very multicultural'. Certainly, some areas of Melbourne were increasingly multi-ethnic from the 1960s, (though admittedly Melbourne was not the outwardly multicultural and cosmopolitan city it is considered

to be today). The 1960s witnessed the visible cultural evolution of certain precincts within the inner-city, including parts of Fitzroy, which became the cultural locale of resident Greeks, Italians and Yugoslavians. Undeniably, Helen's adjustment in Fitzroy and her adaptation in the Australian school were assisted by the presence of 'Greek-speaking families everywhere'. There was little chance of her feeling completely 'foreign'.

Helen Strangos remembered her childhood with a great deal of fondness. However, she was able to contrast her positive childhood narrative with more negative recollections that she had heard from other Greeks: 'I don't think I've ever had people around me who've been the, you know, wog bashers and that sort of thing. I know a lot of people have experienced that but I can't really say I have.' This contrast with her own narrative perhaps enhances her fondness for her childhood and her certainty that she does, and always has, belonged in a 'multicultural' Melbourne. Helen Koryfas, who arrived in 1968 at the age of nine and settled in Clayton, described a different process of finding friends and adapting to the Australian school. Like Helen Strangos, she settled in an area with a number of other families from her village. However, no other children from her village of Terpni were enrolled in her grade at Clayton South Primary. She described being paired up on her first day with an Australian-born Greek student. This was common practice in Australian schools throughout the 1950s and 1960s, especially in inner-city state schools that lacked the resources and time to devote attention to the needs of individual child migrants. Helen remembered being a 'shadow behind him for a month', too afraid to interact with others. Eventually, other Greeks came to Clayton South Primary, and Helen 'clung to them'. She insisted that 'everyone sort of found each other'. Forming this social group took her roughly six months. Her friends were mostly Greek, and all migrants. They 'stuck together' in the early years. Helen provided a clear and progressive narrative of her process of settling in, which she approximated with 'moving out' of her tight circle of friends and ceasing to 'cling' to other Greeks. She said: 'Slowly, slowly, we made friends that were not Greek as well ... when I started having good Australian friends ... a year later, I started to make friends with Australian kids and Italians and other nationalities.' To Helen, this was an important step in establishing a sense of belonging as it meant ease of movement within the Australian school. Her school space was no longer restricted to a small set of Greek migrants, those she would cling to out of fear of the unknown, or fear of humiliation because of her lack of English. The limits



*Greek wedding, South Melbourne, circa 1970.
(Courtesy of Gary Kyriakos Dellios.)*

of her social space had previously compounded her migrant status—in other words, her unstable and transitional position, her non-belonging. ‘Moving out’ to ‘other nationalities’, therefore, enabled her to feel a sense of permanency and belonging.

Discrimination and Ethnic Otherness

Rosenthal and Hrynevich argue that ethnic identity is expressed at the boundaries of otherness, which can be demarcated by both internal *and* external forces. As such, confrontations with the ethnically different are significant for the formation of identity. The popular and scholarly literature frequently refers to those children, who, experiencing negative reactions from students due to their ethnic otherness, ‘wished not to be Greek’. However, my interviewees offered alternative narratives. Certainly, memories of discrimination featured, but its importance (their ‘re-translation’ of its importance) varied in the way it shaped their ethnic otherness and their subsequent belonging within the school. Anna Sfitskis arrived in Melbourne in 1968 at the age of thirteen. Her family settled in Clayton, and she eventually attended Westall High after being made to repeat a year of primary school at Clayton South Primary. Throughout the interview, she made repeated references to the lack of Greek students

within her high school. She remembered feeling scared, with no one to guide her and being unable to communicate. Her attitude towards her rendering of ethnic otherness is particularly telling. While she did not recall any explicit discrimination, she developed a technique for avoiding the Anglo-Australian other based on fear of possible stigmatizing. Hers was a self-imposed exclusion based on her assessment of external and collective attitudes towards her ethnicity:

Anna: I hated high school... I think I did [make friends] but I was always scared that someone was going to do something to me or say something to me. Because that was the age when they really started to hate the wogs. And I was always conscious that someone was going to pick on me or tease me.

Interviewer: Do you remember any fights?

Anna: No, no ...

Interviewer: How long before you formed a group in high school?

Anna: No, I don't think [I formed a group] ...

Interviewer: Did you ever feel shame in expressing or being Greek?

Anna: Oh yeah, I used to be scared all the time. Because when I went there ... with me, I really felt that everyone hated Greeks. I was always on edge that someone was going to pick on me. It never happened. But I was really scared.

Interviewer: So you tried to hide it? How did you try to hide being Greek?

Anna: Oh, I didn't try to hide it! I was just very quiet and kept out of everything. Michael Taussig argues 'the principle of identity itself cannot exist without the phantasmic presence of a feared other'. Clearly, the presence of this discrimination at the hands of Anglo-Australian others ('a feared other') affected Anna's feeling of belonging within the school. Interestingly, she eventually refused to extrapolate on her careful avoidance of this assumed ethnic discrimination and label it 'hiding her ethnicity'. The initial admission of ethnic shame ('oh yeah'), later repudiated by further questioning, might have been a reaction to my leading question: 'Did you ever feel shame in expressing or being Greek?'. Anna later told me: 'I will always be Greek.' While her fear of discrimination had a significant effect on her view of her new environment, she stopped short of admitting to having felt any ethnic shame or pressure to conform. In this sense, fear and pride easily co-exist. Anna (the reticent person she admits to still being) has always guarded her ethnicity. Consequently, her identity within the school was not necessarily

at variance with her identity within the home and community—though she has been able to operate more confidently and enact her specifically ethnic identity within these ‘safe’ spaces.

Arthur Strangos, who arrived and settled in Richmond in 1967 at the age of eight, attended a multi-ethnic inner-city state school. He provided an alternative narrative:

I did hate my first two years of primary school ... even though there were a lot of other European kids there, the fact that a lot of them had been here a year earlier, or a couple of years earlier, it was like they sort of had their connections, and me being the odd one out, there was the mocking, the harassment of being the new kid in town, the foreigner, the wog. Basically, I found myself nearly in trouble every day, fighting, getting involved in incidents. It was always racially motivated. The common thing was: ‘You wog, what are you doing, go back to your country.’ And me, I was obviously an angry little boy as well. I’d retaliate. Yeah, there was a lot of those incidents. That carried on. But the first two years especially at George Street.

Occasionally, what made it worse was being ridiculed or picked on—because again being the new kid in town—by children that were of similar backgrounds to me, whether Yugoslav or Italian. But because they’d had those couple of extra years here, and they felt a little bit more at ease. I couldn’t handle *them* giving me a hard time. I could understand the local boys giving me a hard time, but I could not accept it or tolerate it from children that came from the same background as me. In Arthur’s recollections, ethnicity is not always the basis for conflict. Momentary encounters with the ethnic other prompted him to assert a specifically ethnic identity. However, he switched between describing himself as the ‘wog’ and as the ‘new kid in town’. Indeed, incidents of discrimination are described once as ‘always racially motivated’, and then later, as a result of his ‘being the new kid in town’. Despite this switching, which initially seems contradictory, the two descriptions need not be mutually exclusive. Arthur was able to firmly place the latter description (‘the new kid in town’) into a specifically ethnic context: it was the fact that ‘children of similar [ethnic] background’ were setting themselves against him that prompted a response. Arthur, to this day, has an idea of the rules of ethnic allegiance, which he witnessed children ‘from the same background’ not abiding by. On one level, this particular discrimination reinforced Arthur’s sense of migrancy (his displacement, sense of transience and non-belonging), but denied him a sense of ethnic otherness and membership to an ethnic (or Southern European) group. Ultimately, his interpersonal relationships within the Australian school emerge as more complicated in nature than simply ‘ethnic versus Australian’. All twelve interviewees illuminate the complex

and provisional nature of their interactions.

Chris Toutoglou, who arrived in Melbourne in 1969 at the age of six, provided an example of the contested nature of memory, and the subsequent importance of deciphering the complex and implicit ‘re-translation’ involved in the act of remembering. When remembering discrimination, he articulated a number of conflicting narrative strains, which can perhaps be attributed to the clash and negotiation between personal and collective forms of remembrance:

The Aussies used to call us wogs and that. But, it wasn’t really a problem. We didn’t really get into a lot of fights with them ... we clashed a little bit with some of the Aussie kids, but not really badly, because in the end the school was so multicultural that the Aussies couldn’t really go ‘wogs, wogs, wogs’. In the end, there was Yugoslavian kids, Italian kids, Greek kids. All nationalities. The Australians were probably becoming the minority in Clayton. But, I think I sort of came in the era where it became more comfortable. Whereas my older cousin Peter [Koryfas] had more of a problem.

After a couple of those fights, I got a bit of a reputation as a tough guy, and I was all right then. No issues. But I wasn’t one that would go around bashing people. I was fine ... you had to stand up for yourself. I didn’t really have a problem with the Aussies. In the eighties, there was a group of guys in Oakleigh. Oakleigh was highly Greek-populated. Every second house in Oakleigh is Greek, even today. There was a youth gang: the Oakleigh wogs. I used to know a few of them. I wasn’t in the gang, but I knew them, so that was all right ... there was no problems. There was a lot of idiots in that gang. They’d go around skippy bashing, like bash up Aussie kids and that ... they’d got a reputation. I didn’t like doing that. I never went and hung out with them ... [but] I had no issues like Peter had. Chris did not remember much ethnic discrimination directed against him. However, his reasons for this lack of discrimination alternated between descriptions of Melbourne as multicultural (a collective narrative), and his affiliation with an ethnic gang (a more personal narrative). Additionally, he contrasted his personal experience of discrimination with that of his older cousin, Peter. His cousin experienced the racial discrimination that Chris only remembered by second-hand experience. Consequently, for Chris, recounting discrimination became an intricate balancing act—especially when describing the activities of the ‘Oakleigh wogs’ and then the experiences of Peter. He asserted that he did not condone the activities of the Oakleigh wogs (skippy bashing), but also conveyed the sense that they protected him against the type of discrimination experienced by Peter. Ultimately, his multiculturalism is not the harmonious

one promoted by official policy, but rather the creation of spaces in which 'Aussies' are so outnumbered by 'ethnics' that the Aussies themselves become the objects of discrimination.

Peter Koryfas, for his part, re-fashions a personal past that is explicitly linked to his present sense of identity. His recollections offer an example of what Lewis and Sandra Hinchman call the 'self-shaping quality of human thought', the ability of memory to re-fashion personal pasts and identities. Nathalie Nguyen, in her discussion of memory and trauma, also points to the 'regenerative aspects of memory-making'. In Peter's case, placing memories of trauma within a collective framework and interweaving them with stories of others from within the community, is a regenerative process. Peter reverted to the plural and not the singular personal pronoun when discussing discrimination and asserting an aggressive ethnic pride. As such, the experience is given a new significance:

Australians always used to call us wogs ... we used to have a lot of fights ... support one another. We used to go for it. Hit the Australian kids. They used to bash us. We used to bash them ... We used to think we're the best. Greeks were the best. That's what we believed, and that's what I still believe ... we were proud. All the Greek boys. Proud that we're Greeks. Doesn't matter what they called us. I used to say, 'One day, you Australians, you're going to be under us. We're going to take over.' And we did. Look at some Australian boys, they got nothing. Look at us now. We got our houses, we got our kids, we got everything. We're comfortable. They're not. Peter's collective remembering offered him a way to deal with potentially traumatic memories. These memories are regenerated by his current measure of his generation's social mobility ('we got everything'). His experience of discrimination serves as a reference point in his narrative, a satisfying contrast to his present sense of financial security and, as a result, his ease and confidence in belonging. For Peter, the act of remembering is a regenerative process, because it serves as a refutation of the discrimination of his childhood and adolescence.

Language Use

In regards to state and Commonwealth policy on child migrant education, the 1960s was an ambivalent time. During the height of assimilationist policy in the 1950s, teachers reportedly forbade or discouraged the use of languages other than English by migrant students. Despite government inquiries and independent research into migrant education, it was not until the 1970s that state and Commonwealth governments realised the difficulties of learning English as a second language and the importance of

language proficiency in assisting adaptation and social mobility. Concrete programs and services were put in place to assist migrants, and, in 1970, the Commonwealth began funding the teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL). The ability to switch between English and Greek was a key skill in constructing and establishing a cultural space in which my interviewees could operate comfortably.

Ari Papadopoulos remembered his experience of learning English vividly. He frequently returned to this experience throughout his testimony.

By Year 8, it started to get more towards English. I started to adapt, get better at communicating with them ... I stopped relying on getting information and help from the friends to improve my marks. So, dictionary out. But my thoughts were still in Greek. I knew what the teachers were after. I was able to understand all that. And then I would simply think in Greek and I would translate. So I spent a lot of time with a dictionary ...

The language was difficult. I had to work hard at it. The grammar wasn't as structured like the Greek was. I found that difficult. It was my initiative. To say, no, I'm not getting what I need from the friends. I understood I would ask the teachers. I would get the understanding before I left the classroom what the teacher was after. The kids would help with the translation. Once I knew what the teacher was after, then I would sit down at home and put it all together. Then, with the dictionary, would help me to translate. After halfway through Form 2, it just turned around. I had one of my books that I've kept and gave it to someone else to help them out with their English. Throughout the interview, Ari continued to refer proudly to his proficiency in both English and Greek. The act of giving away his English language dictionary to another migrant confirmed his progress and sense of hard-earned achievement. His emphasis on personal initiative was significant in his construction of belonging. The achievement was all his own; Ari does not mention attendance at ESL classes. For Ari, this hard-earned proficiency in both languages enabled him to confidently articulate pride in what he saw as a deservedly privileged socioeconomic status. Even his current identification with a professional class is ultimately linked to his ethnic identity—that is, via his identification with the collective narrative of Greek migrants' social mobility. Indeed, Ari frequently contrasted his generation's ability to achieve cultural, linguistic and economic security, with his parents and their generation, who 'didn't bother to try and learn the language [due to] poor education'. For Ari, his parents never truly belonged. This generational divide is a constant reference point throughout Ari's testimony and serves to accentuate Ari's own sense of hard-earned belonging. He views his mastering of English as a clear turning point in his education and in his ability to function with ease in Melbourne.

One thing he now prides himself on as a 'Greek-Australian' is being able to switch adeptly between English and Greek.

The child migrant's sense of belonging is also shaped by restrictions on places of language use. Official assimilationist rhetoric in the 1950s argued that the child's continued use of their native language was a barrier to successful assimilation. However, teachers in overcrowded and underfunded state schools were the first to demand structural and ideological changes to assimilation. By the 1960s, most inner-city state schools in Melbourne had a high migrant student population—so high that Australian-born students were sometimes in the minority. Such a concentrated group of migrants could not be expected to forego their native tongue when speaking amongst themselves, especially within ESL classes. Indeed, Barbara Katsimbas remembered speaking only Greek with her fellow students in these classes. None of my interviewees remembered being reprimanded for speaking Greek in or outside the classroom; a couple even remember learning some Italian or Slavic words in order to communicate with their migrant peers. Evidently, it was not a matter of split uses across circumscribed places. This particular group of child migrants could blend, pick and choose (depending on the situation) their language of choice. So much so, that this is the generation that coined the term 'Gringlish', a hybrid form of English and Greek, much to the frustration of their parents who spoke only Greek. Helen Strangos describes it as 'that half Greek, half English. That's what you speak with most Greek people. It's funny, like, it's predominately English with a number of Greek words thrown in all the time'. Their ability and freedom to use Gringlish, Greek or English was important in simultaneously facilitating their ability to express a provisional ethnic otherness and to demonstrate their ease of function and thus their sense of belonging in any given space.

