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The John Adams Prize

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

The following terms apply to the prize:

- This biennial prize will be awarded for the best article or historical note on Victorian history in the four *VHJ* issues over two calendar years, beginning 2017–18.

- The prize will be awarded for an article or historical note that illuminates a significant element of Victoria's history, is clearly and succinctly written, and is researched from original material.

- Members of the RHSV Publications Committee are ineligible for the award.

- The prize offered from the Adams bequest is $300 and three years' free membership of the RHSV, which includes hard copies of the *VHJ*.

- A short list of five articles will be compiled by the *VHJ* editors active in the prize period.

- Short-listing will occur at the end of each two-year period, beginning in December 2018.

- Two judges will be chosen by the Publications Committee from academic and community historians and will report to the Committee by the following April.

- The John Adams Prize will be presented biennially at the RHSV AGM following its judging and will be announced in the ensuing June issues of the *VHJ* and *History News*.

Richard Broome, Chair, RHSV Publications Committee

John Adams Prize Winners

2017–18

Nicola Cousen,

'The Legend of Lalor's Arm: Eureka Myths and Colonial Surgery',

Victorian Historical Journal,

vol. 88, no. 2, November 2017, pp. 212–34.

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Royal Historical Society of Victoria

Front cover:
Aboriginal People in the Vicinity of Mount Buffalo, *c.* 1891–1910 (Courtesy State Library Victoria, Reginald Wood Collection of Glass Lantern Slides, H2004.41/38, digitally restored by Scott Hartvigsen, reproduced here with cultural permission from both the Dhudhuroa and Waywurru people)

VICTORIAN HISTORICAL JOURNAL

VOLUME 91, NUMBER 1

JUNE 2020

ARTICLES

HISTORICAL NOTES

REVIEWS

Introduction

Judith Smart and Richard Broome

This is a bumper issue of the *Victorian Historical Journal* with seven articles, three historical notes and eleven book reviews. The articles deal with family and Indigenous history, a murder and execution, two examples of reform activism prominent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Mahogany Ship, and a mid-twentieth-century infanticide. The notes range from analysis of a father–son correspondence in the mid-1870s, to a follow-up discussion of the heroine of the 1926 bushfires, and a light-hearted account of a late nineteenth-century newspaper hoax.

Like so many organisations, the RHSV in the first half of 2020 has seen many of its activities curtailed by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, while most of its public lectures and events have had to be cancelled and the headquarters closed, the staff, the president and secretary, and a number of volunteers have worked hard to make activities available online, and some presenters very kindly agreed to provide their lectures in written form so we can disseminate them by other means. Among these is Professor Lynette Russell AM, FASSA, FAHA, who had agreed to present the RHSV's second annual Women's History Month lecture in March, then, when it had to be cancelled, provided copy for publication in this issue of the *Victorian Historical Journal*.

In 'What the Little Bird Didn't Tell Me', Professor Russell reflects on the book she published twenty years ago (*A Little Bird Told Me*) concerning the family secrets she had uncovered about her Aboriginal ancestry and the need to understand the lives of her Aboriginal great-grandmother, Emily, and her grandmother, Gladys. In the process, she now realises, 'In almost all cases, in the first instance, those who reached out to me, who placed me and claimed me, were women … [and] it was first and foremost Aboriginal women who supported me'. The archivists, librarians and genealogists who provided assistance were also overwhelmingly women, and, through being drawn into the vortex of family history, Russell now recognises she was writing women's

history as well as bringing a feminist gaze to her Aboriginal past and the process of recovering it.

The second article, 'Mogullumbidj: First People of Mount Buffalo', by Jacqui Durrant, is a fascinating exploration of the identity of this little-known Aboriginal group, first referred to in European sources as the bringers of the 'gaiggip' ceremony to Melbourne in 1843–44. In trying to discover who the Mogullumbidj were and what happened to them, this article suggests they played a key role in the process of cultural diffusion for the Kulin nation, bringing with them from the alpine regions new and sacred forms of song and dance to deal with the unprecedented social turmoil and upheaval caused by European invasion and occupation.

John Schauble's article, 'Brutal Murderer, Mentally Ill or Political Martyr: The Curious Case of James Seery', focuses on the gruesome killing of a goldminer on a remote goldfield in the high country of Gippsland in 1870, and the subsequent arrest, trial, conviction and hasty execution of the murderer within just two months. While not questioning the accuracy of the evidence against Seery, this article argues the failure of the justice system to test his mental capacity to form an intention to murder.

Mental health was also a factor in the fate of late nineteenth-century Melbourne anarchist–socialist, turned co-operative settler, David Andrade. In 'David Andrade's Turn Back to the Land in the 1890s', Rachel Goldlust examines his role in establishing Australia's first anarchist club and first vegetarian restaurant, and his 'tireless advocacy for worker's rights', before considering his turn to co-operative agriculture and the ideal of self-sufficiency in the midst of the 1890s Depression. Tragically, the loss of everything in the devastating 1897 bushfire triggered mental collapse and confinement in various asylums for the remaining 30 years of his life.

In 'Woman's Sphere Remodelled', Ruby Ekkel undertakes an innovative spatial analysis of the Victorian Woman's Christian Temperance Union between 1887 and 1914, arguing that the organisation reworked the ideological framework of 'separate spheres'. In expanding the prevailing definition of the 'private sphere', WCTU branches also physically occupied public spaces from which women had previously been excluded.

Once again the journal plays host to an article on the perennial mystery of the Mahogany Ship. Ruurd Snoekstra, who has been involved in annual magnetic surveys of the sites associated with the ship, undertakes an assessment of the evidence presented in an earlier article in this journal, asking 'Was the Mahogany Ship Built by Escaped Convicts? Questioning Murray Johns's Hypothesis'. Snoekstra concludes that until the ship is found—and 'this is looking increasingly unlikely'—the jury must remain out on Johns's theory.

The final major article, by Marilyn Bowler, a former editor of this journal, deals with a tragic case of infanticide in rural Victorian in 1950. In 'The Death of George Peter Cowper, Aged Less than Three Weeks', Bowler explores newspaper accounts and the evidence given in inquests, not to determine why Margaret killed her baby, but to contextualise her actions in the post-war lives of women on farms, including social isolation, lack of basic amenities, and the inadequacy of medical and mental health facilities.

The three 'Historical Notes' in this issue of the journal include one by Annette Lewis and another by her husband Charles, both friends of the RHSV over many decades. Annette Lewis pursues her long-term interest in Victoria's Clarke family in 'Letters to "Dear Rupert", 1874–75', a sensitive analysis of the missives Sir William Clarke sent to his 9-year-old son while Sir William and the rest of the family were overseas. The letters, she argues, shed light on a father–son relationship and provide glimpses of the paternal expectations that gave rise to lasting tensions between the two. Charles Lewis's piece is also located in the 1870s but is dedicated to leavening the crushing seriousness of historical journals, the chosen subject being a lengthy article titled, 'The Tele-Gastrograph', published in the Melbourne *Age* on Saturday 29 June 1878. Purporting to be an account of a recent invention, not yet patented, it describes the tests allegedly undertaken at five different venues by some of Melbourne's leading citizens, together with some of the public responses. In between these two notes is a reflective piece by Nikki Henningham with Helen Morgan, prepared for PROV's Women's History Month lecture in March this year. Titled 'Florrie Hodges: On Being Brave', it is of special interest to readers of this journal as a sequel to John Schauble's piece in December 2019 on the 1926 Gippsland bushfires. It traces the subsequent life of Florrie in the wake of her heroic achievements in saving the lives of her siblings and 'reflects upon the

relationship between celebrity and heroics and the inter-generational impact of untreated trauma'.

We commend to you the quality and variety of the articles published here, and their demonstration of the healthy condition of historical research and writing in this state. The many book reviews that follow reinforce this judgment about the depth and sophistication of historical scholarship, and the increasingly blurred distinction between academic and community history. We encourage you to submit articles or notes to this journal that draw on your own research into our rich and varied history.

What the Little Bird Didn't Tell Me*

Lynette Russell

Abstract

Nearly twenty years ago I published a book that documented a journey I had been on for over a decade. The book was A Little Bird Told Me: Family Secrets, Necessary Lives. *This monograph represented a journey of discovery where I located my Aboriginal ancestors and answered a number of questions that had dogged my family for generations. Along the way, I discovered a story of secrets and lies, of madness, and refuge. In this talk, I will reflect on this book nearly twenty years later, with a focus on the importance of women as the keepers and tellers of family stories. In so doing I will consider the reasons why I wrote the book, what impact it had at the time and its ongoing influence. I hope that these reflections may have something to say to other family historians, and I want to put the case for family history being considered capital 'H' History too. Finally, I want to question the view that there are some family secrets and necessary lies that should never be revealed and told.*

Introduction

I always begin by acknowledging that we meet, and indeed I write, on the unceded lands of the Kulin people of Naarm, which we know now as Melbourne. However, to be honest, I find these acknowledgements to be unsatisfying, often cursory, and all too frequently easily passed over. Instead, I ask you to imagine that here beneath the concrete, the tram tracks and roads, beneath the buildings, sits the land on which Aboriginal people have lived for tens of thousands of years, since time immemorial. Perhaps over 3,000 generations, mother to son, father to daughter, they (we) lived, thrived, survived. Born here, died here, buried here, practised ceremonies here, hunted, fished, and gathered, they built their homes here. They told the stories of the night skies, the seasons, the changes over time, yearly events. They saw drought, they practised fire-

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stick farming. They managed their landscape, ensuring they benefited from its bounty. They watched the sea level rise and create Port Phillip Bay. They saw the Birrarung (Yarra River) flood and then retreat; where it once wound its way across the plain, it is now the shipping channel. And through all of this, countless generations, thousands of stories, they maintained their connection to Country—a connection that has never been broken, tested at times indeed, but never broken. It is all of those ancestors who went before that I acknowledge, whom I respect and am guided by, and to whom I try to listen.

I was incredibly honoured to be invited to give the Women's History Lecture 2020 at the Royal Historical Society of Victoria; I accepted immediately. Later on, when asked for an abstract and title, I struggled to come up with something. Although solidly a lifelong feminist, and obviously I take these values into all of my work, I have never done what I thought of as 'women's history', or indeed feminist history. I confessed my uncertainty to the RHSV's executive officer, Rosemary Cameron, and she came back with a couple of suggestions that I might like to consider. One of these was to offer a reflection on the work I did for *A Little Bird Told Me*, published nearly twenty years ago. This was timely, as the conservative and reactionary media and Twitter-sphere were at the time attacking the Aboriginality of Yuin elder and author Bruce Pascoe. Actions like this leave me seriously anxious as I can still feel the sting of Andrew Bolt's attacks a few years back when he took aim at a whiteness studies conference where I was giving a keynote address. Clearly I and my family were too fair for him, and he thought he could judge my heritage from a blurry black and white thumbnail image on the poster. Watching the critics, including some Indigenous ones, pile onto Pascoe reminded me of the lateral violence I had seen and indeed felt.[1] Maybe with nearly two decades distance I could take the moment to think about my original work, its reception, impact, and legacy. All of this I would frame by asking myself, again, if some secrets and necessary lies should stay hidden.