Sport and Fitting In

Amanda Wise analyses 'everyday mundane situations' in order to better understand 'cross-cultural transgressions' (crossing cultural borders) in multicultural societies. She concludes that these transgressions are momentary and reciprocal. Both Ari Papadopoulos and Faye Merkouris were able to explicitly identify sport, an 'everyday mundane' school activity, as a key factor in developing their belonging and security within the school. Indeed, sport aided momentary and reciprocal encounters across cultures. This disputes many stereotypes regarding the accepted cultural

segregation of sports within the Australian school. Ari remembered the 'more understanding ones' as those Anglo-Australian students with whom he played sport; however, he presents this relationship as non-hierarchical. Agency is shared: neither party is more active in joining in, nor inviting the others to join in. In this way, his subjective assessment of this 'everyday mundane' activity disputed the stereotypes, and also provided an image of cultures as mutually interactive.

Although they still were teasing us, we were still able to get along. Despite the lack of English, we were still able to play sport outside ...

With the Greek kids, we had no problem. We created a friendship over time. So we were able to see each other outside of school. But with some of the other boys, we were able to see because they used to play football, cricket at summer time, weekends and things like that. They would go back to the school and set up a game and kick the ball around and play cricket. We used to catch up that way. Faye Merkouris, who arrived in Melbourne at the age of ten in 1967, provides similar assessments of the role of sport in her childhood. Indeed, Faye had a very clear idea of sport being used as a means to fit in and be accepted by the 'locals'. Faye had moved schools and suburbs twice before settling in Chadstone, so finding ways to fit in was especially pressing for her.

[In Richmond Primary] my group of friends at the time were migrants, but I was mixing in because I loved sports. I was quite good at sports. The minute the non-migrants saw that I was doing rounders and other sports, and saw that I was good at it, all of a sudden they were coming close to me ... halfway through the year everybody accepted me because I was good in sports.

[At Chadstone] there was no migrants at all ... that was more of a difficult time than any other. What I discovered, I was good in cricket ... What happened at the end of Form 1 [Year 7], we played a lot of sports for the last two weeks, boys versus girls. One of the teams we had was cricket. I was a very good bowler. I managed to bowl out three boys ... and after that I was accepted. I was part of everybody then because I played cricket. Not to my liking, but I happened to be good. So, it came to Form 2 and already I was part of them. Faye actively sought ways to fit in. She also referred to her skills in maths, which proved to the 'locals' that she 'was not dumb'. She now sets herself against such (self-ascribed) migrant stereotypes, often citing her progression through high school and university. None of this, however, is to imply that Faye felt any 'ethnic shame'. Faye's recollections demonstrate the role of individual agency in engaging in reciprocal cross-cultural interactions. That is, she strategically employs these interactions, not only as a means to fit in, but

as a means to communicate ethnic pride. Faye insists that every opportunity she had, she would 'speak out for it [being Greek] ... I was there to prove to them: we're as good as them, if not better'. Contrary to the hypotheses offered in the sociological literature, 'fitting in' does not translate as 'abandoning ethnic identification'.

When it came to their identities and sense of belonging, the school and the home were not two worlds at variance with each other. As evidenced above, the school in particular was not an exclusively Anglo-Australian realm in which their identities felt constrained. The conceptual separation of these two spaces has been undermined by the testimonies about school provided. The situational, complex, and ever changing nature of identity, ethnicity and belonging deny such simple and unworkable dichotomies. Interviewees constructed their identities in relation to a number of different scenarios, both collective and personal. At moments, these testimonies demonstrate the child migrant's desire to 'fit in', but this does not negate the parallel desire to guard his or her Greekness. Entrenched empirical concepts of cultural conflict conceal the dynamic nature of the process of constructing belonging.

NOTES

- 1 Andrew Riemer, *Inside Outside: Life between Two Worlds*, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1992, pp. 1–2.
- 2 See, for example: Rochelle E. Ball, *Worlds Turned Upside Down: Stories of Migrant Children in Contemporary Australia: The Canberra Community Experience*, Canberra, Ginninderra Press, 2005; Constantine Castan, *Conflicts of Love*, Brisbane, Phoenix Publications, Brisbane, 1986; Dina Amanatides, 'Return', in George Kanarakis (ed.), *Greek Voices in Australia: a Tradition of Prose, Poetry and Drama*, Sydney, Australian National University Press, 1987, pp. 231–235; Litsa Gogas, 'Homeland, you are wounding me', in Helen Nickas and Konstandina Dounis (eds), *Re-telling the Tale*, Melbourne, Owl Publishing, 1994, p. 100; Nance Donkin, *The Greek-Australian Experience: Stranger and Friend*, Melbourne, Dove Communications, 1983; Harry Logus, 'Memories', in George Kanarakis (ed.), p. 241.
- 3 Zlatko Skrbis, Loretta Baldassar and Scott Poynting, 'Introduction—Negotiating Belonging: Migration and Generations', *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, vol. 28, no. 3, August 2007, p. 261.
- 4 For examples of the cultural conflict thesis in the scholarly literature, see Irvin Child, *Italian or American?: the Second Generation in Conflict*, New York, Russell & Russell, 1940; Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, New York, Norton, 1965; Erik Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, London, Faber and Faber, 1968; Alan Stoller (ed.), *New*

- Faces: Immigration and Family Life in Australia*, Melbourne, F.W. Cheshire, 1966; Joti Bhatnagar, *Immigrants at School*, London, Cornmarket Press, 1970; M.L. Kovacs and A.J. Cropley, *Immigrants and Society: Alienation and Assimilation*, Sydney, McGraw-Hill, 1975; Kristen Allen et al., *Greek Families in Hawthorn and Clifton Hill*, Melbourne, General Studies Department, Swinburne College of Technology, 1974; David Cox, 'Greek Boys in Melbourne', in Charles Price (ed.), *Greeks in Australia*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1975, pp. 143–87; W.F. Connell et al., *12 to 20: Studies of City Youth*, Sydney, Hicks Smith & Sons, 1975; Eva Isaacs, *Greek Children in Sydney*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1976; Gillian Bottomley, *After the Odyssey: a Study of Greek Australians*, Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1979; Louis Cohen and Lawrence Manion, *Multicultural Classrooms: Perspectives for Teachers*, London, Croom Helm, 1983; Georgina Tsolidis, *Educating Voula/prepared by Georgina Tsolidis for the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Multicultural and Migrant Education*, Melbourne, Ministry of Education, 1986; Voula Efthimiadis and Christine Manolopoulos, *Listen to Me = Akoyste Me: a Study of Greek Youth Attitudes on the Traditional Family*, Melbourne, 1992; Ellie Vasta, 'Youth and Ethnicity: The Second Generation', in Carmel Guerra and Rob White (eds), *Ethnic Minority Youth*, Hobart, National Clearinghouse for Youth Studies, 1995, pp. 55–67; J.A. Athanasou, G. Siefen, and B.D. Kirkcaldy, 'Parental Attitudes: A Study of German, Greek, and Second Generation Greek Migrant Adolescents', *Human Relations*, vol. 49, no. 6, 1996, pp. 837–51, Paul Kraus, *A New Australian, A New Australia*, Sydney, The Federation Press, 1995, p. 37.
- 5 Richard Bosworth and Janis Wilton, 'A Lost History?: the Study of European Migration to Australia', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 27, no. 2, 1981, p. 222.
 - 6 Bosworth and Wilton.
 - 7 Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council Committee, 'First Report on the Progress and Assimilation of Migrant Children in Australia', Canberra, Australian Government Printing Service, 1960, pp. 1–30.
 - 8 W.F. Connell et al., pp. 1–3; Dimitris C. Anagnostopoulos, Maria Vlassopoulos, and Helen Lazaratou 'Forced Migration, Adolescence and Identity Formation', *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 66, no. 3, September 2006, p. 225; Desmond Cahill and John Ewen, *Australian Youth towards the Year 2001: a Multicultural Perspective*, Melbourne, School of Community Services and Policy Studies, Phillip Institute of Technology, 1988, p. 3.
 - 9 Eva Isaacs, *Greek Children at School and After*, ERDC Report No. 29, Canberra, Australian Government Printing Service, 1981, pp. 30–50; Athanasou, Siefen, and Kirkcaldy, pp. 840–8; Jacqueline Goodnow and Judith Cashmore, 'Parents' Expectations in Some Australian Groups: Cultural Differences', in Millicent E. Poole, Philip R. De Lacey and Bikkar S. Randhawa (eds), *Australia in Transition: Culture and Life Possibilities*, Sydney, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985, p. 233.
 - 10 Child cited in Bottomley, *After the Odyssey*, p. 169.
 - 11 Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, pp. 11–21; Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, p. 21.
 - 12 Alejandro Portes and Ruben G. Rumbaut, *Legacies: the Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001, p. 108, 231–74.

- 13 Portes and Rumbaut.
- 14 Stephen Garton, 'On the Defensive: Post-structuralism and Australian Cultural History', in Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White (eds), *Cultural History in Australia*, Sydney, UNSW Press, 2003, pp. 50–53; Fethi Mansouri (ed.), *Youth Identity and Migration: Culture, Values and Social Connectedness*, Melbourne, Common Ground, 2009.
- 15 Nickas and Dounis (eds), *Re-telling the Tale*.
- 16 Michael Tsounis, 'Greek Communities in Australia', in Charles Price (ed.), *Greeks in Australia*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1975, pp. 13–19.
- 17 David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, London, Routledge, 1996, p. 472; Norman Vasu, *How Diasporic Peoples Maintain Their Identity in Multicultural Societies*, Lewiston, Edwin Mellen Press, 2008, pp. 6–7.
- 18 Eva Isaacs, *Greek Children in Sydney*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1976, p. 69; Jacqueline Goodnow and Judith Cashmore, p. 233.
- 19 A.M. Tamis, *The Greeks in Australia*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 48.
- 20 See, for example, W.F. Connell et al., pp. 243–250.
- 21 Amanda Wise, 'Everyday Multiculturalism: Transversal Crossings and Working Class Cosmopolitans', in Amanda Wise and Selvaraj Velayutham (eds), *Everyday Multiculturalism*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 21–45.
- 22 Wendy Lowenstein and Morag Loh, *The Immigrants*, Melbourne, Penguin, 1978. And see, for example, Michael Cigler, *The Czechs in Australia*, Melbourne, AE Press, 1983; James Jupp, *The Australian People: An Encyclopaedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- 23 Eric Richards, 'Hearing Voices: an Introduction. Visible and Audible Immigrants', in Eric Richards and A. James Hammerton (eds), *Speaking to Immigrants: Oral Testimony and the History of Australian Migration*, Canberra, Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies, 2002, p. 8.
- 24 Even a cursory hearing of the recordings contained in the National Library of Australia's *Greek-Australian Oral History and Folklife Project* indicates that adaptation occurs in everyday practices, and that these practices did not always pit one fully formed and static identity against another.
- 25 Typically, these criticisms focus on memory's fallibility, its tendency to reinterpret the past in light of present circumstances. Ultimately, however, to dismiss oral testimony on the basis of its 'subjectivity' denies the subjectivity of all sources (including 'documentary' evidence); the same rules often apply when reading written sources. For an extreme critique of oral testimony's 'unreliability' and the virtues of 'documentary' evidence over 'reported' evidence, see Anthony Seldon and Joanna Papworth, *By Word of Mouth: Elite Oral History*, London, Methuen, 1983, pp. 5, 16–30.
- 26 Although, by virtue of their being from northern Greece, settling in a spread of inner-city suburbs and in Oakleigh, these twelve interviewees are, nevertheless, fairly representative (in terms of socioeconomic status) of the Greek migrants who arrived in Melbourne from the 1960s. But, of course, this article remains focussed on their subjective experience of difference and their construction of belonging.

- 27 Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission, 'Greeks in Victoria: Policies, Directions, and Initiatives', in Charles Price (ed.), *Greeks in Australia*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1975, pp. 181–203; Also, Dominique Francois De Stoop, *The Greeks of Melbourne*, Melbourne, Transnational Publishing Company Pty Limited, 1996, p. 61.
- 28 Tony Black, 'Migrants should fit in, say most', *The Age*, 10 November, 1977.
- 29 Helen Strangos, interviewed by the author, 31 January 2010, Melbourne.
- 30 Cutten History Committee of the Fitzroy History Society, *Fitzroy: Melbourne's First Suburb*, Melbourne, Hyland House, 1989, p. 338; T. Nicolacopoulos and G. Vassilacopoulos, 'Becoming Australians by Choice: Greek-Australian Activism in 1960s Melbourne', in Seamus O'Halon and Tanja Luckins (eds), *Go! Melbourne: Melbourne in the Sixties*, Melbourne, Circa, 2005, p. 248; Jock Collins et al., *Cosmopolitan Melbourne: Explore the World in One City*, Sydney, Big Box Publishing Pty Limited, 2001, pp. 2, 132–3.
- 31 Joy Damousi, 'Growing up in a Greek Family', in Cutten History Committee of the Fitzroy History Society, *Fitzroy: Melbourne's First Suburb*, Melbourne, Hyland House, 1989, pp. 253–254.
- 32 Keya Ganguly, 'Migrant Identities: Personal Memory and the Construction of Selfhood', *Cultural Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1, London, Taylor & Francis, January 1992, p. 33.
- 33 The Brotherhood of St. Laurence, *Two Worlds, School and the Migrant Family: A Look at the Attitudes of Eighty Migrant Children and Their Parents*, Melbourne, Stockland Press, 1971, p. 39; Vasta, pp. 55–67.
- 34 Helen Koryfas, interviewed by the author, 10 April 2010, Melbourne.
- 35 Helen Koryfas. After a year at Clayton South Primary, Helen was more proficient in English and speaking it more frequently. This was a key factor in dispelling her fear of interaction with non-Greek students.
- 36 Rosenthal and Hrynevich cited in J.A. Athanasou, 'Ethnic Background and Identity among Greek-Australian High School Pupils', *Australian Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, vol. 6, 1989, p. 12.
- 37 Jean Martin, *The Migrant Presence*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1978, p. 28.
- 38 Isaacs, *Greek Children in Sydney*, pp. 73–76; see, for example: Nickas and Dounis (eds), *Re-telling the Tale*; Alfred Kouris, *Migrant: The Blessing and Misfortune of Loving Two Countries: The Modern-Day Odyssey of the Diaspora Greeks*, Melbourne, Greek Press, 1998, p. 366.
- 39 Nicola King, *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2000, p. 21.
- 40 Anna Sfitskis, interviewed by the author, 10 April 2010, Melbourne.
- 41 Michael Taussig, *The Nervous System*, New York, Routledge, 1992, p. 73.
- 42 Arthur Strangos, interviewed by the author, 31 January 2010, Melbourne.
- 43 Wog: a derogatory term often applied to Southern European migrants in Australia's post-war era; some claim the term has been appropriated and transformed into a 'term of defiance and self-assertion for non-Anglo youth'. Cited in Tony Mitchell, 'Wogs Still Out of Work: Australian Television Comedy as Colonial Discourse', *Australasian*

- Drama Studies*, no. 20, 1992, p. 126.
- 44 King, *Memory, Narrative, Identity*, p. 21; Paula Hamilton, 'The Knife Edge: Debates about Memory and History', in Paula Hamilton and Kate Darian-Smith (eds), *Memory and History in Twentieth Century Australia*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 14.
- 45 Chris Toutoglou, interviewed by the author, 11 April 2010, Melbourne.
- 46 Lewis Hinchman and Sandra Hinchman, 'Introduction', in Lewis Hinchman and Sandra Hinchman (eds), *Memory, Identity, Community: the Idea of Narrative in the Human Sciences*, New York, State University of New York Press, 1997, p. xv.
- 47 Nathalie Huynh Chau Nguyen, *Memory Is Another Country: Women of the Vietnamese Diaspora*, Santa Barbara, Praeger, 2009, p. 13.
- 48 Peter Koryfas, interviewed by the author, 10 April 2010, Melbourne.
- 49 J.B. Cox cited in Martin, *The Migrant Presence*, p. 85; Vasta, p. 58.
- 50 J. Brennan and C. Alcorso 'ESL—A Major Equity Program', *Ethnos*, Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW, no. 52, 1986, pp. 2–3; Desmond Cahill and John Ewen, 'Services and Policy Studies', Phillip Institute of Technology, 1988, p. 16.
- 51 Aristides Papadopoulos, interviewed by the author, 1 February 2010, Melbourne.
- 52 Aristides Papadopoulos.
- 53 Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council Committee, 'First Report on the Progress and Assimilation of Migrant Children in Australia', Canberra, Australian Government Printing Service, 1960, pp. 3–4.
- 54 Martin, pp. 30–2.
- 55 De Stoop, p. 61.
- 56 Barbara Katsimbas, interviewed by the author, 8 April 2010, Melbourne.
- 57 Anna Sfitskis, interviewed by the author, 10 April 2010, Melbourne; Helen Strangos, interviewed by the author, 31 January 2010, Melbourne.
- 58 Niki Savva, *So Greek: Confessions of a Conservative Leftie*, Melbourne, Scribe, 2010, p. 22.
- 59 Helen Strangos.
- 60 Wise, p. 23.
- 61 Isaacs, *Greek Children in Sydney*, p. 2.
- 62 Aristides Papadopoulos.
- 63 Aristides Papadopoulos.
- 64 Faye Merkouris, interviewed by the author, 12 April 2010, Melbourne.
- 65 Vasta, p. 71; Kouris, p. 368.

SCHOOL TO WORK: CIVVY STREET 1939–45

John Murphy

THE 1930S WERE DEPRESSION YEARS and any job was keenly sought. Many farms, including ours, Rubybank, were barely returning their occupants the basic wage, which at that time was about £4 per week. Government and semi-government jobs with their secure tenure were highly desirable. When Woorayl Shire Council advertised for a truck driver in the early 1930s, it received 189 applicants for the position. My older brother, Dick, after trying unsuccessfully to obtain a position as a telegraph messenger in the Post Office, managed to be accepted as a junior clerk with the Victorian Railways at Moe in 1938.

After gaining my Leaving Certificate at the end of 1938, I was offered a job with the Gippsland and Northern Co-operative Coy Ltd (G & N), the local stock and station firm, but I had already sat for, and passed, the exam, for the position of telegraph messenger at the local post office. My parents advised me to stay with the Postmaster-General's Department (PMG), as, in later life, stock and station personnel were often prone to cirrhosis of the liver caused by over-drinking. Many were obliged to drink with their clients with subsequent impairment to their health. The boy who took up the position offered to me at the G & N that year died soon after reaching the age of fifty and a similar thing happened to a later boy.

Into the Work Force

I began work at the Leongatha Post Office on New Year's Day 1939, three weeks before my fifteenth birthday. To get to work, I bought a Malvern Star bike for £14 10s, which represented about twelve weeks wages at twenty-two shillings and sixpence per week. Fortunately, I was able to pay cash for

the bike as I had saved money from the many rabbits we were continually trapping or ferreting. Work was from 8 am till 5 pm, and 8 am till 12.30 pm on Saturdays. My job consisted of sorting and delivering telegrams and mail around the town. Each morning at 9 am, I would attend the local railway station to consign bags of mail on the ‘up’ train to Melbourne and at midday meet the ‘down’ train to collect the incoming mail. In railway language, all trains to Melbourne from anywhere in Victoria were known as ‘up’ and all from Melbourne were known as ‘down’ trains. On the ‘up’, the guard’s van would be loaded with cans of milk, crates of rabbits or fowls, and the odd bag of potatoes or onions etc. After the autumn rains, it would be crowded with cases of mushrooms, which flourished on the red soil near Leongatha. On the ‘down’ trains, there would be the empty milk cans, numerous parcels for the town shopkeepers, and several cases of meat pies for the local café proprietor. Occasionally, these would be stacked on a coffin for the local undertaker. If he was on his own at the station, I would know the coffin was empty, but if he had an assistant, it was almost a certainty there would be a funeral in town the next day.

At that time, houses in the town were not numbered, but many had unusual names that we had to remember. Staff at the Leongatha Post Office at that time comprised the postmaster, Mr J.C. Luckie, three postal clerks, one mail officer, two telegraph messengers and about six telephonists. The senior postal clerk agreed to come back to the office one night a week and teach us two messengers the intricacies of Morse code, then in use throughout Australia for telegraph purposes. After about two years of practice, I finally achieved a speed of more than twenty words a minute in Morse and was eligible for the position of junior postal clerk. War had broken out in September 1939 and it created a demand for telegraphists both in the armed forces and for the increased telegraph traffic on the Post Office lines.

In January 1941, a vacancy occurred at Wonthaggi Post Office for a junior postal clerk and I was sent there by the district inspector. It was my first experience of living away from home and it certainly was an eye-opener for me. Wonthaggi was still basically a mining town and many of the miners kept greyhounds. I was amazed at their number and the part that greyhound racing played in the lives of Wonthaggi people. The post office was much busier than Leongatha, particularly on pension days, as pensions were paid in cash from the post office. One week, it would be old age pensions

and the following week, it would be war pensions. At Wonthaggi, the total amount paid would be close to £1,000 each pension day.

Imagine my surprise when the postmaster handed me an automatic Browning revolver some three days after I began work there and said, 'Righto, Murph! You are to be the escort this morning!' He then showed me how to click the safety catch on the revolver and what to do to load and fire it. As we were walking back from the bank towards the post office (a distance of about a hundred yards), the postmaster carrying the money in a Gladstone bag and I with the revolver, he told me what to do if we were accosted. 'Look,' he said, 'don't worry about the money. I will throw the bag over the fence on this side of the street; you throw the gun over the fence on that side and I'll race you back to the post office!' So that was the extent of escort duties at the Wonthaggi Post Office.

On weekends, I returned to Leongatha and found that the Recreation Reserve had been taken over by the army and units of the 13th Light Horse Regiment were stationed there for six months. It was quite a sight to see fifty or sixty of these horsemen exercising along the roads adjacent to Rubybank. Later, with the onset of winter rains, the Reserve became a quagmire, so the regiment was transferred to Mt Martha. It later returned to Leongatha as a motorised unit and was based at Knox's Rockhill Farm at Nerrena for a short time before moving interstate.

Off to the City

Early in 1941, after spending some six weeks as a junior postal clerk at Wonthaggi, I applied for the position as Telegraphist in Training at the Elizabeth Street Melbourne Post Office and was accepted. Intake classes for this position were held twice yearly and we were given six months intensive training in all aspects of telegraph communication i.e. Morse code transmission, Wheatstone tape, Murray multiplex, teletype and teleprinter work. Our first priority was to master touch-typing. This was done by fastening a piece of light board over the typewriter keys and then following the manual at eye level. After a period of three months, you became reasonably proficient and I acquired a skill that was to remain valuable all my life. There were some 400 telegraphists at that time working at the Elizabeth Street Post Office. It was a busy place with the increased workload caused by the military traffic emanating from Victoria Barracks and the numerous Army, Navy and Air Force camps being established around Australia. It was a rather stressful occupation: we had a thirty-six-



*Post Office, corner Elizabeth and Bourke Streets, Melbourne, also showing the States Supply Store, c. 1900, postcard.
(RHSV Collection: PC-0053.)*

hour week even in those days, because it was found that telegraphists could not concentrate for much longer than six hours daily on transmission and receipt, particularly if it was done at high speed and in code.

The military traffic was all in code, sometimes with letters mixed up with figures e.g. z8p4t, r3y9b, w6h7k, and, after you has been at it for a few hours, your head began to get a bit foggy. It was quite a relief then to change back to the country lines, which were all in plain English. Many of the telegraphists were fascinated by horseracing and were keen to be sent to race meetings at Caulfield, Moonee Valley etc. I went out to Caulfield on one occasion, and, although we had a good view of the race track, I was not impressed with the so-called ‘Sport of Kings’. On another occasion, I was sent down to the Elizabeth Street counter to assist one Saturday morning.

Imagine my surprise when a racing tipster lined up at the counter with about one hundred telegrams to different customers all over the state. These telegrams were of the 'one shilling collect' variety, which meant that they had to be paid for on delivery. Going through this bundle of telegrams, I found that there were five different signatures on them with different horses named there—about twenty under the name of McLachlin, another twenty under Bourke, another twenty under Dempster and so on. There is a saying in the racing game that 'you pay for your sport' and I am convinced that many of those folk who followed the tips put out by the so-called experts in *The Sporting Globe* certainly paid for their sport!

My only venture into this popular pastime of picking winners proved disastrous! I was working on the Hamilton–Casterton Morse line one Saturday morning and a telegram came through directed to a well-known bookmaker placing a bet of £50 on Phoines, a horse running in the third race at Caulfield that day. I showed the telegram to the telegraphist sitting next to me before placing it on the delivery belt. He said it might be worthwhile if we put a pound or two on it as well. At that time my salary was about £3 10s a week, out of which I was paying almost £2 in board. Anyway, I bet a hard-earned pound on Phoines, which came fifth in a field of seven! It was a good lesson and cured me of any gambling tendencies.

I spent two years, 1941–42, at the Central Telegraph Office (CTO) in Elizabeth Street, during which time I boarded with another telegraphist, Tim Byrne, at boarding houses in East Melbourne—first at Wellington Parade, then at Albert Street, then later at Rose Bank, a two-storey house adjacent to the Freemasons Hospital on the corner of the Fitzroy Gardens. It was handy to the CTO and generally I rode the bike to work and sometimes walked if I had time. On one occasion, I was walking down Little Lonsdale Street and a Melbourne City Council van pulled up outside an old semi-derelict building and out jumped about a dozen or so Fox Terriers. I stopped and chatted to the man in charge and found that he was in charge of the rat-catching team that was often called upon to clean out old rat-infested buildings. Some days he would collect up to fifty, he said.

On week nights, Tim Byrne and I would often spend a couple of hours at Micky Powell's School of Dancing at the top end of Bourke Street and on Saturday nights, we would go down to Leggett's Ballroom in Prahran where we gradually improved our footwork in foxtrots, the modern waltz etc., as well as in some of the other old-time waltzes. Sometimes we would go to the West Melbourne Stadium to watch the wrestling. Two American

VF 271 ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY.

CERTIFICATE—Reserved Occupation.

The Bearer (Name) Nicholas John MURPHY,
 (Occupation) Telegraphist,
 (Address) Central Telegraph Office,
Melbourne,

has applied for enlistment for Service in Australia or overseas. He has not been accepted on the grounds that he is employed in a reserved occupation.

Signed at N. R. O., Melbourne this 16th day
 of January 19 42.

[Signature]
 Signature and Rank of Officer.

[Signature: N.J. Murphy]
 Signature of Recipient.

[Signature: W.I. R.A.N.]
 W. I. R. A. N.
[Signature: Monton Wain] (Countersigned)
 Man Power Officer.

D.3554/9.89.—C.13432.

(Courtesy of John Murphy.)

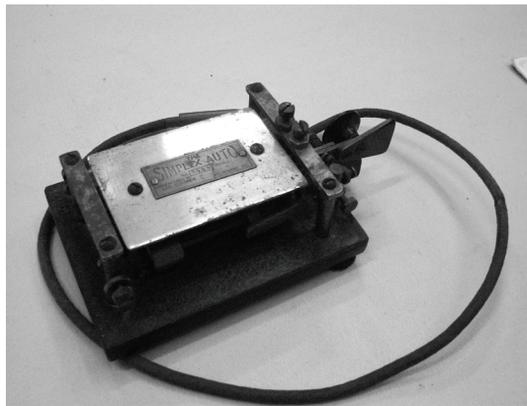
Indians, Chief Little Wolf and Pedro the Panther, were the star attractions and they certainly gave the audience their money's worth: we thought it was great fun watching them trying to toss each other out of the ring. On weekends, I would ride my bike to outlying suburbs such as Wattle Park and Heidelberg where there were still small farms and orchards.

Our former teacher at the Leongatha North State School, Mr E. Higgins, had retired and went to live in Edithvale, near Black Rock, where he built a small yacht in his backyard and then sailed it around Port Phillip Bay for a year whilst he built another one. I had kept in touch with the Higgins boys and one weekend I rode down to their home at Edithvale. Mr Higgins kindly took a few of us out to the old *Cerberus*, which had been sunk off Black Rock as a breakwater. The *Cerberus* was originally the flagship of the Victorian Navy prior to Federation and its name was given to the Flinders Naval Depot, established in the early 1900s. It was an ironclad monitor that was partly submersible, leaving only its guns above water. We climbed over this old warship, dived off its decks and swam around to our hearts' content. In the summer months, I would often work the 6 pm-to-midnight shift so that I could ride down Punt Road to St Kilda Beach for a swim.

Darwin was bombed in February 1942 and soon afterwards, while at St Kilda Beach, I saw about half a dozen large ships out in the bay. A day or two later, Melbourne was crowded with US servicemen. They took over the Melbourne Cricket Ground and Royal Park. The MCG was named Camp Murphy and Royal Park named Camp Pell after two American Army generals. General Douglas MacArthur and his staff took over the Windsor Hotel in Spring Street for several months before moving up to Brisbane.

The American troops certainly livened up old Melbourne town in the time they were stationed here—and showed our wharfies how to get things done. When they were unloading their Sherman tanks at Port Melbourne, they found that the cranes were not strong enough to lift the tanks off the ships. So oxyacetylene torches were used to cut a section out of the ship's side and lay it back onto the wharf. The tank's engines were then revved up and they roared up onto the wharf and up St Kilda Road en route to Puckapunyal.

My brother Dick at that time was a telegraphist with the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), serving in the Indian Ocean on HMAS *Vendetta*, a destroyer. I went down to Port Melbourne to enlist in the RAN, also as a telegraphist, but was refused unless I could obtain a certificate of release from the PMG as we were classed as being in a reserved occupation. When I applied for this, the supervisor in charge of the telegraph section simply laughed: 'You stay right where you are, Murph,' he said. 'We are not letting anyone go as we can hardly handle the telegraph traffic as it is!'



A jigger.
(Courtesy of John Murphy.)

After two or three years as telegraphists, most operators lost sensitivity in their wrists and were unable to maintain their speed when operating the Morse key. So it was usual to graduate to a ‘jigger’, which sent out dots automatically and could be operated by the thumb and forefinger with a sideways motion. Speeds of up to thirty words per minute could easily be reached with a ‘jigger’, and on the receiving end of the line, skilled typing was necessary to record the signals.