I began writing this lecture as we witnessed the emergence of COVID-19, first in China and then in Europe. I wrote this as a performance piece, to be spoken, enunciated, and embodied. Although it was not possible to deliver the talk I have chosen to keep this form; I hope the reader might hear my voice, and feel the enthusiasm, the uncertainty, and the self-conscious self-reflection. By the time the

lecture was to be delivered Australia was on the cusp of a lockdown, and sensibly, very sensibly on reflection, the decision was made to cancel the lecture. Now, as I finish it off for publication, well over two million people across the globe have been diagnosed with the virus and more than 200,000 people have died. Only the deaths of those who tested positive have been recorded as COVID-19 deaths, and by most estimates the pandemic has probably been responsible for many more fatalities. Those of us who study history are daily reminded of the 1919 influenza pandemic, and the aftermath of both world wars. I recently had the privilege of hearing a PhD candidate speak about their work on the way HIV and AIDS devastated gay communities in the 1980s and 90s; the stories were very familiar, perhaps even more so right now. The ongoing impact of childhood polio shaped the destiny of some of my family members. Though it is now a distant memory, I can recall adults who grew up in the pre-vaccination period and contracted polio as children, leaving them with wizened legs and often a shortened life span due to post-polio syndrome. Today, the social and historical lessons learned from these moments seem to be largely forgotten as the medical model, stressing the need to 'flatten the curve', is preferred to social models. Policies of isolation and lockdown, and subsequent economic stimulus packages, are reverberating around the planet. The media tell us we are in uncharted terrain, but we as historians would argue otherwise. Throughout all of the current pandemic discussions it seems the medical and economic fraternity are dominating the conversation. Never has there been a more pertinent moment for humanities and social sciences scholars to be heard; yet we are almost invisible and certainly inaudible. I would argue that history, and in my case Indigenous history, has never been more urgent.

A Little Bird Told Me is the narrative I developed as I tried to understand the life of my Aboriginal great-grandmother, Emily, and by extension her daughter, my grandmother, Gladys. I wrote the book for my father, for my children, but ultimately it was mostly for myself. I wanted to know why Emily and Gladys had taken great care to keep a number of secrets and maintain mistruths through the generations. One of their secrets involved our family's Aboriginal heritage—we were everything from Gypsies to descendants of a Polynesian princess. Another, possibly even more 'shameful', secret in their eyes was Emily's catastrophic mental breakdown and subsequent lengthy confinement.

Emily was detained in several 'mental hospitals' under Victoria's *Mental Hygiene Act 1933* (No. 4157) between Christmas 1925 and February 1941. She was for the most part an inmate at Caloola, in Sunbury. After sixteen years she was released and declared 'relieved', but her relationship with Gladys, her daughter, was irreparably broken; she had left when Gladys was a child and returned when she was a young mother, married with a son.

Emily heard voices and she responded to them. Perhaps she spoke to the spirits of her ancestors. Those around her thought this a pathology; I have no way of knowing what she thought as her medical records are largely silent of voice, apart from one or two comments over her sixteen-year period of incarceration. She was variously described as having auditory hallucinations, schizophrenia, mental breakdown, severe anxiety, psychosis, and mental collapse. At one point of her stay she refused to speak, but rather she sang her replies. I will never forget the powerful jolt I experienced when I read the doctor's notes that 'she sits and picks at the bars of her bird cage'. A bird cage was the vernacular term for a restraining device, commonly used in the early part of the twentieth century. It was, I was assured by the mental health archivist, much less gruesome than it sounds. As Emily was placed in the 'bird cage' and she answered in song, the title of the book became obvious.

Reception

A Little Bird Told Me sold reasonably well by Australian book industry standards. It was quickly placed on Higher School Certificate courses in New South Wales and Victoria, and most local libraries purchased copies. It was well reviewed, mostly positively, and the reception was incredibly pleasing. The period immediately after publication saw dozens of radio interview invitations, usually with the ABC local and national radio stations, and ABC television made it the focus of one of the 'postcards from history' short documentaries. Numerous Aboriginal people contacted me, often with more information on the family, and new connections were made. Some family members rejected the book outright and saw my outing myself as having Aboriginal heritage as an act of betrayal. In short I lost some family members, but was rapidly welcomed into a much bigger family of Victorian Kooris.

In almost all cases, in the first instance, those who reached out to me, who placed me and claimed me, were women. Later some men came to include me, but it was first and foremost Aboriginal women who

supported me. Aboriginal society, at least as it appears here in Victoria and in my world, has always been heavily matriarchal. Aunty Iris Lovett-Gardner, who held my hand thoughout the whole journey, guided me and became my mentor, played a crucial role in the post-publication period. Her wisdom and kindness became an important touchstone as I negotiated the ugly politics of family racism. She was very amused when one relative asked about the book's royalties and who would get them. These were modest but not insubstantial for me as an early career researcher, precariously employed and uncertain what to do next. When one family member suggested he should be entitled to half, as it was 'his story too', Aunty Iris saw the humour—she had never heard anything 'more Koori', she quipped, 'as we share everything'.

Shortly after publication I ran into the brilliant, luminous, and very much missed Lisa Bellear, poet and photographer. Lisa and I had attended the University of Melbourne together. We would often chat, and she would entertain my then 3-year-old son, twirling him around and 'dancing' with him. In her usual fashion she greeted me with warmth and humour, and congratulated me on the book. This was an acknowledgement that meant a great deal to me. Lisa went on to say she saw Emily and Gladys's stories as part of the stolen generation, a different version of it, but nonetheless a sort of removed-family narrative. That characterisation, which I had not really considered before, was revealing. Over the next few years I was able to use this as the lens to understand the intergenerational trauma I had observed but not comprehended. This is a trauma that for some family members continues to the present, a trauma that, for the most part, I feel I was able to leave behind by researching, writing and acknowledging. I remain convinced that it is the process of acknowledging and embracing my history that has enabled me to control it.

A fundamental difference between my upbringing and that of my children was the direct result of the book. Where my childhood was shrouded in uncertainty and secrecy, theirs was not. They were always aware of their heritage, their powerful Aboriginal women ancestors. Their acceptance in the Aboriginal community is perhaps one of the most satisfying aspects of the entire journey—knowing that the denial, the loss, the uncertainty is now in the past.

Women as Secret Keepers and Story Tellers

As this is the Women's History Month lecture I must acknowledge the vast numbers of women researchers, librarians, archivists and genealogists. In all the research for my book—at the Public Record Office, the State Library, the Mental Health Archives, and the offices of Births, Deaths, and Marriages—it was virtually always women who attended me. Meticulous and caring custodians of records and archives, they were only too willing to help disentangle the threads of a complicated story of which I initially knew just the barest of outlines. All the while, I felt guided by the women in the story, Emily and Gladys, mentored by Aunty Iris, and tutored by archivists and librarians. It was this immersion in the archives that led me to a later project, where, in co-operation with the Keeper of the Public Record Office Victoria, State Library Victoria, the Koorie Heritage Trust, and Monash colleagues in archival science, a number of us interviewed over 100 Indigenous Victorians about their experiences in accessing family records, and their need to annotate, amend and correct these where possible. Again this project was dominated by women archivists, researchers, scholars, and community members. The final report for this research, the *Trust and Technology Project*, had a profound impact on the way archives and libraries now interact with Indigenous community members. The desire to correct records, once seen as a challenge to be resisted, is now regarded as adding value to the records, demonstrating their relevance and contemporary utility. None of this would have been possible without *A Little Bird Told Me.*

With what I now think of as a sort of arrogance, partly the result of years of higher education and historical training, I thought I could learn all I needed to know from the archives alone. While Aunty Iris, my guide and mentor, gently chided me that there was much to be gained by talking to people, I was initially reticent. Too much time had passed, no one would remember Emily, who had died in 1964. What I had not considered, however, was the universality of Emily and Gladys's story. As Lisa Bellear had commented, it was a 'sort of stolen generation story'. It was countless Aboriginal people, especially Elders, who pulled me aside and showed me that the experience of loss, dislocation and dispossession is a quintessential Aboriginal story. One woman simply and succinctly said 'we recognise this story, we recognise you'. So, in the end, where I lost many family members who chose to reject me, and by extension I would add, Emily and Gladys, I also gained family—a family

connected by the fragmentation of the colonial experience, forged out of loss and built on commonality. Overwhelmingly I have been offered generosity. For every harsh critic, every act of lateral violence, there have been ten-fold offerings of kindness, understanding and acceptance. The power of this story has been with me these past decades and continues to shape how I interact with the world.

Family History as History

Family history is a vortex. It can be an endless search through official certificates: births, deaths, baptisms and marriages. The success of the University of Tasmania's Diploma of Family History is evidence of its appeal. Family trees expand almost forest like, and branches become choked and difficult to read, causing them to be forever rewritten and reconfigured. Much aided by online resources, genealogical tool kits and family tree drawing programs, it is a vortex into which it is easy to disappear. I was determined that my brief foray into family history was to be specific and short-lived. Like many academic historians I did not really value family history in the beginning. I would look for Emily and Gladys and I would tell their story, and exit promptly. Of course it is never that simple. Gladys, my grandmother, married Walter, whose family had worked on the ships in Bass Strait. They fished for lobsters and, in the off-season, gathered mutton birds. Both Walter and his two brothers married Aboriginal women, and the family connections stretch across the straits to Flinders Island and northern Tasmania. Their grandmother came from Boarhunt, just near Portsmouth in south-east England.

Exactly one year ago I set out to see visit Boarhunt to see where my English ancestors had lived. I pondered the life of a woman who travelled from southern England to Flinders Island, where she is now buried at Lady Barron Cemetery. On a gloriously sunny yet chilly spring day, I and a family member wandered the grounds of St Nicholas Church and graveyard (Figures 1 and 2). Originally this had been a Saxon church built of stone quarried from the Isle of Wight. I stopped and collected a flint pebble from the driveway; it rests on my desk as I write. We stood beneath the massive Yew tree that is on the national register of heritage trees, and we noticed the ribbons new and old and very faded that had been tied to its boughs. This magnificent tree has been estimated to date from around 185 AD, meaning that it was already 880 years old when the Saxon church was established there in the eleventh century.

Figure 1: St Nicholas Church, Boarhunt (Courtesy Lynette Russell)

Generations of my ancestors would have seen it; hundreds are buried nearby. The tree has a large hollow in it. The church newsletter notes 'that local legend has it that a family, in medieval times, sheltered within the hollow trunk throughout an entire winter. An alternative story suggests that the incumbent minister allowed a poor widow to shelter there during Victorian times'.

Figure 2: St Nicholas Church Graveyard, Boarhunt (Courtesy Lynette Russell)

On leaving, we drive along the romantically named 'Trampers Lane' and locate the seventeenth-century home named Russell Place. And it occurs to me that here, on the other side of the planet, other ancestors have lived generation after generation in the same place. Until one day some left and in time connected to Emily and her ancestors, creating in me a lineage that spans the vast oceans. Against my better judgment I know that the story of my great-great-grandmother from Boarhunt, her story of travel and relocation, is one I will eventually tell, not right now but at some point in the future. The irresistible pull of the vortex is ever present.

For me the doing of history is as important as the writing of it. When I wrote *A Little Bird Told Me*, I travelled to the asylums where Emily was constrained, and I visited the country of her ancestors, and mine. I saw the small tin hut she was raised in, almost inconceivably still standing having operated as a post office into the 1930s. My father retraced our steps a few years back and visited the hut in Lillimur, north-western Victoria. Over the intervening decades it had fallen over,

probably in one of the strong wind storms for which the Wimmera is known. I am thankful that at least it was there when I visited in the 1990s and I got to imagine what life might have been like for an Aboriginal girl and her family, growing up on the edge of the desert, long before she became a mental patient, before she became a subject of intrigue to me, and before she became a secret to be hidden—in a sense before she became white.

One of the challenges for me, as an academic historian writing a family history, or, in the case of *A Little Bird Told Me*, a biography and memoir, was the dismissive way many of my colleagues engaged with the narrative. It has been my experience that many still want to keep capital 'H' History separate from family history, and often even local histories are similarly dismissed. I understand this because I was guilty of it too. I gave an academic paper on my research at a biography symposium, much to the consternation of many assembled there who were studying 'great men and women'. Several thought that Emily and Gladys were entitled to a life story but not a biography. I felt the sting of that intrusion into their space, and decided that I would not speak publicly about *A Little Bird Told Me*. But distance, time, experience, and perhaps confidence have made me reconsider. And there are a few signs that capital 'H' History is changing too.

Having the opportunity to revisit *A Little Bird Told Me* has been a privilege for which I am immensely grateful. To the RHSV I give sincere thanks, for this has provided me with a rare interlude to reflect on previous work. The modern academy does not lend itself to slow research. We are constantly pressured to produce quality outputs and move on to the next project. The chance to reflect on prior work hardly ever eventuates. But this opportunity has allowed me to recalibrate the impact of the research and think deeply about the crucial role it has played in the way I do history. Writing *A Little Bird Told Me* grounded me; it showed me my connections to the past, and it allowed the development of new connections and the emergence of new and different types of engagement. While some family members were critical and thought that the secrets should stay firmly hidden and in the past, I welcomed the chance to set the record right. Every family historian, and indeed every biographer, will discover something that others wanted hidden. The question of whether some secrets should stay unexplored needs to be answered by the individual researcher. I went to

great lengths to preserve the anonymity of family members, leaving out surnames where I could. However, for me at least and in this context in particular, while the 'family secrets' were 'necessary lies', uncovering them and bringing them to light was equally necessary. Where others saw betrayal I see an honouring.

Biographers make decisions, some big, some small; they layer interpretation, and they create context. As a historian I know that the stories we tell are always partial, and always subjective. Although we might try for objectivity, at best it is an illusion and at worst a fraud. I, for the most part, write Aboriginal history, and I look for agency and response. I want to see reaction, I want to find those moments when Indigenous people exerted control, when they spoke back, when their actions had impact, when their voices were heard.

When I first framed this talk I commented that I did not see myself as a 'feminist historian' nor indeed did I do 'women's history'. As I have worked my way through the paper I realise that this is, of course, incorrect. As a feminist I do feminist history. As the biographer of Emily and Gladys I do women's history. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect everything we do, as my beloved State Library remains closed to the public, the chance to research, along with the desire to write and think, intensifies as we remain in isolation—what they call socially distant. Of course we are not socially distant but physically distant, the plethora of social media and other mechanisms for interacting continuing to multiply. Zoom meetings have become a daily event, and friends, family, colleagues and students all interact via the laptop screen. I hope the text of this undelivered lecture might stand as a historical marker of that moment in time when we were to meet and think about women's history, about what the little bird did not tell me, and history intervened.

Notes

1   Gundijtmara activist and 'cultural healer' Richard Frankland has identified lateral violence as endemic in Indigenous communities. He is not referring to episodes of physical violence per se but to insidious attacks focusing on the identity and authenticity of community members, especially those who are perceived as successful or imagined to be benefiting from their Aboriginality. See https://www.humanrights. gov.au/our-work/chapter-2-lateral-violence-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-communities-social#fnB2; see also, Barbara Wingard, 'A Conversation with Lateral Violence', *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, no. 1, 2010, pp. 13–17.

Mogullumbidj: First People of Mount Buffalo

Jacqui Durrant

Abstract

The name 'Mogullumbidj', referring to the first people who lived in the area around Mount Buffalo, is virtually unheard of today. However, in the early years of European 'settlement', this group was widely known and spoken about by other Victoria Aboriginal peoples. This article examines who the Mogullumbidj were, the nature of their cultural connections with other Aboriginal groups, what happened to them, and why they are now so rarely 'on the map' of Aboriginal Victoria.

In the summer of 1843–44, a group of Mogullumbidj people from Mount Buffalo, arrived at Yarra Bend (where Merri Creek meets the Yarra River) in Melbourne, for a large ceremonial gathering with Kulin peoples. In late December, this gathering, which involved 800 people of seven different groups, witnessed the performance of a 'gaiggip'—a special new ceremony, which the Mogullumbidj had brought with them. This gaiggip was recorded in a good amount of detail at the time by the assistant protector of Aborigines in Melbourne, William Thomas, who also made a clear note of the presence of this new group of people. Thomas wrote that the ceremony, which ran for six days, consisted of seven different dances; the first six involved an individual weapon of war, but the seventh dance was with a leafy bough—the emblem of peace. Each group was represented by its own bark emblem, 'each of which has a division of seven patches of "wurup" (an emblem of joy & cheerfulness)', and, at the end of the ceremony, these were 'collected together and put in the centre of the encampment in silence, proclaiming goodwill to all around'.[1]

We can speculate that the participation of the Mogullumbidj in the gaiggip ceremony in Melbourne, held in order to 'make friends' with the various Kulin groups, was part of a process of realigning diplomatic relations, perhaps even involving Mogullumbidj incorporation into the Kulin polity. This should be considered in context, for the early 1840s was a period of unprecedented social turmoil and upheaval in which Aboriginal people were dealing with the horrific destruction of their lands and people, and this social upheaval may have encouraged

previously disparate Aboriginal groups to unite in a common struggle for cultural, spiritual and everyday survival. Indeed one newspaper report of the day, in which a European man asked some Kulin people what the gaiggip was about, recorded that the ceremony was 'an incantation—the intention of which is to remove the terrible epidemic under which so many of them are labouring'.[2] We can be certain that this was a grossly over-simplified explanation, but it still conveys a sense of urgent response to the circumstances of the day.

Clearly, the group of Mogullumbidj people attending the gathering at Yarra Bend had travelled a considerable distance from their country in north-east Victoria's Alps, and their preparedness to undertake such an arduous and possibly dangerous journey lends weight to the cultural significance of their presence. Indeed, despite their geographical remoteness from Melbourne, the Mogullumbidj people were well known. In examining archival materials for the purpose of tracing the Aboriginal history of north-east Victoria, I have found references by many different groups of Aboriginal people—from the 1840s right through to the end of the nineteenth century and from locations extending from Mansfield to Melbourne and Omeo—to the people of Mount Buffalo, always referring to them as 'Mogullumbidj' or 'Mogullumbeek' (or variations on these spellings). While it is thus readily apparent that this distinctive group of people existed and that they were identified by other Aboriginal groups, today their name is practically unknown outside of obscure academic and historical sources. The Mogullumbidj do not appear on many maps of Aboriginal Victoria. Instead, we will sometimes find what to the untrained ear sounds like a related term, though it may or may not be related: 'Minyambuta'. Thus the main purpose of this article is to suggest answers to three questions—who were the Mogullumbidj, what happened to them, and why are they not 'on the map'?[3]

Though not well known generally, the Mogullumbidj have certainly come to the attention of scholars—especially through their connection to the gaiggip ceremony, and also through their role as 'intermediaries' between the Kulin peoples and what Adam Brumm has described as the 'mysterious occupants of the Australian Alps' in his wonderful ethnohistorical exploration of the symbolic and cosmological associations relating to Mount William greenstone axes—'The Falling Sky'.[4] Although Janice Newton does not mention the Mogullumbidj by name in her article, 'Two Victorian Corroborees: Meaning Making in

Response to European Intrusion', she too discusses the gaiggip ceremony in order to contextualise change in Kulin corroborees.[5] Although the words of the gaiggip song, dutifully recorded by William Thomas, have been given much attention by La Trobe University linguist Stephen Morey in his comprehensive forthcoming book *Indigenous Songs of Victoria*, Morey has ultimately been unable to translate what he still regards as a 'clearly very important text'.[6] Scholars have also focused on delineating the Mogullumbidj as a people; in manuscript materials written before her untimely death in 1986, pioneering ethnohistorian Diane Barwick concluded that the Mogullumbidj were a 'clan' of the Waywurru-speaking peoples.[7] However, in his 2010 article, 'Mogullumbidj Reconsidered', Ian Clark made no such definitive statement. Written on the basis of a reanalysis of primary references, Clark's study left hanging in mid-air the tantalising observation that 'Mogullumbidj' was a descriptive term, and a Kulin exonym rather than a language term.[8]

Aboriginal Society in the Alpine Valleys of North-east Victoria

In order to explain who the Aboriginal people of the Mount Buffalo and surrounding areas were, it is necessary first to explain the structuring principles that organised Aboriginal society in this part of the world. When talking about their social organisation with Europeans in the early contact period, Aboriginal people—the Kulin in particular, as well as groups in north-east Victoria—first and foremost identified the name of their local area group. Some anthropologists have referred to these as 'clans', or, more recently and more accurately, as 'areal-moieties' (a social group attached to a geographical area, with a 'moiety' also attached to that group).[9] Local groups actually comprised a number of smaller 'patri-clans', land-owning families led by the male heads of each family, but, when Aboriginal people identified themselves to Europeans, they generally named their local group (areal-moiety) first. In this article, I will simply refer to these areal-moieties as 'local groups'. At the time under scrutiny here—the 1830s and 1840s—local groups appear to have been the principal unit of identity from an Aboriginal point of view, at least in terms of defining an inherited attachment to an area of land or, rather, the right to manage, utilise and belong to a certain area of country. It is thought that a local group would typically comprise a few hundred individuals[10] and that, usually, there was a core area of country that Europeans would readily associate with the presence of

that particular group. A subsequent massive decline in the Aboriginal population, which saw the reduction of these local groups from a few hundred to a mere handful of survivors, may have contributed to the decline in usage of these local group names. What is more certain is that only after early ethnographers such as Alfred Howitt and R. H. Matthews began interviewing the survivors did broader language-based names such as 'Dhudhuroa' come into greater prominence.