Army Camps

Early in 1943, a vacancy arose for a telegraphist at a military camp at Old Seymour on account of the arrival of the 7th Division from the Middle East. I applied for the position and went up there in February of that year. The camp was situated about five miles from Seymour on the road to Trawool. We lived in tents for a few months, but luckily we were shifted into huts before winter, as those tents were certainly cold on a frosty morning. On weekends, I would ride the bike out to Tallarook and Trawool where I was amazed at the number of rabbits on the surrounding hills. There were literally thousands of them and I wondered how the farmers could make a living with these pests eating all their grass. When the 7th Division moved on, I was transferred to Puckapunyal several miles west of Seymour where I spent upwards of eighteen months. I enjoyed my time there—there were about six of us on the staff at the PO and we dined in the Sergeants’ Mess and lived in huts adjacent to the office. One weekend, I rode up to Shepparton to stay with one of the other postal clerks, but when I left to come back to Puckapunyal on the Monday morning, I struck a strong headwind, and it was the hardest day’s work I had ever done pushing that bike for sixty miles.

One of the postal clerks at Puckapunyal at that time, Kevin Craven, was a keen runner and normally would run around the perimeter of the camp each morning—a distance of about four miles. I would often go with him. We would start off jogging and finish with a sprint. Of an evening, we staff played cards, usually penny poker. Many times we would play until 3 am, but rarely would any large amounts of money be won or lost. Like the telegraphists at the Central Telegraph Office, two of the postal clerks were inveterate punters on horses and their lives further influenced me against this pastime. One of these men once won £800 on a race at Flemington, placed the whole amount on the next race and lost it! Yet when he was

working at Puckapunyal, he could hardly afford a decent pair of trousers or shoes—his savings had all gone on horses.

One of the advantages of life at Puckapunyal and other military camps was that we did not have to pay for our board, so we could save a little money. On weekends, there would often be a concert party from Melbourne that would put on a show for the troops in the amenities hall adjacent to the post office. On Sunday, mass was celebrated there by the military chaplain Fr Conway.

I was particularly fortunate in my wartime experiences compared to many of my age group.

Homecoming

There was a major drought in Victoria and Southern NSW in 1944: there were bushfires in the summer, and army personnel were sent down to the Western District to bury the dead animals. Many of the farm horses from the Mallee were sent south on agistment and my father had a couple at Rubybank. Unfortunately, one was rather fractious, and one day in early September of that year, it bolted whilst he was harnessing it to the sledge. The reins got caught around his leg and he was dragged across the paddock for a couple of hundred yards before he became disentangled. Nothing was broken but he was seriously injured and was out of action for several months. My mother was on her own and could not cope with farm work, so she immediately applied to the Manpower Authorities, who quickly arranged for my release from the Post Office so that I could return and cope with the farm.

I can recall the day that I came back to Rubybank—it was a very hot day in September and the train took almost four hours from Flinders Street to Leongatha. This was not uncommon at the time. Coal was in short supply and the steam engines on smaller branch lines were forced to use wood for their boilers. On wet days, coming up the Loch hill, the engine could not make it to the top of the grade. So the whole train would reverse back to the foot of the hill where the boilers would be stoked up until a good head of steam was acquired, and the driver would then have another attempt to get over the hill. Four hours in the train seemed to be interminable, but I pitied the other passengers who would then have another two or three journeying on to Yarram. Between Dandenong and Leongatha, there were seventeen stations, which necessitated a lot of lost time stopping and starting: Dandenong, Lyndhurst, Cranbourne, Clyde, Tooradin, Koo Wee

Rup, Dalmore, Monomeith, Caldermeade, Lang Lang, Nyora, Loch, Jeetho, Bena, Whitelaw, Korumburra, Kardella, Ruby and Leongatha.

My parents were glad to have me back on the farm as things were rather chaotic at the time with the cows being milked by our neighbour, Lou Horn, who had his own herd to look after. In addition, my sister Mary, who had married a farmer from nearby Wild Dog Valley the year before, had just had twins, one of whom died after living for only a short time, so there was a funeral to be arranged. There were about thirty cows to be milked, twenty-odd pigs to be fed, and three acres of onions to be hoed and weeded, so I soon learnt what farming entailed. The forty-hour week was a thing of the past. But I must say I enjoyed the outdoor life after being tied to a desk for the past four years as a telegraphist with the PMG.

Although the war in Europe had just finished, the Pacific War was still in progress. On the home front with all the young men engaged in the Armed Forces, their places on farms were taken by Prisoners of War (POWs). These were mainly Italians who had been captured in the Middle East and transferred to Australia for the duration. Depots were established around the countryside from which POWs were allocated to farmers to assist in vital food production. At Leongatha in 1943, a local committee to supervise allocation was formed to work with Manpower officer, Mr R.J. Hagan. Temporary accommodation was set up in the produce pavilion at the Recreation Reserve and a maximum of three prisoners per farm was allowed. The farmer was obliged to pay the Army £1 per week for their services and provide the men with food and accommodation. Regular inspections by the Control Office were made of the farms to which prisoners were allocated and, although there were a few complaints from farmers, and some from the prisoners, the scheme worked quite well. Prisoners received fifteen shillings per week from the Army and, depending on the good graces of the farmer, were allowed to pay occasional visits to neighbouring townships and attend church services on Sundays. Some criticism was expressed from time to time that they were given too much freedom, having wine parties, riding bicycles, ‘even driving cockies’ cars!’ At a meeting of the Leongatha Traders and Progress Association, one member said: ‘Why, these fellows even wander into barber’s shops to get their hair cut!’

Such criticism was understandable as many of the local boys were fighting for their lives in the mud and jungles north of Australia, while the Italian POWs were enjoying the relative ease and comfort of farm life in

South Gippsland. On Sundays, most of these prisoners of war, clad in red woollen army uniforms, would endeavour to attend mass at the nearest Catholic church. At Leongatha at the 11 am mass, there would be ten to twenty of them, who would sit up in the front left hand corner of the main body of the church directly under the eye of parish priest, Fr P.M. O'Donnell, in his pulpit. Fr O'Donnell, who had completed his training for the priesthood in Rome, and could speak Italian fluently, would finish his homily in English for his Australian congregation and would then repeat it in Italian for the benefit of the prisoners.

Soon after the war ended in August 1945, my brother Dick was discharged from the RAN and returned to the farm, so there were the two of us and my father, trying to earn a living from the eighty acres of the good red soil fronting Ruby Creek. As a family though, we were indeed lucky compared to other district families. Of the four boys of my age at the High School in 1936–38 who joined the RAAF, only one survived. One was killed in a training accident at Mildura, and two were killed in operations over Germany, including my best friend from school, Arthur Grabham, who was shot down on his first flight in that area of operations. Many ex-students from the high school either enlisted or were drafted into the 22nd Battalion of the AIF, which suffered severe casualties on the Kokoda Track in New Guinea. Three who were captured by the Japanese lost their lives whilst being transported to Japan on the *Montevideo Maru* when it was sunk by an American submarine near the Philippines. At the celebrations commemorating the first hundred years of Leongatha High School held in May 2012, an Honour Roll was unveiled containing the names of twenty ex-students who lost their lives in the 1939–45 war. It was a high contribution from a school with an attendance of less than one hundred in the pre-war years.

Having now almost reached four score and ten, and still living on Rubybank, I look back with fondness on my years of employment and civilian life during the war. I enjoyed those times and the service involved and am truly grateful for the years given to me since leaving school.

**PARLIAMENT IN EXILE:
THE VICTORIAN PARLIAMENT AT THE EXHIBITION BUILDING
1901 TO 1927**

Victor Isaacs

The Commonwealth's Choice

THERE WAS NO MENTION OF THE SITE of the future Federal capital in the draft Federal Constitution submitted to colonial electors for approval in the 1898 referendums, and this was one of the factors leading to the referendum's failure in New South Wales. Consequently, a Premiers' Conference in 1899 settled this and other contentious questions. Section 125 of the revised draft Constitution provided that the future federal capital would be in territory granted by New South Wales, and that 'The Parliament shall sit at Melbourne until it meet at the seat of Government'. Both New South Welsh and Victorian honour was satisfied. In the 1899 referendums, the Constitution was approved.

1900 was increasingly devoted to arrangements for the inauguration of the new Commonwealth. One of the questions to be settled was determination of the initial home of the new Federal Parliament. The predominant view was that the Federal Parliament would occupy the State Parliament building in Spring Street, and the State Parliament would move to the Exhibition Building. But many Victorian Parliamentarians asked why the Victorian Parliament should not remain in Spring Street, and instead the new Commonwealth Parliament occupy the Exhibition Building. In general, however, the magnanimity of the Victorians is said to have surprised even some of the more ardent local federationists.²

On 26 July 1900, William Irvine, Attorney-General in the Victorian McLean government, initiated debate on the *Commonwealth Arrangements Bill* in the Legislative Assembly. He said that the proposed legislation was ‘very innocent’, although it had ‘caused a certain amount of suspicion in some quarters’. ‘The sole object ... is to meet certain technical difficulties.’ Specifically, the Bill provided for the Commonwealth to occupy Parliament House in Spring Street, Government House and some public buildings. Duncan Gillies, a former premier, expressed reservations about the Victorian Parliament having to give up its premises and its library.³

There was considerable discussion in the press, and a committee, comprising the President of the Legislative Council, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and other Members of the Victorian Parliament, was established to consider housing the Federal Parliament. When debate on the *Commonwealth Arrangements Bill* resumed in the Legislative Assembly on 2 October 1900, Mr Irvine moved a significant amendment to allow the Commonwealth to occupy *either* the Spring Street building *or* the Exhibition Building in Carlton Gardens. In the Legislative Assembly debate that followed⁴, and the next day in the Legislative Council⁵, some members referred with approval to a suggestion that both Parliaments should occupy the Spring Street building. The Speaker was later reported as having suggested that the uncompleted northern wing of the Parliament House should be built, thus providing space for the members of both Parliaments.⁶ The legislation passed with provision for the Commonwealth to occupy either of the buildings.⁷ Sir Frederick Sargood MLC thought that, because of lack of space at Parliament House, it was ‘almost a foregone conclusion that the Commonwealth Parliament would be opened and continue to hold its sittings in the Exhibition Building’. Sir Henry Wrixon MLC expressed regret that both Parliaments could not hold their meetings in Parliament House. He believed sufficient accommodation could be provided for both, and ‘they would then have the advantage of the library, and of meeting together for social intercourse’.⁸

Following the formation of the Commonwealth government, the Premier, Alexander Peacock, wrote to the Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, on 10 April 1901, asking the Commonwealth to choose which building it desired. However, he made it clear which choice the Victorian government preferred: ‘While leaving your Government perfectly free in its choice of which ever of the two buildings it may deem the more suitable, I desire to remark that such alterations are in progress at the Exhibition Buildings as



Johnstone, O'Shannessy and Co. Melb.

HON. WILLIAM HILL IRVINE.

The Cyclopaedia of Victoria (*James Smith (ed.), Melbourne, The Cyclopaedia Company, 1903, p. 160.*

(RHSV Collection: BK001-0120).

will, it is considered, most fully meet the requirements and promote the comfort of the Members and the representatives of the Press, should that place be selected.⁹ On 12 April, Barton and the Commonwealth ministry inspected both sites.¹⁰ Alas for the Victorians' hopes, Barton now replied to Peacock that 'After most careful consideration and a personal inspection of both buildings', the Commonwealth had chosen Spring Street.¹¹ Reportedly, Alfred Deakin was instrumental in this decision, as he was moving from the State to the Commonwealth Parliament and was disinclined to be away from the parliamentary library in which he took such great interest.¹² Indeed, *The Argus* reported that 'One of the main reasons that induced the Commonwealth Ministry to decide in favour of the permanent Parliamentary buildings rather than the temporary accommodation in the Exhibition building was the presence of the library in the former'.¹³

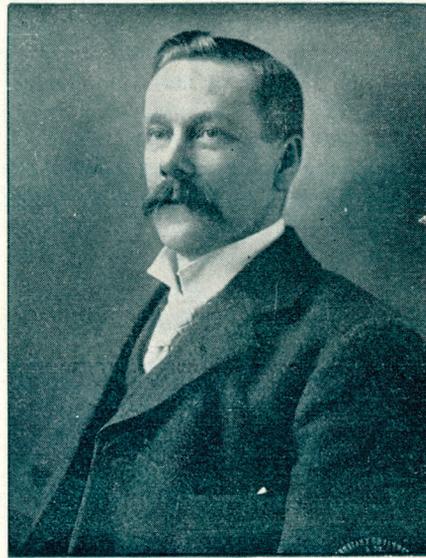


View looking north along Spring Street, Melbourne, from Parliament House to the Exhibition Buildings (Gordon Gardens in the foreground) from Beautiful Victoria, the Garden State of the Australia, Melbourne, Osboldstone and Co., c. 1920, (RHSV Collection: BL003-007, detail).

The Two Governments Agree

Because of the huge nature of the occasion, the only building that could accommodate the grand ceremony for the opening of the Federal Parliament on 9 May 1901 was the main hall of the Exhibition Building. However, following this ceremony, the senators and the members of the House of Representatives moved down to Spring Street to start work.¹⁴ Many prominent members of the Victorian Parliament, as in all States, had resigned to stand for the Commonwealth Parliament. Among them was George Turner, the liberal Premier. However, for six weeks before his resignation, he was both Premier of Victoria and Australia's first Treasurer. His Chief Secretary, the affable, popular Alexander Peacock, became Premier.

The Prime Minister stated in July 1901 that he expected an agreement would be necessary for the Commonwealth to occupy the Victorian building for three to five years.¹⁵ The agreement between the Federal and State governments, however, did not specify any time. This agreement was not finalised until 9 December 1901. It provided that the Commonwealth



Johnstone, O'Shannessy and Co. Melb.

HON. SIR ALEXANDER JAMES PEACOCK.

The Cyclopaedia of Victoria (*James Smith, ed.*), Melbourne, *The Cyclopaedia Company*, 1903, p. 165.
(RHSV Collection: BK001-0129).

was to be charged with the cost of repairing and maintaining the building and of restoration at the end of the agreement; work was, however, to be carried out by the State. The Commonwealth could not alter the building without the consent of the State; such alterations were to be carried out by the State at the Commonwealth's expense. Members of the Victorian Parliament were to have 'free and uninterrupted access' to the library, State documents, the refreshment room, the billiard room, rooms set aside for their use, the out-offices and the gardens. Both parliaments would establish library committees to manage their respective interests in the library, and they would confer on matters of joint interest. The Commonwealth could not make any alteration to the furniture and structure of the library without State consent. The officers of the library were to remain State employees, with the Commonwealth reimbursing the State for their salaries. The Victorian Parliament was to continue to store its documents in the building and State officers were to have free access thereto. During the first half

hour of each sitting of the Commonwealth Parliament, one row of seats in the Speaker's Gallery and the President's Gallery was to be reserved for any visiting members of the Victorian Parliament. Reciprocal rights applied to Commonwealth members visiting the State Parliament at the Exhibition Building.¹⁶

The Pain of Change

The first meeting of the Victorian Parliament after the inauguration of the Commonwealth was not until 18 June 1901. Newspapers commented that it seemed like the inauguration of a new Parliament.¹⁷ Parliament met in its new premises in the western annexe of the Exhibition Building. But, as well, there was a new government, a new Opposition Leader, a large number of new members to replace all those who had transferred to the Commonwealth Parliament, a new President of the Legislative Council, new Parliamentary officers to replace those transferred to the Commonwealth, and a new mace in the Legislative Assembly to replace the one loaned to the House of Representatives. In addition, all members had to swear allegiance to the monarch, as usually takes place after a general election, but on this occasion, because of the death of Queen Victoria and the accession of King Edward VII.