When writing about the Kulin, Diane Barwick suggested that territorial boundaries of such local groups were likely indicated by landscape features, and people from a different area needed permission to enter that country and make use of its resources.[11] While is it likely that this pattern also existed in north-east Victoria, it is difficult to make that claim on the basis of solid evidence. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, there may also be evidence in north-east Victoria for areas of 'shared' country.

In relation to the Kulin, Barwick has also stated that each local group was essentially independent, and governed by collective decisions. Insofar as we know, each such group had a head, who had 'executive authority' and would provide guidance and advice during group discussions, then represent that group at larger meetings in which a number of local groups assembled to make joint decisions. These head positions were neither automatically inherited nor elected. Often the headman, towards the end of his life, would nominate his successor, but that nominee still had to prove his competence and win endorsement.[12] It is highly likely that a similar pattern existed in north-east Victoria, where Aboriginal people were given to identifying various heads within a local group. A ready example is the identification of headmen of the Yaitmathang, described to George Augustus Robinson in 1844: 'Tar. hagerer or Taragerer, alias Motogo, is chief of the Omeo, and Jar giar, alias Johnny, is another chief';[13] and likewise to Alfred Howitt some decades later: 'To this part of the whole tribe belonged Metoko the Head Wizard and Doctor. "Old cockey" who was a Doctor and "Cobbon Johnny" who was then Head fighting man'.[14] [As an aside, there was communication across different language groups, so most adults were multi-lingual, and etiquette seems to have required that visitors to another language area should make polite efforts to substitute some words of that country.[15]]

The name of a local group usually included a suffix that denoted its status as a local area group. Closer to Melbourne, the suffix was '—[w] illum' (or '—yellum'), meaning 'dwelling place' or '—balluk' meaning number of people. However, in north-east Victoria (and in south-east Victoria in Bidawal and some Kurnai/Ganai dialects[16]), this suffix was '—mittung' (or variations), which also meant a group or number of people.[17] Consequently, names in north-east Victoria take on the form of Pallangan-*middang*, Djinning-*mittung*, Yait-*mathang* and so on. It has been noted that this suffix contains *thang* (also expressed as *dhang*), meaning 'word,' 'language' or 'talk' in Gippsland, which is a reflex of a widespread root word in Aboriginal languages, *tha*, meaning mouth. Although this suggests that the '—mittung' suffix should refer to a language (in the same way that '—wurrung' is applied to Kulin language names), it would appear that in its usage in north-east Victoria the historical etymology of the suffix has been lost.[18]

Clearly, the name Mogullumbidj does not fit the common pattern of names for local groups in north-east Victoria, in that it has no '—mittung' or '—illum' suffix. Nevertheless, the context in which the name was used strongly indicates that the Mogullumbidj people were a local group.

The 'local groups' were usually a part of a larger group in the social structure sharing the same language—whether directly or in the form of a dialect. The suffix used to denote many of these broader groups, stretching from Melbourne right into north-east Victoria, was '—(w) urrung', which, as we have noted above, means mouth or speech. In simple terms '—wurrung' thus denoted a collection of local groups sharing a language. The '—wurrung' suffix can be heard in the name of the north-east Victorian group, Taungurung (Daung-wurrung), and also in Woi-wurrung, and Ngaurai-illum-wurrung. Further to the north and north east of the Taungurung, '—wurrung' was replaced by '—wurru', so that one finds a broader group named Waveroo (Way-wurru). The suffix '—wurru' can even be found in a vestigial form in the language name Dhudhuroa (Dhu-dhu-[wu]rru-wa).[19]

In some cases, these broad language groups may also have considered themselves part of even larger groups, which have been described by non-Aboriginal people as 'nations', 'confederacies' or 'cultural blocs'. One of these 'nations', which reached from the Mornington Peninsula and Melbourne, right through the upper

Goulburn and Campaspe river valleys and into north-east Victoria, at least as far as the Broken and Delatite rivers, and perhaps further, was the 'Kulin' nation—a bloc of at least five broad language groups. All of the Kulin nation's constituent members spoke similar languages, as well as sharing cultural practices and close diplomatic relations.[20] There is some evidence that north-east Victoria may also have formed a distinctive cultural bloc, based on intermarriages and diplomatic alliances, although, unlike the Kulin, members of this bloc almost certainly crossed language boundaries.

It is unclear whether these different 'tiers' of self-identification within Aboriginal society constituted an hierarchical structure, although the fact that individuals frequently presented the local area group to Europeans as their first point of 'belonging' is highly suggestive that the local group was of primary significance. Nevertheless, it remains helpful to think about the social structure of Aboriginal society in much of south-eastern Australia as a layered system that can be expressed in size, from the smallest to the largest number of individuals, starting with patri-clans, and progressing to local area group, language group, and sometimes 'nation'. Worth pointing out is that Europeans have generally hopelessly confused these different elements in north-east Victoria, especially on maps.

The other important organising principle of Aboriginal society within large areas of south-eastern Australia, which was generally invisible to most Europeans in north-east Victoria (with the clear exception of late nineteenth/early twentieth–century ethnographers), was the 'moiety' system. From the Port Phillip Bay area into large areas of north-east Victoria and beyond in some cases, each local group belonged to either one of two moieties, which were named for the ancestral creation figures of Bunjil (the eagle hawk) and Waa[ng] (the crow). This division between the two moieties effectively split society into two parts. If you were born into one moiety, you had to marry someone of the opposite moiety, necessarily someone of a different local group. Bunjil always married Waa and vice versa. Women generally went to live on their husband's country, sometimes in quite distant localities. Moiety affiliations shaped patterns of intermarriage and therefore also reciprocal rights to resources. As Diane Barwick once wrote of the Kulin peoples: through the moiety system, '[d]istrict loyalties were thereby extended,

and travel and trade with more remote areas were encouraged by the resulting web of kinship ties'.[21]

One thing we do know about the Mogullumbidj from information collected by nineteenth-century anthropologist Alfred Howitt, who interviewed Wurundjeri elder William Barak, is that the Mogullumbidj were Bunjil—eagle hawk moiety—which meant that they could have, for example, intermarried with their immediate neighbours to the south, a Taungurung local group of the Mansfield area, Yowung-illum-balluk, but not with their Pallangan-middang neighbours in the nearby Whorouly, Oxley–Milawa and Beechworth–Mudgegonga area, who were also Bunjil.[22] In theory, they also could have intermarried with groups like Wurundjeri-illum, a Waa local group, whose country reached along the south banks of the Yarra River from about Blackburn, right up to the northern slopes of the Dandenong ranges. Certainly, Mogullumbidj and Dhudhuroa peoples were remembered by William Barak as having visited their 'friends at the Dandenong mountain'. This friendship probably came from kinship ties.[23]

Diplomatic, Trade and Kinship Ties with Other Groups

One significant question to consider in relation to the Mogullumbidj is whether they should be considered a local group belonging to the Taungurung or, more broadly, a part of the 'Kulin nation'. This is a worthwhile question, not because there is a clear answer, but because in attempting to answer it we can get fresh insights into the complexity of local Aboriginal society at the time of European settlement.

In late 1838, the area that was soon to become north-east Victoria was being 'settled' by European pastoralists, and the following year the colonial government of NSW appointed its first 'Aboriginal Protectorate' for the Port Phillip District (which eventually became Victoria). Headed by the man it designated 'Chief Protector of Aborigines', George Augustus Robinson, the Protectorate was a mere handful of men, assistant protectors, each stationed in a different area, supposedly to look out for the interests of Aboriginal peoples whose lands the European pastoralists had invaded. The Protectorate was hopelessly underfunded, understaffed and generally powerless. Despite calls from George Augustus Robinson,[24] no assistant protector was ever appointed to oversee this north-east region. The notes of Robinson and his assistant protectors have provided an invaluable historical record of early Aboriginal Victoria, but none of them was ever permanently

stationed in north-east Victoria or visited some of the remoter parts of its high country like Mount Buffalo. This is a major reason why we have nothing recorded about the Mogullumbidj that has come directly from the Mogullumbidj people themselves. Instead, we only have information about them from what Aboriginal people from other areas told various officers of the Aboriginal Protectorate. However, from Aboriginal people who spoke to George Augustus Robinson and one of his assistant protectors, James Dredge, in the 1840s, we know that the Mogullumbidj people of the Buffalo River had country that extended to the south, at least as far as Dandongadale and the Wabonga Plateau to the back of Mount Buller.[25]

Beyond this, we know next to nothing about the extent of Mogullumbidj country other than what we can establish by exclusion: the fact that they were bounded by country associated with a Kurnai local group on the Dargo High Plains,[26] and by the Pallangan-middang local group, whose country included Whorouly and the King River Valley as far as the confluence of the King and Ovens rivers at Wangaratta.[27] The Mogullumbidj also would have had various Dhudhuroa-speaking neighbours to their north east and east.[28]

The Kulin peoples to the south,[29] together with other people of the Victorian alpine region,[30] referred to the people of the Buffalo River Valley as 'Mo-gullum-bidj' or variations of this (such as 'Mokeallumbeet'). As stated earlier, this name has no typical north-east Victorian suffix of '—mittung', and nor does it have a typical Kulin suffix of '—illum' or '—balluk'. Almost all of the Taungurung local groups had an '—illum' or '—balluk' suffix, denoting Kulin connections, but not so with the Mogullumbidj. It is possible that '—bidj' (which has also been rendered as 'beek' and 'bitch') is an actual suffix, and that it denotes something in particular. Referring to uses of the term 'Moke.al.lum.be' found in George Augustus Robinson's journals, where it was applied to people *other* than those of Mount Buffalo, and also referencing samples from a vocabulary supplied to R.B. Smyth by Assistant Protector E.S. Parker, in which the term 'Moo-coo-lom-beetch' is applied to 'half-castes', Ian Clark has convincingly concluded that 'Mogullumbidj' may have been, for example, a descriptive term used by Kulin peoples signifying some distinctive attribute of these people.[31] Worth noting is that 'beek' resembles the Eastern Kulin (Woiwurrung/Taungurung) word 'biik', meaning 'country, ground, earth or land'.[32] This suggests

that the name 'Mogullumbidj' refers to a geographical locality. In Taungurung, the word 'biik' can also denote the finish or the end of something.[33] Therefore it is also plausible that 'Mogullumbeek' is simply a Kulinic term implying a place where something (country, language) ends. This would certainly help us to account for a unique reference in the Robinson journals in which the name is applied not just to a local group but clearly to a series of local groups located in the Alps, beyond Taungurung (and, by extension, Kulin) lands: 'Pin.ge.mitum; Din.ne.mittum; Moke.al.lum.be; Kun.de.war.eek; Wal.le.mit.um; Wog.er.ro.mitum: are called Moke.al.lum.be. The above six sections are Moke.al.lum.be, away in the mountains at the alps, beyond Marine [Mount Buller] and Warinbut [Mount Timbertop], SE'.[34] In this example, we can see a dual usage of the term at play: referring to both a local group, as well as a broad section of peoples in the Alps. I would also suggest that the term may have been applied to the local group associated with Mount Buffalo by people who, for whatever reason, did not wish to speak the Mogullumbidj's self-designated name aloud. In essence, their name alone cannot help us understand their cultural position, other than to suggest something distinctively separate about them.

If their actual name tells us very little about where they fit in culturally, then perhaps we can consider their diplomatic relations with other groups: with whom were they on good terms for trade and cultural exchange, and to whom were they hostile? In 1844, George Augustus Robinson undertook a journey that saw him travel through Gippsland, Omeo, and the Monaro, to Twofold Bay (Eden), then over to Albury and back down to Melbourne.[35] For the part of the journey that would take him to Omeo, he was guided by an Aboriginal man from Omeo, whose conferred name was 'Charley', and it was Charley who explained to Robinson that: 'The Yowenillum are mermate with Mokeallumbeet, then Dodora, then Kinimittum, then Omeo'.[36] The term 'mermate' (also glossed as 'mainmet', 'mey-met') means that the Yowung-illum-balluk were on unfriendly terms with the Mogullumbidj, Dodora, Djinning-mittung and Yaitmathang, which were adjoining groups of the alpine valleys. Whether Charley was overstating the fact about this Taungurung group being at odds with the others, or over-simplifying things for Robinson, we will never know. But what is interesting is the sequence of names, for the local groups are actually listed in consecutive geographical order from west to east—suggesting

that Charley had a very clear picture in his mind of this allied block of alpine peoples reaching from Mount Buffalo to Omeo.

The same local group names appeared again in Robinson's journal, written while he was on the Tambo River. He recorded that: 'Two miles above the crossing place up the stream is the spot where a great slaughter of Gipps Land blacks by the Omeo and the Mokeallumbeets and Tinnermittum, their allies, took place; [I] was shown the spot by … Charley'.[37] Once again, this can be seen as an expression of an alpine-based group alliance against a common enemy—in this case the Kurnai peoples of Gippsland.

There is clearly some evidence that the Mogullumbidj were on unfriendly terms with the Kurnai and perhaps some Taungurung local groups, and that they were allied in battle with other alpine groups. However, what can be said with the overview that a historical perspective provides is that Robinson's guide Charley was seemingly unaware of what was then a very recent event—that, in the summer preceding his journey with Robinson, the Mogullumbidj had actually travelled to Melbourne and, as we have seen above, had undertaken their gaiggip ceremony with the Yowung-illum-balluk and other Kulin groups in order to 'make friends'.[38]

What Language did the Mogullumbidj Speak?

Another characteristic of the Mogullumbidj we might consider in trying to determine where they 'fit in' culturally is the language they spoke. In Melbourne, Assistant Protector William Thomas did manage to record six words spoken by the Mogullumbidj. On the basis of analysis undertaken by Stephen Morey, these six words are clearly Dhudhuroa,[39] and so we may be justified in assuming that the Mogullumbidj spoke Dhudhuroa. There is other evidence to suggest they spoke at least a form of Dhudhuroa language. Just after the turn of the century, amateur ethnographer R.H. Mathews interviewed a Djinning-mittang man from the lower Mitta Mitta valley, Neddy Wheeler, who said that his people spoke Dhudhuroa, and that surrounding peoples south of the Murray River spoke what Mathews recorded as a 'dialect of Dhudhuroa', called 'Minyambuta'. According to Mathews, Minyambuta was spoken in the Ovens River Valley from Wangaratta to Bright, to Beechworth, Mount Buffalo, and even in Benalla and the Broken River Valley.[40] Supporting evidence includes that in 1844 a Pallangan-middang man, Mol-le-min-ner (Joe), gave George Augustus Robinson a vocabulary of his own

people's language (which Robinson recorded as 'Pal-ler-an-mitter'), but Mol-le-min-ner also added that when at Yackandandah his people spoke 'Min-u-bud-dong'.[41] Minyambuta and Minubuddong, are potentially alternatives of the same form. Decades later, when Joseph Shaw asked elders at Coranderrk several questions concerning language on behalf of Alfred Howitt, Wurundjeri elder William Barak said that language spoken by the 'Mo-gullum-bitch' was 'Yambun'.[42] This sounds like a foreshortened version of Min-yambun, although this is not found as an alternative spelling for what would be Minyambuta. In any case, there are perhaps three historically recorded versions of the term: 'Minyambuta', 'Minubuddong' and possibly Min-'yambun'.

There are complicating factors relating to Matthews' geographical description of the extent of Minyambuta. These relate to the fact that Mathews' description of the area in which Minyambuta was spoken overlaps heavily with the area in which Pallangan-middang was spoken, and also with country that has been documented as belonging to at least one northern Taungurung local group (Yeerun-illam-balluk),[43] so either Minyambuta and Pallangan-middang are the same language (bearing in mind that Pallangan-middang had a 25 per cent commonality with Dhudhuroa),[44] or one language gradually 'bled' into one or more other language(s) depending on a person's location and perhaps those to whom they were talking. This suggests that 'Minyambuta' was a term for a 'language strategy' rather than a separate dialect or other language, and that it included Dhudhuroa and Pallangan-middang languages. A further point to note is that the overlap of Minyambuta with areas of both Pallangan-middang and Yeerun-illam-balluk country suggests the possibility of different ways of looking at territory (for example, areas of 'shared' territory) and/or concepts of relatedness, as it suggests a common language strategy between what would otherwise seem to be two distinctive language groups (Taungurung and Waywurru).

Reinforcing this, we should note that while William Thomas delivered parts of his religious sermons in Woiwurrung and Boonwurrung languages, meaning that he was proficient enough to at least recognise Kulin languages,[45] he did not understand the language of the Mogullumbidj people when he heard them speaking in Melbourne.[46] Therefore it is highly unlikely the Mogullumbidj spoke a Kulin language as their first language.

It may also be possible that the name Mogullumbidj/Mogullumbeek and Minyambuta/Minubuddong are in fact the same word. Both terms consist of two sections, each commencing with the same consonant: mogullum + beek/bidj and minyam + buta/buddong, and it is certainly possibly that 'bidj' and 'buta' are attempts by different writers to capture the same sound. However, when one considers the likely link between 'bidj' and the Taungurung word 'biik', and the possible correlation between 'buddong' and the Wiradjuri word for Aboriginal person, 'buudhang' (as noted by Ian Clark[47]), it seems unlikely that these two words are related.

There is one final point worth considering about language. The song performed at the gaiggip ceremony, which was brought to Melbourne by the Mogullumbidj and their Taungurung neighbours and was written down by Thomas, might have been sung in one of the Yuin languages.[48] These include Ngarigu, which was spoken in different forms from the Snowy Mountains to the Monaro and Omeo. The presence of this language at a ceremony in Melbourne would demonstrate a great cultural connectivity between the Aboriginal groups of the alpine areas from the Snowy Mountains right down to Mount Buffalo and Mount Buller.

The Mogullumbidj and Cultural Knowledge

Despite the fact that we know very little about the exact place of the Mogullumbidj in the wider Aboriginal society, we do know that they were a people who held significant sacred cultural knowledge. When in 1843 William Thomas asked a Taungurung man about the history of the gaiggip ceremony that had been brought to Melbourne with the Mogullumbidj, he was told in quite unambiguous terms that there was, in the Alps, a group of Aboriginal people called the 'Bul-lun-ger-metum' (Bullunger-mittung), who lived in stone houses of their own making and never went out to seek their own food. Instead they ate herbs and relied on what others brought them, focusing solely on creating new sacred songs and dances.[49] Their exact location in the Alps was not vouchsafed to Thomas—only that it was in the 'Teberrer range Mountainous Alps NE of Melbourne'.[50] On a separate occasion, George Augustus Robinson was also told: 'On the top of the mountains by the Deberer plains are the Mokalumbeets'.[51] ('Debera' is the Taungurung word for bogong moth.) Specific mention of these people eating 'herbs' should be pondered if only momentarily, for Mount Buffalo is the sole location of Buffalo

Sallow Wattle (*Acacia phlebophylla*), which is reputedly a powerful natural source of the psychedelic drug dimethyltryptamine (DMT).

These people of the Alps were described as something akin to a superior religious class, which Thomas would later classify as 'Aboriginal druids'[52] or 'great wise blacks', deemed responsible for teaching song and dance to people from Omeo, to Mansfield, Benalla and Wangaratta, and as far as the Murrumbidgee River and even to Eden on the coast. And it was said that when one of these groups had a gaiggip ceremony with another, from that time they were friends.[53] Moreover, different Aboriginal peoples sent their own 'doctors' to these druids in order to learn, but the druids were also able to make other people dream, or could appear before them to show them new dances (and by the term 'dances', we should infer a much deeper form of sacred and cultural knowledge than this word generally conjured up among non-Aboriginal peoples). Thomas would later write that: 'I am informed that from these sages of the rocks or druids have sprung [this] new series of sacred dances with such curious effigies, altogether new from any thing that has as yet been heard or seen among the Aborigines of Victoria'.[54] If the Mogullumbidj were not the actual druids in question (the Bullunger-mittung), they were certainly in close contact with them and able to transmit the sacred cultural and spiritual information encoded in these new forms of ceremony, song and dance to the wider world.