When one entered the Exhibition Building from Rathdowne Street through the main vestibule of the western annexe, the Legislative Council was to the south and the Legislative Assembly to the north. The two chambers were apportioned on the same lines as those applying at Spring Street, but with more lavish space.¹⁸ Unlike the two richly decorated chambers at Spring Street, neither chamber was ornate. The Legislative Council was substantially finished with polished wood. The only decoration was a carved wooden screen behind the President's chair in the Legislative Council.¹⁹ Galleries were provided in both houses. Reporters' rooms were along the western wall of the annexe. To the east, next to the Legislative Council, were two dining rooms and a kitchen. Behind this was a room known as the 'Map Room', which was in fact probably the Reading Room/Library. Behind the Legislative Assembly was the Billiard Room and the Ministerial Members' Room. Nearby was the Opposition Members' Room. Elsewhere in the annexe were committee rooms and other offices.²⁰ The cost of fitting out the new premises was £35,523.²¹

Members were unfamiliar with their new premises. Many were reported to have 'lost themselves in the maze of corridors, rooms and doors, and

there was a perfect babel as members ran into each other and shouted for information about the various rooms. Everywhere members were to be found loudly discussing, not the political situation, but the accommodation provided for them', according to *The Argus*.²² *The Age* noted: 'Many an unsuspecting visitor got lost in the labyrinthine mazes of multitudinous apartments.'²³ The arrangements were not completed. Heating was inadequate on a very cold day when snow fell over much of inland Victoria. *The Herald* unkindly noted that the building now converted for Parliament had for years been used for the purposes of a dog show.²⁴

The Honourable Members were not happy. At the start of the next day's session, Thomas Bent complained that his letters and papers had disappeared from the Spring Street Parliament House. He said that Victorian parliamentarians were 'being treated like a little municipal council'. Sir John McIntyre interjected that it would be 'a very good thing' if the Exhibition Trustees ejected them. The Premier made a soothing speech, referring to State Members' rights under the agreement with the Commonwealth.²⁵ Grumbling had, in fact, been anticipated. In April, the *Leader* (*The Age's* weekly paper) had said: 'If there is any dissatisfaction it will be confined to a few members of the State Legislature who may consider that their personal convenience will be infringed by the necessity of change from accustomed quarters. This grumbling need not be taken seriously.'²⁶

However, members were not mollified. A few days later, on 27 June, the Premier moved what would usually be the most routine of motions—the appointment of members of the Library Committee. This erupted into a lengthy series of complaints by members about their new circumstances. Sir John McIntyre said that when 'a guest came to his house, he was usually offered the best chair, but he usually refused to take it'. He described the library as 'an heirloom of the State of Victoria'. Members decried the loss of easy access to their valuable library. They demanded to know how the library would be managed. They suggested various remedies, such as duplicate books. William Maloney suggested a pneumatic tube between the two Houses so that books could be transported quickly. George Prendergast pointed out that members often required a great number of books, so 'if a pipe was provided it would be necessary to have a pipe big enough to convey the member as well as the book'. Thomas Bent said the provisions in the agreement about the billiards room and the refreshment room could have been left out, but 'the library was of great importance'. A couple of

members even thought that worry over the library may have contributed to the recent death of the librarian. Theodore Fink thought that 'a bookless house would be something new in the history of Parliament, and they did not want to go down to posterity as an ignorant Parliament'.²⁷

Then, on 17 July, Legislative Councillors took their turn to complain when J.H. Abbott moved an adjournment motion to discuss the situation. He suggested that at the end of their current session, the Federal Parliamentarians should vacate Spring Street and come up to the Exhibition Building, allowing the State to move back to the city.²⁸ On the same day, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly received a complaint that the Exhibition Building was now heated too much, but he reassured Members that he had arranged for the purchase of thermometers.²⁹

Complaints continued. In the Assembly, on 31 July, S.T. Staughton claimed that Federal members had 'turned half the lobbies in the [Spring Street] buildings into bedrooms' and the corridors into 'private resorts'.³⁰ On 7 August, Mr Prendergast complained about only one telephone wire being available, but, once again, the Speaker saved the day by saying he had arranged for more.³¹ George Prendergast again took up the fight on 12 December when he described the library as 'one of the best Parliamentary Libraries in Australia, and ... probably the best in the southern hemisphere as a library of reference'. He also described sending to the library to obtain books to use in a debate, only to find that 'By the time he finally got what he wanted, the member found that the House had gone three or four Bills ahead of the item'.³² Even the Attorney-General, Sir Samuel Gillot, agreed with the complaints and bemoaned the lack of legal reference books at the Exhibition Building.³³ On 19 December, Thomas Bent complained of going to the library in Spring Street and finding it closed. Sir John McIntyre again came up with memorable phrases when he said: 'It was only the Library that induced the Federal Government to make an effort to get possession of the Parliament buildings ... The Library was the great object of the desire of the Federal Government.' One gentleman, whom he did not wish to name, was desirous of getting the Library all the time.³⁴ J.W. Taverner suggested that as Federal Parliament had adjourned for Christmas, the Victorians should return to Spring Street.³⁵

These statements by State Parliamentarians were noticed by their Federal counterparts. On 20 June 1901, Jim Page, MHR for Maranoa, facetiously asked the Prime Minister if, in view of such expressed dissatisfaction, it would be possible for the Federal Parliament to meet in Sydney 'where

no doubt we will be received in a true federal spirit'. King O'Malley, a Tasmanian MHR, suggested Hobart.³⁶

In May 1902, the Premier wrote to the Prime Minister, and the President of the Legislative Council wrote to the President of the Senate, bitterly complaining that State Parliamentary records at Spring Street had been interfered with.³⁷ The President apologised and said the room had been restored to its original condition.³⁸

The Library

How did the Victorian Parliamentarians cope with the loss of their library? A Reading Room was set up at the Exhibition Building. This was not intended to be a separate institution, but rather an outpost of the main library at Spring Street. All major library activities continued at Spring Street and staff alternated between the two locations, with typically only one or two on duty in the Reading Room. Patrick Gregory's history of the Victorian Parliamentary Library records:

The atmosphere in the Reading Room was initially casual. Refreshments were served ... making it as much a lounge as a library, an impression reinforced by a noticeable lack of books. All of the newspaper and periodical subscriptions were redirected there, the papers from the last two sessions of the Victorian Parliament, some law reports, statutes and [British] Hansard were transferred, and a few works of reference were purchased. But only £450 of the £2,100 spent on the collection by the State between 1901 and 1904 went towards the collection at the Reading Room, the rest being used to purchase new volumes for the Spring Street Library, no doubt much to the enjoyment of federal members ... Compared with the sumptuous Library rooms at [Spring Street], the Reading Room would not have appeared inviting. The absence of windows meant that it lacked both views and natural light. The floor was covered with linoleum rather than plush carpet, and the lack of heating discouraged casual visits by members during the winter months.³⁹

William Embling MLC described the Reading Room as 'a library with no books', while George Prendergast said it 'was not fit for any honourable member to go into'. Theodore Fink called it a 'very uncomfortable and absurd reading room'.⁴⁰

In 1901, the Victorian Parliamentary Library Committee decided that all new books purchased by the State should go directly to the Reading Room, but this was not implemented.⁴¹ In mid-1904, with the realisation that the Federal Parliament was not likely to go away soon, the Committee decided to turn the Reading Room into a proper library. As the Commonwealth

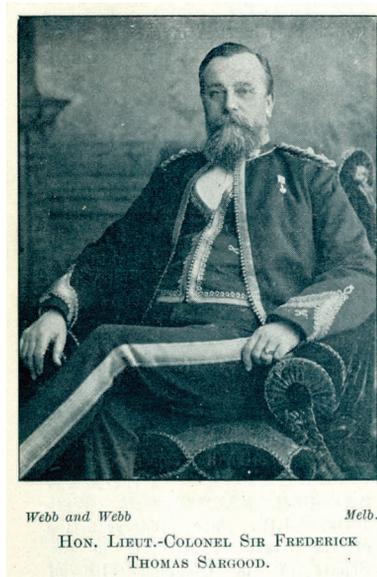
was creating its own collection, which would eventually be moved, it was clear that Victoria should develop its Parliamentary Library separately. The Reading Room was renamed 'The Library, State Parliament House'. The entire book vote was now spent there. All purchases made since 1901 and stored at Spring Street were transferred. An extra room was fitted out for periodicals. Nevertheless, the total library area was still small and dwarfed by the dining rooms. The Assistant Librarian, Patrick Quirk, was now stationed at the Exhibition Building, effectively becoming the Acting Victorian Parliamentary Librarian. Requests for the delivery of items from Spring Street continued, but from 1904 onwards, management of the two libraries was completely dissociated.⁴²

In June 1905, when William Watt was criticised in the Legislative Assembly for quoting out-of-date statistics, he responded by saying that 'the honourable member knows full well how hard it is to get information up from the other Parliament building'.⁴³

The State Parliamentary Librarian, Arthur Wadsworth, also acted as Commonwealth Parliamentary Librarian for the period of the Federal use of the Spring Street building. He and his staff remained Victorian officers, but as provided for in the intergovernmental agreement, their salaries were reimbursed by the Commonwealth.⁴⁴ The same arrangement was even supposed to apply to staff such as the housekeeper. But when a new housekeeper was appointed as early as October 1901, the Commonwealth did not consult the State.⁴⁵

Going Home, but Only Temporarily

Towards the end of 1902, State Members were apparently still pining for their former home, a feeling intensified by temperatures inside the Exhibition Building of up to 94 °F (34 °C). In December 1902, the State Parliament was sitting, but the Federal Parliament had been prorogued. The Victorians seized their chance. On 12 December 1902, the Premier, William Irvine, announced that 'in response to what he understood to be the almost unanimous wish on the part of members', he had arranged with the Commonwealth for the State Parliament to return to Spring Street, thus 'relieving all of the inconvenience, almost suffering' felt in the Exhibition Building. Mr Bent said that on a hot day, the Exhibition Buildings were like an inferno. Some Members, led by Dr Maloney, however, opposed any move back. This objection was pushed to a vote, but those supporting the move won 53 to 18.⁴⁶ Accordingly, when the Legislative Assembly met in



The Cyclopedia of Victoria (*James Smith, ed.*), Melbourne, The Cyclopedia Company, 1903, p. 150.
 (RHSV Collection: BK001-0102)

the next week, they were back at Spring Street. The Legislative Council, however, had not been in session when this idea came forth. So, they were put to the inconvenience of having to meet at the Exhibition Building to move a motion authorising their move to Spring Street. This being unanimously agreed, they reassembled in the Spring Street building.⁴⁷ *The Argus* drew a pen picture of ‘two-score well-fed and well-clad gentlemen wending their way to their meeting place. The [Carlton Gardens] loiterers opened a sleepy eye in wonder and the park orators paused ... to gaze’.⁴⁸ State Parliament remained at Spring Street until April 1903, for 40 sitting days.⁴⁹

This period back at Spring Street included a significant constitutional event following the death of Victorian Senator Sir Frederick Sargood. On 21 January 1903, the first ever joint sitting of an Australian Parliament took place pursuant to section 15 of the Commonwealth Constitution to elect a replacement senator. This novel event was held in Queen’s Hall between the two legislative chambers. Legislative Councillor Robert Reid was elected as the new senator, defeating past and future premier Sir Alexander Peacock.⁵⁰

This experiment of returning temporarily to Spring Street was not repeated. State Members generally either got used to their accommodation at the Exhibition Building, or became resigned to their fate. Gavin Souter, in his history of Federal Parliament, *Acts of Parliament*, says: 'The Victorians continued to assert their rights under the occupation agreement, but as they became more accustomed to Carlton Gardens, they were seen less frequently at Spring Street.'⁵¹ R.A. Crouch, Federal Member for Corio, recounted a story of the Premier Sir Alexander Peacock, using the Spring Street dining room. Peacock was famous for his enormously loud laugh. In reaction to one such laugh, William Hughes put aside his feigned deafness and deliberately dropped two plates. Another Peacock laugh resulted in further dropping of plates by Hughes. The Premier, offended, rarely dined there again.⁵² There were, in fact, some advantages to the Exhibition Building. Members' offices were close to the chambers; visitors and members no longer got lost in the maze of basement corridors and rooms; and the building could be used more flexibly.⁵³

More Complaints

Occasional complaints about the Exhibition Building continued during this period. On 9 March 1909, in the Budget debate, George Prendergast returned to his concern about access to the Parliamentary Library, arguing that all of the State Parliament's records and papers should be at the Exhibition Building, as well as the headquarters of the Library.⁵⁴ On 7 December 1916, Prendergast was supported by other Members when he complained about the difficulties of obtaining access to the Library after hours.⁵⁵ Complaints about ventilation and lighting were also made occasionally, for example, by Prendergast on 10 December 1914⁵⁶ and by E.J. Cotter, John Lemmon, and even the Premier, Harry Lawson, on 17 November 1921.⁵⁷ On 10 August 1915, Legislative Councillor R.B. Rees complained of the free services provided to the Commonwealth by Victoria and asked why the State 'could not charge the Federal Government rent for our Parliament House'.⁵⁸

A controversy flared in 1925. On 24 July, James Deany, MLA for Warrnambool, took up a position on the steps of the Spring Street Parliament House to watch the march past of sailors from a visiting United States Navy Fleet. A policeman ordered that he and other State Members leave. As he later indignantly told the Legislative Assembly: 'Of course, I resisted ... and said I intended to stay there, that I was a State member with certain

rights and privileges and was entitled to be there.’ At that point, Senator Thomas Givens, President of the Senate, intervened. Deany continued, ‘I defied the President. I told him that he was degrading his position, and that, as a matter of fact, I had more right there than President Givens ... I take it as a gross insult.’ G.C. Webber from the Labor Opposition said that he had also had been ordered from the steps and out of Queen’s Hall, and Mr J. McDonald, Honorary Minister, said there was ample justification for Deany’s complaint.⁵⁹ Senator Givens responded in *The Argus* newspaper asserting the right of Federal Parliament. He said that ‘Federal Parliament was the tenant and had the right to the House’. Givens continued: ‘[E]very courtesy and consideration has been shown to State members’, but ‘if the churlish and grudging attitude of Mr Deany is an indication of the general feeling of the present Victorian Parliament ... then that sense of obligation and appreciation will be very much lessened’.⁶⁰ This enraged Mr Deany and other MLAs even further. Deany pointed out that the Federal Parliament was there under an agreement that preserved the rights of State Members. He said ‘that Senator Givens is an unmitigated liar’, and ‘he was ignorant of the whole conditions regarding the occupancy of Parliament House’.⁶¹ Givens then called Deany ‘very foolish’.⁶² Deany responded in *The Argus* that he had heard ‘foolish arguments put forward during my public career, but none comparable to his latest one’. He concluded that ‘I have no desire to embarrass Senator Givens further, so will leave the issue in the hands of the House Committee which will give him every opportunity of extricating himself from the undignified entanglement he now finds himself in’.⁶³ Finally, the President of the Legislative Council and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly jointly met the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The two Federal presiding officers then ‘expressed their deep sense of generosity of the Government and Parliament of Victoria’, and ‘While expressing regret at the incident, they gave complete assurances that there would be no recurrence of anything of the kind’.⁶⁴

A Happy Ending

The Federal occupancy of Melbourne’s Parliament went on for much longer than anyone had anticipated in 1901. Construction of the new Federal capital was delayed by other priorities of the new government, by lengthy arguments about where it should be located (within Federal Parliament, as well as between the Commonwealth and New South Welsh

governments) and then by world war. Construction of Canberra continued throughout the 1920s.