When the revered head man of the Mogullumbidj, Kullakullup (likely a ceremonial title rather than his personal name[55]) came to Melbourne in March 1845,[56] he was of advanced age, but hundreds of people from different Kulin groups assembled at what is now Yarra Bend park to receive his teachings. Thomas wrote that, 'the sight was truly imposing'—Kullakullup was idolised to the point where at each daybreak people assembled in crescent rows, and sat in profound silence while, in Thomas's words, the

> Old Patriarch would be holding forth as though laying down some code of laws for their guidance or giving instructions … I often endeavour'd to catch his words and pencil them down as well as I could but in vain, the old Idol and Chief would immediately stop on my approach.[57]

Thomas eventually made inquiries with one of the men attending Kullakullup's teachings, Billibellary, who was an extremely influential

Wurundjeri headman ('a paramount chief among the southern Kulin'[58]) and song-man in his own right. The two men, Billibellary and Thomas, had already held many conversations as Billibellary thought deeply about how his people could navigate the devastating changes wrought by European invasion. While Billibellary had responded pragmatically to these irreversible changes by adapting to the situation—seeing that one of his sons, Simon Wonga, was educated at a government school, leading men into the Native Police Corps, and even asking William Thomas for land on which his people could farm—as Richard Broome tells us, Billibellary nevertheless 'remained unflinchingly Aboriginal in his identity and cultural actions'.[59] Accordingly, Billibellary had listened intently to Kullakullup. He told Thomas that Kullakullup had spoken of this class of druid-like people who lived in the Alps and created corroborees for everyone, and that Kullakullup also said that he received corroborees communicated to him in dreams.

It is unlikely that Billibellary was communicating to Thomas the full scope of what was being taught by Kullakullup, but Thomas was nevertheless left with the impression that the much-venerated headman had been 'laying down some code of laws (for their guidance) or giving instructions'.[60] We cannot not know what the priorities of the Mogullumbidj were regarding Kullakullup's presence in Melbourne, but it is worth pondering whether Kullakullup, a man nearly eighty years of age,[61] who had travelled a considerable distance to be in Melbourne, was also giving instructions in light of the predicament of his people. What we can observe from the interaction between Billibellary and Thomas is that the Mogullumbidj did have a purpose in visiting their Kulin counterparts, and that the full nature of their undertakings was withheld from their European colonisers.

What Happened to the Mogullumbidj People?

In north-east Victoria, there was a huge decline in the local Aboriginal population from mid-1838 onwards. For years this was blamed in retrospect on the introduction of European diseases and then the excessive consumption of alcohol. But, while it is true that lethal new diseases like small pox and syphilis brought on a massive loss of life and also caused infertility, the population decline among local Aboriginal people in the decade after 1838 was predominantly the result of illegal poisoning and shooting carried out by European settlers. When asked about this population decline twenty years later at an

1858 select committee of the NSW Legislative Council, most of those questioned—all European men of some social and economic standing from around Victoria—avoided the awful truth by referring only to events of the preceding decade. However, Mr Wills of Omeo did admit: 'The mortality has been … caused by intoxicating drinks and the worst form of venereal disease, and last though not least, by gunshot wounds inflicted by stockmen'.[62]

Can we say that this happened to the Mogullumbidj people of Mount Buffalo? When visiting the region in February 1841, a little over two years after the first permanent arrival of Europeans, George Augustus Robinson wrote of pastoralist George Faithfull at Oxley on the King River that 'Faithfull has the credit for having shot a number of blacks in his time and for having encouraged his men who were convicts'.[63] Faithfull even later recorded in a letter to Governor La Trobe his shooting of Aboriginal people on the King River, explaining, 'I ordered my men to take deliberate aim, and to fire only with certainty of destruction to the individual aimed at … We were slow to fire, which prolonged the battle, and 60 rounds were fired'.[64] In other words, Faithfull and his men conserved ammunition by not firing unless they were confident of killing their target, but they still managed to shoot 60 rounds over six hours. While Faithfull's description suggests that at least 60 men, women and children were shot, his stockman James Howard would reminiscence in the *Argus* towards the end of his life about Faithfull's men having shot more than 200 Aboriginal people in one day, leaving the bodies strewn along the river.[65] We cannot know whether Faithfull was downplaying the number or Howard was exaggerating, but we can be certain that a massacre of horrific proportions occurred.

Significantly, it was George Faithfull and his brutal convict servants who were the first to take up the Buffalo River area as a heifer station in the summer of 1839–40.[66] At the time, it was a remote location beyond the reach of the border police, and there is no record of what happened. Sadly, this article cannot begin to touch on the level of brutality of the Europeans at this time, the factors that enabled the massacres to happen and go unpunished, and the impact that this had on Aboriginal people. However, it is worth noting that some Aboriginal people in north-east Victoria survived and did their utmost to stay on country, and that they retained some of their traditional seasonal patterns of movement after European settlement, well into the late 1880s. Certainly, in Beechworth,

the gold-rush era of the 1850s overlapped with Aboriginal people still living a traditional lifestyle as best they could manage. We even have a photograph, probably from the late nineteenth century, of Aboriginal people in the Mount Buffalo area who are clearly living a partly Europeanised but still partly traditional existence. We also know that they continued to use a campsite and nearby ceremonial site at Nug Nug on the western fall of the mountain,[67] also camping where Cropper Creek entered the Buffalo River (before the construction of Lake Buffalo),[68] and that they were still there in the closing decade of the nineteenth century. While some local Aboriginal people were pushed off country onto government reserves, others integrated into European society as station hands and household servants.

Figure 1: Aboriginal People in the Vicinity of Mount Buffalo, *c.* 1891–1910 (Courtesy State Library Victoria, Reginald Wood Collection of Glass Lantern Slides, H2004.41/38, digitally restored by Scott Hartvigsen, reproduced here with cultural permission from both the Dhudhuroa and Waywurru people)

Conclusion

The initial questions underpinning this article were: who were the Mogullumbidj, what happened to them, and why are the Mogullumbidj not 'on the map'? Resolving the question of their identity is complicated, as we have seen. The Mogullumbidj were a local group who considered the Buffalo River Valley a part of their country, and who—at least around the time of early Aboriginal–European contact—had alliances against common foes with a range of '—mittung' local groups of the alpine valleys and ranges, not just on the western side of the Alps, but over as far as Omeo. In addition, the Mogullumbidj were, it seems, one conduit through which a special class of stone-house-dwelling Aboriginal druids passed on new and sacred forms of song and dance. Reinforcing the part they played in facilitating cultural diffusion was the work of their widely revered headman, Kullakullup, in transmitting valuable cultural and spiritual information from the Alps to as far away as Melbourne. Furthermore, within a few years of European settlement, it seems that the Mogullumbidj were either forging new, or strengthening existing, diplomatic relations with the Kulin peoples. As to why they do not appear on maps of Aboriginal Victoria, it would seem that local group names, particularly in north-east Victoria, rapidly fell from use as a result of extensive and rapid depopulation and instead have been replaced with broader language-based group names. The debate about which broader group name should be associated with the people of Mount Buffalo is still continuing among Aboriginal groups today.

Notes

1   'Quarterly Report from 1 Dec 1843 to 1 March 1844', by William Thomas, contained in Marguerita Stephens, *The Journal of William Thomas, Assistant Protector of the Aborigines of Port Phillip & Guardian to the Aborigines of Victoria 1839–1867, Volume One: 1839–1843*, Melbourne, VCAL, 2014, p. 571. Thomas notes that on 27 December 1843 the gaiggip had been running for six days.

2   'Original Correspondence. Aboriginal Ceremony', letter from J.H. McCabe, *Port Philip Gazette*, 11 February 1843, p. 3.

3   An earlier version of this work was first published on the author's blog 'Life on Spring Creek' (www.lifeonspringcreek.com) in December 2019, where it was read by an audience that included Aboriginal people with ancestral connections to north-east Victoria. I would especially like to thank the Aboriginal people with whom I have had many opportunities to discuss my research in the last couple of years, often at length, and whose input and opinions I value greatly.

4   A.R. Brumm, '"The falling sky": Symbolic and Cosmological Associations of the Mt William Greenstone Axe Quarry, Central Victoria, Australia', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2010, pp. 179–96.

5   Janice Newton, 'Two Victorian Corroborees: Meaning Making in Response to European Intrusion,' *Aboriginal History*, no. 41, December 2017, pp. 121–49.

6   Stephen Morey, *Indigenous Songs of Victoria*, section '3.4.9 Gaiggip/Gaggip (State Library of New South Wales MLMSS 214, Box 21)', publication forthcoming in 2020.

7   Diane Barwick Records, MS13521, Series 4, BARS4006, Box 2, BARI01248, State Library of Victoria (SLV).

8   Ian Clark, 'Aboriginal Language Areas in Northeast Victoria: "Mogullumbidj" Reconsidered', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 81, no. 2, November 2010, pp. 181–92.

9   Tony Jeffries, 'The Eastern Kulin Confederacy: Did It Exist? If So, What Were Its Features?' Forthcoming article, 2020.

10   Gary Presland, *First People: The Eastern Kulin of Melbourne, Port Phillip & Central Victoria*, Melbourne, Museum of Victoria, 2010, p. 18; Richard Broome, 'A Different Courage', in Ben Silverstein (ed.), *Conflict, Adaptation, Transformation: Richard Broome and the Practice of Aboriginal History*, Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press, 2018, p. 147.

11   Diane Barwick, 'Mapping the Past: An Atlas of Victorian Clans 1835–1904', *Aboriginal History*, vol. 8, 1984, p. 106; Presland, p. 16.

12   Barwick, pp. 107–08.

13   Ian Clark (ed.), *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson*, *Chief Protector, Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate, 1839–1852*, Melbourne, Ian Clark, 2014, entry for 22 June 1844.

14   John Buntine, in A.W. Howitt, 'Notes by A.W. Howitt on the Omeo Tribe Including an Incomplete Undated Letter by Rev. John Bulmer and Notes on His Findings', p. 1, Papers of A.W. Howitt (Alfred William), MS9356, Box 1054, 2(b), n.d, SLV.

15   Barwick, p. 105.

16   Clark, 'Aboriginal Language Areas', p. 187.

17   Barwick, p. 106, including footnote 9; Howitt, 'Notes by Howitt on the Omeo Tribe', p. 3. This explanation is given by Howitt's informant Jenny Cooper: 'Mittung = a number, or many [people]'.

18   Personal communication between the author and Corey Theatre, La Trobe University PhD candidate, December 2019, January 2020.

19   Ian Clark, 'Aboriginal Languages in North-east Victoria—The Status of "Waveru" Reconsidered', *Journal of Australian Indigenous Issues*, vol. 14, no. 4, 2011, pp. 2–22 (see his discussion of 'Waywurru' in this paper); Barry J. Blake and Julie Reid, 'The Dhudhuroa Language of Northeastern Victoria: A Description Based on Historical Sources', *Aboriginal History*, vol. 26, 2002, p. 179.

20   Barwick, pp. 104–06; Presland, p. 16.

21   Barwick, p. 105.

22   A large list of areal-moieties is contained in Alfred Howitt's notebook, XM690; and information specifically about the Mogullumbidj appears in Alfred Howitt's notebook, XM765, p. 12. Both notebooks held in Museums Victoria Archives.

23   A.W. Howitt, 'The Kulin Tribe. Informant "Ber-uk" otherwise King William of the Yarra Tribe', p. 67, Papers of A.W. Howitt (Alfred William), MS9356, Box 1053, folders 2b & 2c, n.d, SLV. Specifically, Barak explains to Howitt that it was Theddora-mittung (i.e. Dhudhuroa) who came to Melbourne as 'friends of the Kulin of the Dandenong Mountain', and this is discussed in relation to visits of the Mogullumbidj to Melbourne.

24   British Parliamentary Papers, *Despatches of Governors of Australian Colonies, Illustrative of Conditions of Aborigines*, House of Commons, Paper Series: House of Commons Papers, Paper Type: Accounts and Papers Parliament, 1844, p. 109. Robinson wrote: 'I am induced under the current circumstances to recommend a subordinate agent be appointed to the Ovens district'.

25   Assistant Protector of Aborigines James Dredge told George Augustus Robinson that the Mogullumbidj occupied country on 'Hunter and Watson's outermost station'. James Dredge,

cited by Robinson, 9 April 1840, in Clark (ed.), *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson*. This same information was repeated to Robinson (entry 1 June 1840) by a group of Kulin speakers in Taungurung lands, to the effect that the Mogullumbidj lived on country at Hunter and Watson's 'beyond Marine and Warinebut, to the SE'. (Marine and Warinebut are Mount Buller and Timbertop respectively.)

26 Alfred Howitt, MS notebook, p. 51, XM690, Museums Victoria Archives.

27 Clark, 'Aboriginal Languages in North-east Victoria: The Status of "Waveru"'. The Pallangan-middang, a local group within the Waveroo (Way-wurru) language group, have frequently been confused or conflated with the Pangerang.

28 Ian Clark, 'Dhudhuroa and Yaithmathang Languages and Social Groups in North-east Victoria—A Reconstruction,' *Aboriginal History*, vol. 33, 2009, pp. 201–29, offers the best current published explanation to date of the Dhudhuroa and Yaitmathang areal moiety groups.

29 Alfred Howitt's information from William Barak provides an example of a Kulin person referring to the 'Mogullum-bitch'. See Howitt, 'The Kulin Tribe. Informant "Ber-uk"' otherwise King William of the Yarra Tribe', p. 67.

30 An example of an Omeo (Yaitmathang) man referring to the 'Mokeallumbeet' is found in Clark (ed.), *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson*, entry for 3 June 1844.

31 Clark, 'Aboriginal Language Areas in North-east Victoria', pp. 181–92.

32 Lee Healy, *Taungurung: liwik-nganjin-al ngula-dhan yaawinbu yananinon* (Taungurung Language Dictionary), Melbourne, Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages, 2011, p. 73. The author would like to thank Rebecca Crawley for her thoughts and assistance with regard to thinking about this language term.

33 Healy, p. 44.

34 Clark (ed.), *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson*, entry for 1 June 1840. Although it is difficult to determine which other local groups are being referred to in this list, it is at least worth noting that 'Din.ne.mittum' is used by Robinson, as is 'Tinnemittum', to denote the Dhudhuroa-speaking group Dyinning-mittung of the lower Mitta Mitta and Tallangatta Creek.

35 George Mackaness (ed.), *George Augustus Robinson's Journey into South-eastern Australia, 1844, with George Henry Haydon's Narrative of Part of the Same Journey*, Sydney, Australian Historical Monographs, Volume XIX, 1941.

36 Clark (ed.), *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson*, entry for 3 June 1844.

37 Clark (ed.), *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson*, entry for 15 June 1844.

38 Excerpt from a 'Quarterly Report from 1 Dec 1843 to 1 March 1844', by William Thomas, contained in Stephens, *Volume One*, pp. 572–3, footnote 240. See also the same, transcribed in M.F. Christie, *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria 1835–1886*, Sydney, Sydney University Press, 1979, p. 19. Stephens has partly mis-transcribed the report, and my information comes from a combination of Christie's and Stephens' transcriptions.

39 Stephen Morey, *Indigenous Songs of Victoria*, section '3.4.9.1 The Tanderrum Ceremony', publication forthcoming in 2020.

40 R.H. Matthews Papers, MS 8006, Series 3, Item 4, Volume 2 [Marked on notebook '6'], pp. 38, 40; and R.H. Mathews Papers, MS 8006, Series 5, File 3, Box 6, 'The Dhudhuroa Language'. MS held at National Library of Australia. Matthews' writings, in the view of Dhudhuroa-speaker Neddy Wheeler, are the main source of the term 'Minyambuta'; they are also the sole source used by Tindale, who actually mapped it in 1974 as if the term referred to an identifiable people. When one reads Matthews' manuscript materials, it is apparent that it is not a people.

41 Clark (ed.), *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson*, entry for 30 September 1844.

42 Joseph Shaw to Alfred Howitt, letter dated 27 July 1900, part of MS9356/427, Box 1054, 1a, SLV. (427 is the Library's new number given to the .pdf file that they made when they digitised these materials.) I would like to thank the generous anonymous reviewer of this article for providing me with both the bibliographic details and a digital scan of this letter.

43   Barwick, p. 128. Although Barwick documents Benalla as Taungurung, it is worth noting that there is some scant evidence in the journals of George Augustus Robinson to suggest that the area was possibly Pallangan-middang. See for example, Clark (ed.), *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson*, entries for 20 April and 1 June 1840.

44   Barry J. Blake and Julie Reid, 'Pallanganmiddang: A Language of the Upper Murray', *Aboriginal History*, vol. 23, 1999, p. 17.

45   Throughout William Thomas's journal (Stephens, *Volume One*) one can see Thomas initially lamenting his lack of Aboriginal language skills, and his intentional building of those skills so that he could give lessons and sermons using local languages. His familiarity with Kulin languages was thus the result of hard work.

46   William Thomas wrote in his journal on 22 March 1845 of the Mogullumbidj: 'I cannot understand a word of their language', in Marguerita Stephens, *The Journal of William Thomas, Assistant Protector of the Aborigines of Port Phillip & Guardian to the Aborigines of Victoria 1839-1867, Volume Two: 1844–1853*, Melbourne, VCAL, 2014, p. 94.

47   Clark, 'Aboriginal Languages in North-east Victora—The Status of "Waveru"', pp. 2–22.

48   Morey, in the section '3.4.9.2 Text of the Gaiggip and Notes on the Analysis'. On the basis of linguistic analysis, Morey notes: 'It seems possible that the language of this Gaiggip was either Gippsland or one of the Yuin languages'. I would personally suggest that it was far more likely to have been a Yuin language, and most likely Ngarigu, given the poor diplomatic relationship with the Gippsland peoples at this time and the strong possibility of kin and other relations between the non-Kurnai alpine peoples.

49   William Thomas, in Stephens, *Volume One*. For the actual name of the Aboriginal 'druids', which Thomas records as having the name Bullunger-metum (in which the suffix —metum is a cognate of the common alpine suffix —mittung), see Morey. Morey has sourced this from the Thomas papers, held in the Mitchell Library, Sydney.

50   Stephens, *Volume Two*, p. 4, entry for 12 January 1844.

51   George Augustus Robinson, in Mackaness (ed.), p. 12.

52   Thomas, in Stephens, *Volume One*, p. 572, footnote 240.

53   Thomas, in Stephens, *Volume One*, p. 572, footnote 240.

54   Thomas, Paper No. 11, 'Superior Races', sent to Duffy on 13 July 1858, in Stephens, *Volume Two*, p. 95, continuation of footnote 49.

55   'Tribe and Chiefs', p. 68, William Thomas Papers, MS 214, Box 23, Section 1 (Book A) (Microfilm CY 3130), Mitchell Library. Gibberook provides Thomas with a list of tribes and their chiefs, listing 'Kullkulluk' as the chief of the 'Mogolum Bith', and his own father, 'Netkulluk' as chief of 'Yerren Nillum'. This suggests to me that these names ending in '—kulluk' may be ceremonial titles rather than personal names. A linguist may be able to make a better judgment.

56   William Thomas, 'Writing', entitled 'Native Encampment' (fourth of the papers prepared by William Thomas for Charles Gavan Duffy and sent on 25/5/58, Box 3, item 1/R3f59, Mitchell Library), in Stephens, *Volume Two*, p. 94, footnote 49.

57   Thomas, 'Writing', entitled 'Native Encampment'.

58   Broome, p. 147.

59   Broome, pp. 148–51.

60   Thomas, 'Writing' entitled 'Native Encampment'.

61   Thomas, 'Writing' entitled 'Native Encampment'.

62   *Report Select Committee of the Legislative Council—The Aborigines*, Melbourne, John Ferres, Government Printer, 1858–59, p. 29.

63   Clark (ed.), *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson*, entry for Monday, 15 February 1841.

64   George Faithfull, from Wangaratta, 8 September 1853, Letter 27, in Thomas Francis McBride (ed.), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers: A Series of Papers on the Early Occupation of the Colony,*

the Aborigines, etc., Addressed by Victorian Pioneers to His Excellency Charles Joseph LaTrobe, Esq., Lieutenant Governor of the Colony of Victoria, Melbourne, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria, 1898, pp. 152–3. Faithfull describes the site of the shooting as being on an 'anabranch' of the river, which, when correlated with stockman James Howard's account (footnote below), would appear to be just south of the current Docker-Carboor Road, on the east bank of the King River.

65   'Settlement in the Kelly Country (By our special reporter)', *Argus*, 13 September 1883, p. 9.