At last, on 13 January 1926, the Governor-General, opening a new session of Federal Parliament in Melbourne, said that ‘arrangements have been made according to which the transfer of the seat of government will be effected in the early part of 1927’⁶⁵, and on 26 May 1926, the Prime Minister, Stanley Bruce, in a Parliamentary statement, advised an exact date for Federal Parliament to commence sitting in Canberra—9 May 1927, the twenty-sixth anniversary of Federal Parliament’s opening.⁶⁶ Victorian Federal Parliamentarians no doubt cursed the future inconvenience for them, and Victorian State Parliamentarians probably rejoiced at the prospect of regaining their own building.

A trial shipment of books from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library collection was sent to Canberra in November 1925, and the rest of the collection, 108,000 volumes, between October 1926 and April 1927. As Gregory puts it: ‘The Victorians were keen to ensure that none of their books went north—accidentally or otherwise—and arranged for a complete stocktake’.⁶⁷ It was found that 1,460 volumes were missing, of which only 200 were considered worthy of replacement. The Commonwealth agreed to provide ‘good editions’. After removing their books, the Commonwealth had the library cleaned and agreed to pay for repainting and rebinding damaged volumes. Over eight working days in May–June 1927, five labourers, one carpenter and one large covered motor lorry transferred 21,000 volumes from the Exhibition Building to Spring Street. Five thousand volumes of Parliamentary Papers and newspapers were left behind because of lack of space, as a suite of rooms had been converted by the Commonwealth to kitchens. ‘After a month of frantic work, the Library was ready for the opening of the new [State] parliamentary session on 6 July.’ None of the library staff now at Spring Street had worked there before.⁶⁸ There remained some years of work to amalgamate the catalogues of the two collections.⁶⁹

The opening of Federal Parliament House in its own city (rather, bush village) of Canberra on 9 May 1927, however, was merely a ceremonial occasion. The first substantive session of Parliament House in Canberra did not commence until 28 September 1927. In the meantime, the Commonwealth quit the Spring Street Parliament House from 30 June 1927. The Commonwealth paid £13,510 to Victoria for repairs to the building.⁷⁰

On 6 July 1927, the Victorian Parliament returned to Spring Street. Nine members of the Legislative Assembly survived the whole period of exile: Alfred Billson, John Bowser, Alfred Downard, E.C. Wade, Harry Lawson, David Oman, Sir Alexander Peacock, George Prendergast and Richard Toutcher. Four (Peacock, Bowser, Lawson and Prendergast) had been premiers during this period. Only two Legislative Councillors survived the whole of the diaspora: Joseph Sternberg and Thomas Payne. While the State Parliament had been away, the Spring Street building had been altered: three chandeliers had been removed from the Legislative Council/Senate chamber, a gymnasium (which was rarely used) installed in the basement, sewerage connected and an early form of air-conditioning provided.⁷¹ When repairing the Senate Chamber to return it to use by the Legislative Council, an allegorical female figure who held a broken chain to represent ‘liberty’ was attended to by a well-meaning artisan. He mistakenly repaired the ‘broken’ chain—the figure is now said to represent ‘unity’.

On 15 April 1926, Sir William McPherson MLA wrote to the Federal Government to suggest that, before vacating Spring Street, it should complete the building by erecting the proposed dome. He said it could be known as the ‘Deakin Dome’ as a ‘graceful compliment to pay to the memory of that revered gentlemen’. McPherson estimated the cost at about £40,000, i.e., ‘less than £2,000 per annum’ of occupation. Upon receipt of the suggestion⁷², Mr Bruce referred the question to Cabinet, which decided a Parliamentary Committee should consider a suitable memorial of Federal occupancy.⁷³

Fittingly, almost as its last business before leaving Spring Street, the Commonwealth Parliament considered the *Victorian Parliament House Memorial Bill*. The Bill was introduced by the Prime Minister, supported by James Scullin on behalf of the Opposition, and passed without a division.⁷⁴ This legislation provided that ‘Whereas the Parliament of the Commonwealth desires to express its appreciation of the action of the State of Victoria’, a sum of £50,000 was appropriated to be ‘applied towards the provision of a permanent memorial associated with the Parliament House of the State of Victoria in commemoration of the occupation by the Commonwealth Parliament’.⁷⁵ The Federal Parliamentary Committee that had considered the matter envisaged a ‘symbolic sculpture’.⁷⁶ Senator Givens opined ‘that it is not desirable that the addition of a kitchen to these premises should be regarded as a fitting memorial of our occupation of it’.⁷⁷ The State Government considered using the money to meet half the cost

of constructing the unbuilt north wing, but had difficulty finding the other £50,000. On 26 October 1927, the Premier, Ned Hogan, accompanied by his Minister for Public Works, called on Stanley Bruce. The Prime Minister later minuted that he ‘could not quite follow what was in their mind at first, but I gathered later that they were somewhat apprehensive that the Commonwealth might be inclined to question their not proceeding to spend the £50,000 that we had made available’.⁷⁸ In the event, the Victorians spent the money on the mooted refreshment room. This was opened in 1929 and was the last substantive addition or alteration to the Victorian Parliament House. This addition to the refreshment room released space to the library, enabling the volumes which had remained in storage at the Exhibition Building in 1927 to be brought to Spring Street.⁷⁹

In the meantime, the western annexe of the Exhibition Building was given to the Country Roads Board, and later also the Motor Registration Branch and the Transport Regulation Board. Clerks occupied the area in cramped and uncomfortable accommodation until the 1960s.⁸⁰

Retrospect

What was the effect of the Victorian Parliament having spent 26 years in exile? The physical effect is obvious—duplication of premises and facilities, plus the oddity of two Parliaments in one city. But there were no wider implications for Victorian politics. Other than spending time complaining about the Exhibition Building, and that mainly in the first couple of years, politics went on as normal. Indeed, the new premises had been designed as a replica of the old. It was plainer and slightly more spacious, but this was mere detail. Even the location was only approximately a kilometre from the old premises. There is no surviving evidence that the changed location altered how State politics worked nor how politicians operated.

NOTES

- 1 Notably Gavin Souter, *Acts of Parliament*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1988.
- 2 Raymond Wright, *A People’s Counsel: A History of the Parliament of Victoria 1856–1990*, South Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 113–114.
- 3 *Victorian Parliamentary Debates (VPD)*, vol. 94, 26 July 1900, pp. 533–538.
- 4 *VPD*, vol. 95, 2 October 1900, pp.1767–1774.
- 5 *VPD*, vol. 95, 3 October 1900, pp. 1807–1809.
- 6 *The Argus*, Melbourne, 17 April 1901.

- 7 *Commonwealth Arrangements Act*, no. 1672 of 1900, section 2(a), Parliament of Victoria.
- 8 *VPD*, vol. 95, 3 October 1900, p. 1808.
- 9 *National Archives of Australia (NAA)*, A8, 1901/163/1.
- 10 *The Argus*, Melbourne, 13 April 1901 and *The Age*, Melbourne, 13 April 1901.
- 11 *NAA*, A8, 1901/163/1.
- 12 Statement by Sir Alexander Peacock MLA to the Library Committee of the Victorian Parliament (date not stated) reported in E.L. Frazer, *The Library of the Parliament: A Brief History*, published by the Library Committee of the Parliament of Victoria, 1951, p. 7.
- 13 *The Argus*, Melbourne, 26 July 1901.
- 14 *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (CPD)*, vol. 1, 9 May 1901, p. 1–8.
- 15 Souter, p. 56.
- 16 *Victorian Parliamentary Papers*, 1902, vol. 2, no. 2; also *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers*, 1901–1902, p. 937.
- 17 *The Herald*, Melbourne, 18 June 1901, p. 2; *The Argus*, Melbourne, 19 June 1901, p. 5.
- 18 *The Age*, Melbourne, 19 June 1901.
- 19 David Dunstan, *Victorian Icon: the Royal Exhibition Building. Melbourne*, The Exhibition Trustees in association with Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 1996, has an illustration of the Legislative Council, p. 337.
- 20 *Leader*, Melbourne, 29 December 1900, has a diagram, p. 34. This is captioned ‘The Federal Parliament Arrangements’, but labels the chambers as ‘Assembly’ and ‘Council’, indicating the uncertainty as to which Parliament would occupy the Exhibition Building western annexe.
- 21 Patrick Gregory, *Speaking Volumes: The Victorian Parliamentary Library 1851–2001*, Victorian Parliamentary Library, 2001, p. 63.
- 22 *The Argus*, Melbourne, 19 June 1901.
- 23 *The Age*, Melbourne, 19 June 1901.
- 24 *The Herald*, Melbourne, 18 June 1901.
- 25 *VPD*, vol. 97, 19 June 1901, pp. 28–30.
- 26 *Leader*, Melbourne, 20 April 1901.
- 27 *VPD*, vol. 97, 27 June 1901, pp. 227–241.
- 28 *VPD*, vol. 97, 17 July 1901, pp. 281–285.
- 29 *VPD*, vol. 97, 17 July 1901, p. 298.
- 30 *VPD*, vol. 97, 31 July 1901, p. 551.
- 31 *VPD*, vol. 97, 7 August 1901, p. 639.
- 32 *VPD*, vol. 99, 12 December 1901, p. 3448.
- 33 *VPD*, vol. 99, 12 December 1901, p. 450.
- 34 *VPD*, vol. 99, 19 December 1901, p. 3748.
- 35 *VPD*, vol. 99, 19 December 1901, p. 3747.

- 36 *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, (CPD), vol. 1, 20 June 1901, p. 1366.
- 37 *NAA*, A8, 1902/134/2 and 1902/134/18.
- 38 Souter, p. 56.
- 39 Gregory, p. 68–70.
- 40 *VPD*, vol. 97, 30 July 1901, p. 92 & p. 473; *VPD*, vol. 99, 12 December 1901, pp. 1448–1449.
- 41 Gregory, p. 8.
- 42 Gregory, p. 71.
- 43 *VPD*, vol. 110, 29 June 1905, p. 88.
- 44 Souter, p. 57.
- 45 Souter, p. 6.
- 46 *VPD*, vol. 102, 12 December 1902, p. 1290.
- 47 *VPD*, vol. 102, 16 December 1902, p. 1323–1324.
- 48 *The Argus*, Melbourne, 17 December 1902, p. 17.
- 49 Wright, p. 143.
- 50 *VPD*, vol. 102, 21 January 1903, pp. 1579–1595.
- 51 Souter, p. 57.
- 52 Quoted in Souter, p. 57.
- 53 Wright, pp. 114–115.
- 54 *VPD*, vol. 123, 9 December 1909, p. 2966.
- 55 *VPD*, vol. 145, 7 December 1916, p. 3135.
- 56 *VPD*, vol. 138, 10 December 1914, pp. 164–165.
- 57 *VPD*, vol. 159, 17 November 1921, pp. 1174–1175.
- 58 *VPD*, vol. 140, 10 August 1915, p. 1712.
- 59 *VPD*, vol. 169, 11 August 1925, pp. 342–344.
- 60 *The Argus*, Melbourne, 12 August 1925, p.19, and 13 August 1925, p. 5.
- 61 *VPD*, vol. 169, 13 August 1925, pp. 430–432.
- 62 *The Argus*, Melbourne, 15 August 1925, p. 27.
- 63 *The Argus*, Melbourne, 18 August 1925, p. 13.
- 64 *VPD*, vol. 169, 15 September 1925, p. 1111.
- 65 *CPD*, vol. 112, 13 January 1926, p. 8.
- 66 *CPD*, vol. 113, 26 May 1926, pp. 2303–2305.
- 67 Gregory, p. 88.
- 68 Gregory, p. 88–90.
- 69 Gregory, p. 92.
- 70 Letter from Prime Minister Bruce to Premier Hogan, 7 March 1928, *NAA*, A282/1, A144.

71 Wright, p. 143.

72 Harry Evans, Clerk of the Senate, 'Canberra Day Oration', 12 March 2009, reported in the Canberra and District Historical Society *Newsletter*, no. 423, June 2009, p. 3.

73 *NAA*, A461, F4/1/10.

74 *CPD*, vol. 115, 24 March 1927, pp. 1032–1034 and 1077–1078

75 *Victorian Parliament House Memorial Act*, no. 24 of 1927.

76 *NAA*, A461/7, F4/1/10.

77 *CPD*, vol. 115, 4 March 1927, p. 1032.

78 *NAA*, A461/7, F4/1/10.

79 Gregory, p. 97.

80 Dunstan, pp.337–338.

REVIEWS

The Kelly Gang Unmasked. By Ian Macfarlane. Oxford University Press, Melbourne 2012. Pp. xiii + 258. \$29.95, paperback.

The True Story of Ned Kelly's Last Stand: New Revelations Unearthed about the Bloody Siege at Glenrowan, By Paul Terry. Allen & Unwin, Sydney 2012. Pp. xix + 275. \$29.99, paperback.

These are recent additions to the ever-burgeoning Kelly historiography. Both have somewhat sensationalist titles, indicative of the popular readership to which much Kelly literature has been directed. Most publications try to prove that the Kellys were either heroes or villains. Earlier writers like Hare, Sadleir, Chomley and Turner presented the views of the police and polite society: Ned was a villain—in Turner's words, a 'poor shabby skulker'. At the same time, there was a pro-Kelly view largely expressed in the oral tradition. Given the dangers of being associated with murderers after Stringybark Creek, this view did not appear in books until the 1920s. Kenneally's *The Complete History of the Kelly Gang and Their Pursuers* was followed by other influential pro-Kelly writers such as Max Brown, Douglas Stewart and Clive Turnbull.

Scholarly interest in the Kellys began with the 1967 Wangaratta seminar with important contributions from Manning Clark, Weston Bate and Louis Waller, as well as Ian Jones, whose subsequent work in books, films and documentaries has been very important in framing later debates. Since then, there has been much more academic interest in the Kelly phenomenon with significant contributions from McQuilton, Molony, Morrissey, and McDermott, and from the lawyers, especially John Phillips.

The insatiable popular demand for Kelly material continues. Websites and pictorial publications have made more material accessible and new books, including novels, continue to plough the Kelly material, often repeating errors of fact and usually debating the rights and wrongs of the Kelly case.

Ian Macfarlane brings both new material and perspectives to the Kelly story, but he is firmly within the anti-Kelly fold. His text reveals many problems with the records at the Public Record Office (PRO): citations in earlier works could not be relocated because the document 'series has been re-boxed and rearranged several times' (p. viii); documents that should be in the PRO are yet to be identified or have gone missing, for example, the original 'Cameron letter' and the many items that were 'part of a protracted hate campaign by the Kelly Gang against police' (p. ix). Macfarlane opines that further items, especially relating to policing, might still be found at the PRO.

Chapters pursue themes and do not follow the chronology: Glenrowan; rural crime and terror; Stringybark Creek; forensic science; the Kelly trial; the defence of the police; and 'the bitter aftertaste of the Kelly legend'. In rough order of their appearance, the major tenets of his argument are that Glenrowan was a planned mass murder of those on the police train after the deliberate murder of Aaron Sherritt, and not the time and place for the declaration of the republic of north-east Victoria and an armed uprising of sympathisers; that the Kellys and related Quinns and Ryans were members of the 'criminal classes' involved in violent anti-social behaviour and crime, such as stealing stock and selling sly grog, who migrated to the wild country of north-east Victoria and made it a hub of crime; that Ned did shoot Fitzpatrick albeit with a defective pistol; that Stringybark Creek was murder and not self-defence; that contemporary forensic science was rudimentary, meaning that puzzles about the murders will remain; that the police were by and large competent despite the views of the 1881 Royal Commission; that Ned Kelly was neither a leader nor a Robin Hood; and that the legend needs to be debunked.

There is much to commend in Macfarlane's book: the discussion of stock stealing and the Baumgarten case, often glossed over in the pro-Kelly literature; the demonstration of the mysteries about George King's activities and disappearance; his examination of the Fitzpatrick shooting; his careful analysis of the wounds to Lonigan, Scanlan and Kennedy at Stringybark Creek and the problem police had in drawing their revolvers

from their heavy leather holsters; the state of contemporary forensic science; and his critique of modern writing that points to shortcomings in Kelly's defence at his trial.

What is less convincing is his defence of the police in the Kelly outbreak. According to Macfarlane, 'with a few notable exceptions, Victoria Police during the Kelly hunt served with exemplary skill' (p. 155). Standish, Nicolson and Hare, the butt of much of the 1881 Royal Commission criticisms, in Macfarlane's view, were diligent and competent. His argument glosses over the ways in which the rivalry of Nicolson and Hare, and Standish's support for Hare, did not help the hunt. The Royal Commission may have been made up of men who had been critical of the police but with good reason. He is ambivalent about Fitzpatrick, contending that he remains an 'unknowable central figure in the Kelly story' (p. 170). He does not deal with the argument that Flood was overzealous in his pursuit of the young Kellys or that Hall's actions at Greta were those of an overbearing bully. He seems to have taken no account of Haldane's work on the police (not in his bibliography). He largely ignores the conflicts over land and the role of police in enforcing the selection laws explored by McQuilton. He also does not acknowledge the changes in policing in the north-east that followed Glenrowan. Macfarlane somewhat uncritically accepts the contemporary view that there was a criminal class and that Ned and his cohorts were examples. He assumes that criminals lied and that any recorded statements by members of that class cannot be believed. Thus the 'Jerilderie Letter' is easily dismissed as a source that might help explain what he calls a 'puzzle from which too many parts and pieces are missing'. It and other recorded statements of Ned and his cohorts surely point to another world view that must be part of the reconstruction of the events of the outbreak and of discussion of the reasons for participants' actions.

Macfarlane shows that new material can be discovered and new insights taken on the Kelly outbreak. The project that Paul Terry's book describes and charts potentially was a new means of advancing the debate. Terry was engaged in the 2008 archaeological dig at the Glenrowan inn site and was a producer on the television documentary, *Ned Kelly Uncovered*. This is the first time that attempts have been made to examine the inn site archaeologically, no mean feat since there have been two further buildings since Ann Jones's inn was burnt to the ground on 28 June 1880. The dig located the outlines of the first inn but could not extend the dig to her kitchen and house to its rear. This prevented the discovery of evidence

that might be the final word on whether Dan Kelly and Steve Hart could have survived in a cellar and escaped. The artefacts from the inn show that Ann Jones provided good quality glasses and ceramic ware for her guests and the large numbers of bullets taken from the inn give a very good indication of the volume of the police attack given the presumed numbers of 'souvenirs' taken from the site over the intervening years. It seems the dig itself has added little to the Kelly story.

At another level, as Ian Jones argues in the foreword, Terry writes 'a fresh and precisely detailed narrative' (p. x) of the 36 hours that the Kellys were at Glenrowan. Terry sets his account of the dig itself in the context of the Kelly literature. One result is that Ann Jones's life is more fully dealt with than elsewhere. Surprisingly, the book has no index.

It may be that Terry's focus on reconstructing an event can be more productive than debating heroes and villains. On the other hand, Macfarlane does much to demythologise many aspects of the Kelly story. He may not 'for the first time' have supplied the reader with 'the ability to distinguish between fact and fiction, report and myth' as the flyer claims, but he has made a notable contribution to Kelly historiography. Hopefully, there will be more from both writers.

Don Gibb

Black Gold. Aboriginal People on the Goldfields of Victoria, 1850–1870.

By Fred Cahir. Australian National University E Press, Canberra 2012. Pp. viii + 152. \$24.95, paperback.

This book is quite a revelation. It aims to overturn existing misconceptions about Aboriginal people in Victoria during the gold rush era: that there were few Aboriginal people in mining settlements; that they were rarely engaged with mining communities; and that their experiences were negative ones. To the contrary, Fred Cahir argues they were deeply involved in the world of mining and at times in mining itself. Indeed, he concludes that, just as Weston Bate has argued that the gold rush was a time of great social and economic energy driven by that most democratic of minerals—gold, the rushes for Aboriginal people 'spelled a freedom and a social energy rarely enjoyed in the pastoral period, or in subsequent epochs' (p. 128).

The themes covered are extensive and show Aboriginal people engaged in discoveries of gold deposits, but rarely being accorded credit, guiding

others through country, fossicking, selling gold finds, providing labour, and acting as trackers and native police. The people, mostly Djadjawurrung on whose lands most of the auriferous metals were found, also provided entertainments to diggers through corroborees and other performances, through sexual services and as drinking partners. At times, Cahir shows the diggers borrowing culturally from Aboriginal people: adopting the call 'cooee' and some Aboriginal words, and using bush foods and possum skin rugs, which they purchased from the Djadjawurrung. The amount of social interaction Cahir has discovered in the sources is quite amazing and supports his argument of an energised era for all peoples.

This book is based on a great deal of research: gold diggers' letters, reminiscences, travellers' accounts, city and country town newspaper comment, and parliamentary and government reports. A wealth of fine description of the activities of Aboriginal people is provided to make a case. The pages bulge with quotations, some of them too long. Sometimes there is too much detail, and this reader yearned for a little more analysis or discussion at times. Also a few things do not add up. It is said that in the early 1850s there were 1500 Aboriginal people employed on stations (p.104), yet the whole Victorian Aboriginal population was about 2000 in that decade. Ian Clark is said to be right about Aboriginal labour 'increasing the rate of their exploitation' (p.103), but Cahir's evidence is that they were valuable workers and valued during the labour shortages. In Victoria, they were often paid in these years—not equally, mind you—and had an air of independence, leaving their employment when they wished, usually for traditional reasons.

It is a great pity then that there are no references to these many pieces of historical evidence. I do not know whose decision it was to omit foot or endnotes, but I suspect it was the publisher and by way of cost saving. However, five extra dollars for thirty pages of endnotes would have been worth it to add to the value of the book. It remains a good read but is diminished as a research tool for others. Of course, if we are really keen, we can drive to Ballarat and read the PhD thesis from which this book came, but would it be as easy as turning the page once we were there? Or has there been a rewriting between thesis and book, so that parts of the book might not match parts of the thesis? There is, of course, an extensive bibliography, but not every piece of evidence offered in the text can be tracked at least to a listed source (if not a page in that a source). For instance, where are George Baker (p.38), W. Dobie (p.107) and other miners who

wrote letters to be found in the bibliography? Occasionally we do not even have a name for the quotation as when we read ‘some pronounced...’ with the quoted word following (p. 123).

These things detract from what is an interesting, well-written and hardworking book.

Richard Broome

Melbourne before Mannix: Catholics in Public Life 1880–1920. By Patrick Morgan. Connor Court, Ballarat 2012. Pp. 240. \$29.95, paperback.

We know a great deal more about Billy Hughes than we know about Andrew Fisher, his predecessor as prime minister. So too with Daniel Mannix, who succeeded Thomas Carr as Catholic archbishop of Melbourne in May 1917, after a stormy four-year period as Carr’s coadjutor. The conflicts between Mannix and Hughes in the conscription debates of the First World War were so divisive and so emotionally fraught that they almost expunged the memories of church and state in Carr’s more tranquil time.

Patrick Morgan’s immensely valuable new book, *Melbourne before Mannix*, sets out to redress the balance. He argues that Mannix was an inheritor as well as a creator. He takes a close look at the Melbourne to which Mannix came in March 1913, and the church that Carr built up during his thirty years as archbishop.

By all accounts, Thomas Carr was affable, scholarly, well-liked and a good administrator. An Irishman, as were most of the Catholic clerics of his time in Australia, he managed to separate the brutal experience of British colonial rule in Ireland from the more benign state of things he found in Melbourne, and in Australia generally. Sectarianism existed; there was no doubt of that, but the heated confrontations of the Mannix years were still to come. And, as Morgan points out, the contrast between the peacemaker Carr and the firebrand Mannix owed as much to the shaping force of world events as it did to their differing temperaments.

Mannix arrived in Melbourne in March 1913. This time of hope, with Home Rule for Ireland seemingly assured, was utterly changed by the outbreak of the First World War, Britain’s decision to delay the measure of independence that Ireland had been promised, and the Easter Rising of 1916. Mannix’s initial response to the Rising was temperate, but with the summary execution of most of its leaders, he emerged as an

uncompromising nationalist. His involvement in the anti-conscription campaign followed the same pattern. His few speeches in the referendum of 1916 were moderate and thoughtful in their attitude to the war. In the second referendum, in October 1917, he spoke with devastating force. By then, his anger against Britain for suppressing Irish freedom served to undermine Irish-Australian trust in the Empire for which their sons were asked to fight.

The Carr-Mannix transition had the force of an electric shock. Carr had his arguments with other church leaders, but these were mainly about matters of faith and observance, and his style was always decorous. His careful responses to such questions as the validity of Anglican orders did not rouse much passion. The one crucial issue in which he engaged vigorously was the question of public funding for Catholic schools.

Morgan's examination of the political influence wielded by Catholics in Carr's time has special interest. Noting that Catholics did not, on the whole, cluster in the same areas, and, therefore, could not dominate a particular electorate, he describes their thinking as tribal rather than ghettoized. He discovers, however, that the political uses of the parish structure (Santamaria's operational base in the Movement from the 1940s on) were being tested in 1912 by the Australian Catholic Federation. This body of laymen was stronger in Victoria than in the other states. It held public rallies on the education issue and put questions to sitting and aspiring members of parliament at election time about their views and voting intentions.

Morgan looks at the social and religious groupings in Victoria in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Briefly and expertly, he sorts out the various clubs and societies, the small magazines and weekly papers that disseminated ideas and held disparate groups together, or apart. His central point is well-made: there was a lively intellectual climate among laymen in Carr's time, and at a time when the clergy too often lapsed into self-congratulation and a plethora of pious practices, this made Melbourne Catholic life quite different from Sydney, where clericalism kept a tight hold.

Morgan does his best for the few women who had a place in lay activities. Marion Miller Knowles, a minor poet and journalist, is perhaps over-represented in his pages. The story of Joseph Winter's daughter Mary, who managed *The Advocate* for a short time, and lost her job when Mannix bought the paper, might have been mentioned, not just for Mary Winter's

brief prominence, but for the fact that no one appears to have considered keeping her on the staff.

Morgan's book is at its incisive best in the final section, when Mannix takes centre stage. Out of a total of twelve chapters, it might be said that only nine precisely fit the title, *Melbourne before Mannix*. The tenth chapter begins with Mannix's arrival as the new coadjutor, and he holds the spotlight to the end. Yet Morgan's shrewd, fair-minded analysis of the impact of Mannix, from 1913 to 1920, shows how much he owed to the men of Carr's time. Three laymen, Joseph Winter, Nicholas O'Donnell and Morgan Jageurs, made Melbourne the 'great bastion' of Irish Catholicism in Australia:

The trio's prolonged advocacy of Irish causes in the *Advocate* meant that when Irish problems suddenly became a factor in Australian politics with the Easter Rising, the ground had been prepared for Mannix's interventions ... (p.169).

Patrick Morgan's finely researched and stimulating study gives an invaluable context for the controversial, enigmatic figure of Daniel Mannix. How Mannix came to shape national life in Australia as no churchman has done, before or since, cannot be fully understood without knowledge of the Catholic laity who were active and influential in public life before the dramatic entrance of the main player in whose shadow they have been made almost invisible.

Brenda Niall

Serving Church. By Jane Carolan. vol. 1, ***A History of Catholic Church Insurances Ltd.***, Pp. xiii + 238; vol. 2, ***The People of Catholic Church Insurances Ltd.***, Pp. xiv + 133, Utber & Patullo Publishing, Melbourne 2011. Free hardcopy with slip case.

The first thing about this history by Jane Carolan is the lavish production of its two volumes and the beauty of its design by Green Poles Design. The hardback volumes have cloth-embossed spines, gilt- and silver-edged pages to make each volume distinctive, and beautiful coloured endpapers from an interior mural at St Gertrude's, New Norcia. The pages are formed from heavy-gauged glossy paper, which feels wonderful, but does pick up reflections from light sources—which is somewhat irritating while reading. The two volumes are generously graced with finely reproduced images of people, buildings and scenes from Catholic life, and breakouts on pages

with gold or black backgrounds and white text – which is arresting, but again does not always make for easy reading. It is glorious to behold, but a little surprising in a centennial history of an insurance company, an industry marked by parsimony.

The Catholic Church Insurance Ltd (CCI) sprang from the determination of the Catholic Church in Australia around 1900 not to be bowed down by Protestantism and to provide for the Church from Church resources. It was the brainchild of men like Cardinal Moran and the layman Hugh Mahon MHR, who wanted to provide fire insurance for church property, and keep Catholic insurance premiums within Catholic borders. It was established in 1911 and, despite Cardinal Moran being in Sydney, CCI was run from Melbourne as Mahon was its heart and soul. Most of its business centred on Victoria and New South Wales in its first fifty years.

CCI began due to the faith of over 260 Catholic shareholders, who subscribed to establish a company which aimed to serve the Church, and because they were offered a solid 7.5 per cent return. It soon made a financial return to the Church of forty per cent of premiums paid, as it did not have to pay out commissions (then about 32% of premiums across the industry) and did not have to advertise. Despite this ‘dividend’ to the Church, parishes and archdioceses were slow to insure their properties with the CCI, and over the years often went elsewhere for a better rate.

This occasional lack of loyalty treated the CCI as the business it was. Yet it was surprising treatment, as the CCI was not just like any business. It paid a substantial dividend to the Church in the form of loans at a good rate; practised a lenient attitude to underinsurance by Church clients and to fire claims that might have been knocked back elsewhere; and set up a benevolent fund from its excess for sick clergy, to supplement other local funds which were uneven in nature and not always in existence.

Jane Carolan tells this insurance story in a well-written and clear way: following the CCI over a hundred years, noting changes of management, directors, and responses to changes in the industry. The Insurance Act 1973 led to new prudential rules and capital holding, and the Trade Practices Act 1974 shook up the industry, reducing the number of companies from 400 to 150 over a decade. Through these turmoils and subsequent troubles such as the Global Financial Crisis of 2006–2007 onwards, the CCI survived to grow into general insurance and superannuation.

Carolan has devised ways to make this company history more reader friendly. She discusses insurances claims, at times year by year, but in doing

so, gives mini-histories with images of buildings burnt down, relating their creation, destruction and rebuilding. In volume 2, the people volume, she creates short biographies of directors, shareholders, the company's solicitor, clergy and bishops involved with the CCI and others, to give vignettes of Catholic life, enlivened by some marvellous images of Catholic laity at church activities. New Norcia Aboriginal mission is a special client of CCI and its short history is told. Hugh Mahon, the driving founder and first managing director, is given significant treatment as well. He was an Irish-born journalist, with a background in land league agitation. He was gaoled in Ireland for such activities before being released and sent to Australia in 1886 for a cure for tuberculosis. He practised journalism before being elected to the first federal parliament as a Labour member in 1901, later serving in Cabinet. His advocacy of Irish causes, Home Rule and republicanism meant he was expelled from federal parliament in 1920 in a vote on party lines, for so-called seditious and disloyal utterances, the only member to date to suffer expulsion.

Serving Church is about the church as much as it is about an insurance company, as it should be, because the CCI was established to serve the Catholic Church and continues to have that at the centre of its mission.

Richard Broome

Books for the Profession: the Library of the Supreme Court of Victoria.

By Sue Reynolds. Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne 2012. Pp. x + 144. \$39.95, paperback.

Melbourne's three great nineteenth-century libraries—the Parliamentary Library, the Public Library (now the State Library of Victoria) and the Supreme Court Library—were all creations of the 1850s. Together, they formed a group unique in Australia. The history of the Parliamentary Library has been studied in Patrick Gregory's excellent *Speaking Volumes*. The centenary in 2013 of the domed reading room at the State Library is being celebrated in an exhibition and public lectures. Now the Supreme Court Library has a scholarly history written by library historian Sue Reynolds.

Early attempts to establish law libraries in colonial Australia had mixed success. Sydney solicitors banded together to open what seems to have been the city's first law library in 1842, but it was short-lived. In the same

year, Supreme Court judges in Sydney and Melbourne separately proposed to use surplus court fees to establish law libraries in the two cities, but their plan came to nothing after a standoff with the government over the necessary court rules. A similar proposal failed in South Australia in 1848 when members of the Legislative Council objected to the use of public funds—even practising fees paid by lawyers themselves—for a library that would benefit only the profession.

The establishment of the library of the Supreme Court of Victoria went more smoothly, but its exact foundation date remains slightly hazy. The failure to date the court rules that created the Library Fund has caused much confusion. In fact, the rules were made in 1852, the year of the court's foundation, and were tabled in the Legislative Council that September. The council's members, unlike their colleagues in South Australia, did not object when the high fees that the rules imposed on new practitioners were set apart for a library for the profession. The library came into existence blessed with a guaranteed source of income.

Historians of the Supreme Court are hampered by the loss of the key source for the administration of the court, the minutes of the judges' meetings. The nineteenth-century minutes, which were detailed and included correspondence of the judges, survived into the 1950s but have since disappeared from view. Fortunately, Reynolds has found a wealth of other archival sources for the library's early history.

The library's collections were built by the dominant figure of its first 30 years, Redmond Barry. The court's rules for the admission of new barristers, which partly determined the library's early purchases, required candidates to pass five law exams, but also five exams in Greek, Latin, and ancient English and 'Universal' history. (Mere solicitors had to pass only the legal exams.)

The ideal to which practitioners were meant to aspire was English law embedded in history and high European culture. Australian law-publishing, dominated by pamphlets, practitioners' manuals and the raw data of cases and statutes, seemed a poor cousin compared with this grand tradition. Law reports and legislation aside, the library seems to have made few systematic purchases of Australian titles in its first 50 years.

The library's accommodation fell furthest from Barry's ideal. The books were squeezed into makeshift spaces in the old Supreme Court building until, after Barry's death, the library occupied the grand rotunda under

the dome at the centre of the new law courts in William Street, where it remains today.

As Reynolds's title suggests, the library was one for the legal profession as a whole, not just for the judges. Ready access to the sources of law was vital for the work of the profession and benefitted the legal system as a whole. But this ideal of legal information as a public good did not extend to making the library's collections available to the public. Vexatious litigant Goldie Collins failed in 1952 in his attempt to use the library's resources for his numerous legal battles, and even Australia's first professor of law, Edward Jenks, had to apply for permission. Called to the bar in London, Jenks had no automatic right of entry to the library.

In Reynolds's history, the twentieth century is little more than an epilogue to the energy of the library's foundation years. In 1895, parliament reduced the high professional admission fees that funded the library and capped them for the future, although enough remained in the Library Fund for the court to draw on it for two major donations to the University of Melbourne's law school in 1930 and 1940. Inflation gradually reduced the real value of the capped fees, and, by the 1950s, the library's income was dwindling. Renovation in the 1990s expanded the library's accommodation, and, in 2013, the creation of the amalgamated Law Library of Victoria renewed the vision of providing lawyers with shared access to the information essential for their work.

John Waugh

Life's Logic: 150 Years of Physiology at the University of Melbourne.
By Juliet Flesch. Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne 2012. Pp. xii + 280. \$49.95, hardback.

Writing university histories, whether of a department, faculty or an entire multi-campus university, is a complex matter. Ideally, such a history should be both a reliable record of its key events, and an engaging account of how its past history shapes its modern identity. It is the historian's challenge to write within the context of the wider university history and the Australian tertiary sector. One of the pitfalls is the tendency to write an interesting yet insular history focussing only on the personalities of the people who have moulded and shaped the department over its lifetime, excluding the minor players. Juliet Flesch, the author of this history, is no stranger to

writing university histories. With Peter McPhee, she authored *150 Years 150 Stories: Brief Biographies of One Hundred and Fifty Remarkable People Associated with The University of Melbourne* (2003) and more recently, *Minding the Shop: People and Events that Shaped the Department of Property & Buildings 1853–2003* (2005).

In *Life's Logic*, Flesch attempts to situate Physiology's history within the wider context of the University of Melbourne and its Victorian and Australian medical and scientific setting. Providing this context is more successfully achieved for the first hundred years than for more recent times. The story is told chronologically, its eight chapters falling naturally into the tenure of its heads of department and sometimes into the timeframe of world events, so we follow the life and times of the department and its people concurrently. However, as Flesch clearly states on p. 102: 'This history ... is, above all, an account of scientific discoveries and the people who made them.' Sadly, student life is unexplored in this history.

The early chapters cover the period 1862 to 1938, the establishment of the department and the arrival of its inaugural Professor of Anatomy, Physiology and Pathology, George Britton Halford (1862–1896). It introduces us to the second professor, Charles James Martin (1896–1903) and the third head of department, William Alexander Osborne (1904–1938) all British-educated men. The development of the department and the engagement of teaching staff occupy most of these chapters; it is a veritable roll-call of the lecturers and demonstrators employed during the Halford and Osborne periods. The impact of the infamous embezzlement of university funds by the accountant, discovered in 1901, and of the First World War are briefly explored.

Neatly bookended, engaging highlights of the early and penultimate chapters are the work and conditions of behind-the-scene staff. We learn of the appalling nineteenth century conditions of the domestic staff and porters, who cleaned and prepared for research and teaching. The living conditions for the cleaner, Mrs Bridget Peck/Peek/Pick (it is unclear what her real name was), or the first three porters, Patrick Driscoll, Henry Macaulay and William Henderson and their families were dire (the porter's house was built over a cesspool). Most recently, the technological and other requirements of the current non-professional staff are revealing and light years away from the conditions endured by the nineteenth and early twentieth century staff.

The second phase (1939–71) under the leadership of Roy Douglas ‘Pansy’ Wright is dealt with over three chapters. Wright was the first Australian-born professor appointed to the department and made his mark scientifically and as an administrator during the Second World War, the years of post-war reconstruction and the Cold War. The rise of women in the department and the employment of refugees stand out as significant in Wright’s period. Two ‘*Dunera* boys’ joined the department. One, Eduard Trautner, worked there until his retirement in 1961, while Walter Julius Freund spent five years in the department working on chemotherapy. Many women scientists built brilliant careers in physiology, although, as Flesch notes, some of them were ‘to reach their full potential only after they left the Department and in some cases left the University altogether’. Flesch also notes (p. 92) that, in many cases, the women scientists were too busy teaching to contemplate research for higher degrees.

The Howard Florey Laboratories of Experimental Physiology opened in 1963, becoming a separate entity in 1971 at the conclusion of Wright’s lengthy tenure as head of department. In changing times, the length of tenure of staff changed dramatically. Ian Darian-Smith was appointed the second professor of Physiology in 1972 and remained until 1983. He was succeeded by Trefor Morgan from 1984 to 1995. Morgan embraced new technology, the theme of the remaining chapters. Stephen Harrap succeeded Morgan in 1995. Extraordinary and disgraceful for a modern university, the first female professor was not appointed until 2011. One hundred and forty-nine years after the Department of Physiology was established, Lea Delbridge became its first female Head.

Life’s Logic is written and presented in a style reminiscent of *150 Years 150 Stories*. The stated and necessarily narrow approach taken in this history has unfortunately left me with unanswered questions and a blinkered view of the department. We read nothing of internal discussions and the rationale for undertaking various research projects. I found little or no hint of internal politics, personality conflict or the usual jockeying for leadership positions frequently associated with a major university department. There is minimal discussion of the effect of the Dawkins reforms, or the existence of external financial threats to the department. Notwithstanding these limitations, Flesch presents the biographies as a rich tapestry of personalities, and their contribution to science, in a lively and engaging manner.

Fay Woodhouse

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Teigan Arthur is a Bachelor of Arts student at the University of Ballarat. Her interests include Indigenous Studies and Australian History.

Richard Broome is Emeritus Professor of History at La Trobe University and a Councillor of the RHSV. He is the author of eight books including *Aboriginal Australians. A History since 1788* (2010). He has just completed a history of the Aborigines Advancement League and is involved in an environmental history project on the Mallee.

Ian D. Clark is a Professor of Tourism in the Business School at the University of Ballarat. He has a doctorate in Aboriginal Historical Geography from Monash University. His areas of interest include Victorian Aboriginal history, Indigenous tourism, the history of tourism, and Victorian toponyms (names derived from places).

Alexandra Dellios is a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne. She is interested in ethnic community involvement in heritage and other public history practices. Her father arrived as a child migrant in the late 1960s and went to school in South Melbourne.

Tony Edney is a semi-retired solicitor with an interest in the history of pastoral settlement in pre-colonial Victoria.

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

Carole Hooper was until recently a research associate at the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Melbourne. Her main research interest is the history of education in Victoria, particularly the provision of

higher education within the public sector. In recent years, she has worked with Professor Richard Selleck on an ARC-funded project researching the Masson family.

Victor Isaacs is a retired Commonwealth public servant, whose career included work as a Ministerial adviser in the post-1988 Commonwealth Parliament House. His interests include political history, railway history and the history of newspapers.

Beth D. Kicinski has a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) and a Diploma of Fire Technology (Fire and Explosions Investigations) from the University of Ballarat. Her areas of interest include comparative analysis of historical methodologies, industrial heritage and community identity.

John Murphy, a farmer from Leongatha North, was elected president of the Leongatha and District Historical Society when it was first formed in 1964. He began writing local histories in the 1980s, followed by two commissioned shire histories, *No Parallel—the Woorayl Shire 1888–1988*, and later, *On the Ridge—the Shire of Mirboo 1894–1994*. From 1988 until 2000, he served as Gippsland representative on the Council of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. In January 2004, he was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in recognition of his work in promoting local history.

Brenda Niall is writing a biography of Daniel Mannix, which will be published by Text in 2014.

Marjorie Theobald is a senior research fellow in the History Department at the University of Melbourne. She has published widely in the history of women's education. She has returned to her home town of Castlemaine where she is writing a history of the Mount Alexander goldfields and the town which emerged from them. She has recently published her family history, *The Wealth beneath Their Feet*, following six families who came in search of gold to the Castlemaine district.

John Waugh is a senior fellow in the Melbourne Law School at the University of Melbourne and author of *First Principles: the Melbourne Law School 1857–2007*.

Ben Wilkie is a doctoral researcher at Monash University in Melbourne, Victoria. His thesis is entitled 'Scotland's Empire in Australia: Imperialism,

Culture, and Diversity, 1788–1940’. He lectures in Australian Studies at Deakin University.

Fay Woodhouse has been working as a commissioned historian for the past ten years, writing history and biography for universities, government agencies and individuals. She has written various institutional histories. She is currently completing a history of Monash’s Faculty of Law and of Melbourne’s first yoga school, the Gita School of Yoga.

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.

The RHSV has a large membership base, including individuals, families, libraries, schools and businesses, as well as functioning as the umbrella organisation for over 280 local and specialist historical societies throughout Victoria.

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.

The *Victorian Historical Journal* publishes and reviews scholarly contributions to Australian history, with particular emphasis on the history of Victoria. Reviews are by invitation. Guidelines for contributors can be obtained by contacting the Society's office below. Books may also be reviewed in *History News*.

President: Don Garden
Honorary Editor: Marilyn Bowler
Review Editors: John Rickard, Peter Yule
Desktop Production: Kate Jones

Publications Committee: Richard Broome (Convenor), Marie Clark, Mimi Colligan, Don Gibb, Kate Jones, Farley Kelly, Richard Morton, Kate Prinsley, John Rickard, Emma Russell, Judith Smart, Carole Woods, Peter Yule

Address: Royal Historical Society of Victoria
239 A'Beckett Street, Melbourne, VIC. 3000

Telephone: (03) 9326 9288

Fax: (03) 9326 9477

Website: www.historyvictoria.org.au

Email: office@historyvictoria.org.au

GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS TO THE *VICTORIAN HISTORICAL JOURNAL*

1. The Victorian Historical Journal is a refereed journal publishing original and previously unpublished (online and hard copy) scholarly articles on Victorian history, or on Australian history that illuminates Victorian history.
2. The submission of original scholarly articles is invited.
3. The journal often publishes historical notes, generally of 2–3000 words. A historical note contains factual information of significance to themes of Victorian history and to readers of the VHJ, and is different from an article by not being an extended analysis or having an argument. Submitted articles may be reduced and published as historical notes at the discretion of the editor and the Publications Committee, but only after receiving permission from the contributor for such action.
4. Reviews are commissioned by the review editor(s). Suggestions of publications to review are welcome.
5. The Royal Historical Society of Victoria does not pay for contributions to the *Journal*.
6. Articles within the range of 4000–8000 words (including notes) are preferred.
7. 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.
8. References should be supplied as endnotes and should not exceed 10 per cent of the text. They should be devoted principally to the citation of sources.
9. 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 indicating the main argument or significance of the article.
10. Suitable illustrations for articles are welcome, but initially send clear photocopies and not originals. Digitised images should not be sent on disk or by email. If your article is accepted we will give you further details about sending images.
11. Titles should be concise. A subtitle can also be submitted. The editor reserves the right to alter the title in consultation with the author.
12. Send an electronic copy of your manuscript, either on disk or preferably as an email attachment (.rtf or .doc file format). Email attachments should be sent to office@historyvictoria.org.au. Telephone enquiries to the RHSV office 9326 9288.