66   'Country News. (From various Correspondents) The Ovens', *Sydney Herald*, 8 July 1840, p. 1.

67   Kay Robertson, *Myrtleford: Gateway to the Alps*, Adelaide, Rigby, 1973, p. 98.

68   Personal communication, Rodney Mitchell to Jacqui Durrant via email, 9 April 2020.

Brutal Murderer, Mentally Ill or Political Martyr: The Curious Case of James Seery

John Schauble

Abstract

In 1870, a ghastly murder on a remote goldfield in the Victorian high country resulted in the swift capture, trial and execution of the accused. Whether justice was done is another matter. While all the prescribed forms were followed, the case of James Seery had more hallmarks of rough bush justice than the civil society the young colony of Victoria was striving to become. Seery went to the gallows despite serious doubts about his capacity to face trial, raised at the time but addressed in only the most perfunctory fashion.

Justice on the Victorian goldfields, even after the rule of law had been firmly established in the colony, could be swift but sometimes of questionable quality. Such was the case for James Seery, an Irish-born miner held responsible for taking the life of one of his fellow diggers, a German named Augustus Tepfar. Initial reports of a gruesome murder at Crooked River, in the remote high country of Gippsland, appeared in late September 1870. Within just two months the accused murderer had been arrested, tried, convicted and hanged.

Capital punishment was an accepted and expected outcome for those convicted of serious crimes in nineteenth-century Victoria. Yet 1870 was an exceptional year even by the standards of the day. There were five executions that year alone, almost one-quarter of those in the colony for the entire decade. Four of the five men hanged were miners, albeit on different goldfields.[1]

Seery's case is notable for a number of reasons. Among these was the sheer brutality of the crime involved. Then there was the quality of the legal representation he received when tried on a capital charge, both at committal and at trial. Seery's mental health—in short, his fitness to plead let alone face the gallows—was questioned at the time and remains a matter of serious doubt. Finally, the fact that he shuffled to the gallows in the footsteps of a close forebear who had been executed 24 years earlier in Ireland, while not material to his own demise, is an extraordinary coincidence.

Murder Most Foul

Both Seery and Tepfar worked on the Crooked River goldfield. Second in Gippsland only to Stringers Creek (later named Walhalla), the field burst into life in 1861 after a prospecting party led by Alfred Howitt (1830–1908) (Figure 1) found gold in Good Luck Creek.[2] Crooked River has largely disappeared from public memory as a significant goldfield. It has also all but disappeared as a populated locality. All of the mining villages that sprang up on this field vanished physically more than a century ago except for Talbotville, which lingered until the 1940s as a post office and store. Much of the goldfield has been incorporated into national park or state forest, with a few areas of isolated farmland. It remains a remote location, sparsely populated but popular with four-wheel drive enthusiasts, campers, shooters and anglers.

Figure 1: Alfred William Howitt. Photographer Batchelder and O'Neill, n.d.
(Courtesy State Library Victoria, H25326)

Seery and Tepfar lived in separate, rough bush huts about 300 yards apart along the Crooked River, south of its junction with Good Luck Creek. The settlement (also known as Stonewall) was close to Bull Town, the earliest village on the field. By 1870, these communities had been eclipsed by the larger town of Grant, which sprang up in 1865 (Figure 2).

The whole field, however, was already beginning a rapid decline as the alluvial gold petered out, and reef mining, though yielding considerable gold, proved too costly in this remote mountain area rendered even more inhospitable in winter.
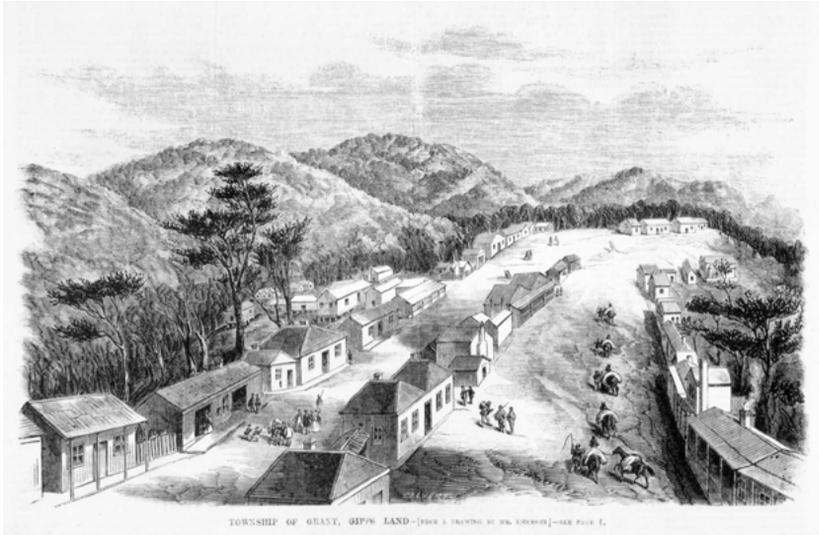
Figure 2: Township of Grant, Gipps Land. Engraver Samuel Calvert (1838–1913), *Australian News for Home Readers*, **25 August 1865** (Courtesy State Library Victoria, IAN25/08/65/8)

James Seery was born in County Westmeath, Ireland, and reportedly arrived in Australia in 1861 on the clipper ship *Lightning*, working briefly on a sheep station before making his way to the goldfields.[3] He was described in contemporary accounts as 'a large featured, powerful man and known to be of a most violent temper'.[4]

Augustus Tepfar (also spelled Tepfer or Topfer) was born in the German mining town of Lautenthal in Lower Saxony. He had turned 34 years of age just days before his murder.[5] The *Argus* reported that he was married and had fathered two children.[6] According to contemporary accounts, his parents lived in Adelaide, and he was 'a strong, muscular built man, almost six feet tall and an honest, quiet, inoffensive man' as well as a 'steady, honest, hardworking miner'.[7] Commonly known by the anglicised name 'Charlie Deptford', he had worked around Crooked River as an alluvial miner for some time before taking a job mining for wages. Little else is known about him, other than the circumstances of

his death. His death certificate notes his burial at Crooked River, but sheds no further light on his age, origins or next of kin.[8]

A fire, the gruesome discovery of a skull and soon after a decapitated body, followed by a violent attempt to resist arrest, were the events that led James Seery, aged 33, to the Grant Police Court in early October 1870. Three weeks earlier, Tepfar had been working on the claim of Rudolph Klemptz,[9] a local storekeeper, whose other interests at one time included the Pioneer Hotel in Grant. The Prussian-born Klemptz held several mining leases at Good Luck Creek. He told the inquest into Tepfar's death that he had known the deceased for nine years. In order to get to his workplace, Tepfar had to pass Seery's hut, close to the Good Luck Creek junction. He was seen alive by his employer after knock-off on the afternoon of Thursday 15 September, walking his large dog back to his hut. He failed to turn up for work the next day.[10] Another miner and part-owner with Klemptz of the claim, William Beaumont, would later testify at the committal hearing that he saw Tepfar leaving the claim leading a horse, but there is no other corroboration of this nor further mention of a horse, which might have made for a speedier getaway for the murderer.[11]

Peter Mentz, who worked at a local store, saw Seery's hut on fire that Friday morning. He crossed the river to see if he could save anything but found the roof had already caved in.[12] Beaumont said he also had witnessed Seery's hut on fire. Beaumont, along with another miner Harry Lee, examined the fire scene on Saturday and found what appeared to be a human skull, partly bashed in, and some teeth. He also saw traces of blood on some leaves at the hut. The police were summoned from Grant, and Constable Edward J. Coleman and Constable William Lloyd arrived on Sunday 18 September. Beaumont accompanied the police to the site. He was also present when a headless corpse was found concealed in disused mine workings not far from the burnt-out hut:[13] 'I saw the body found by Constable Coleman. It was buried in some old workings about 100 yards from Seery's hut. The head was missing and there was a wound in the neck and another in the side and several cuts on the hands'.

The police found evidence that the hut had been deliberately set on fire, with saplings stacked up at the site. They also found evidence of a struggle nearby. The body was wrapped in a red blanket, covered in about 30 centimetres of soil and mining rubble. A dog was later

found buried at the same site. Next to the body was a miner's pick that matched the wounds.

Later that day, Mounted Police Constable Lloyd was dispatched with instructions to look for both Seery and Tepfar (the identity of the victim still being uncertain). He found Seery some 23 miles away 'between Frasers restaurant and the Twenty-five Mile Creek'. Lloyd spotted him on a spur about 60 yards distant. Constable Lloyd's account of the arrest that ensued (aided by a couple of others who followed Seery from Frasers) was dramatic and some would later claim self-serving.[14]

> When he saw me, he threw down his swag, and, grasping a long-handled shovel, came rapidly towards me with the shovel raised in a menacing manner. When he was within 12 paces of me, I called upon him to surrender. I was in uniform at the time. He said, "I will teach you to come before me; I will split your skull." He then rushed at me. I fired on one side of him to deter him from striking at me, but he still continued to do so, and I fired again. And I then ran sideways from him, and when he came after me, closed with him. He tried to get me by the throat, and we fell; assistance came, and we secured him. I told him that I arrested him on suspicion of having murdered August Tepfar. He asked what suspicion I could have of him. He said he did not care if I had put half-a-dozen holes in him; he would have murdered me that time if he could.[15]

Seery was brought before the Grant Police Court on 20 September and remanded in custody.[16] An inquest held before Edward Whiting JP on 26 September established that the body was that of Tepfar, based on identification of physical characteristics and items of clothing, including a pair of Wellington boots, found with the body. Whiting found Tepfar had been wilfully murdered; his remains were then released for burial. He was buried at Crooked River on 27 September 1870. His death certificate notes 'no minister in attendance', and the arrangements appear to have been undertaken by his employer, Rudolph Klemptz, and Constable Coleman.[17] The remains of Tepfar's skull were retained to be produced as evidence.[18]

On 7 October, Seery was again brought before the Grant Police Court. Inspector John Sadlier, the senior police officer in Gippsland,[19] put the prosecution case before the district police magistrate and erstwhile explorer, Alfred Howitt, with local justices of the peace,

Murdoch Mackintosh from Dargo Flat and Edward Whiting from Grant, making up the bench.[20]

Seery came into court secured in irons and escorted by constables. His demeanour was described in the *Gipps Land Mercury* as one of 'complete sangfroid'. This particular journal, salacious reports from which were syndicated in the Melbourne *Argus*, proved to be no friend of the accused. In one such account, its correspondent reported: 'Coolly calculated precautions seem to have been taken by the murderer to avoid detection. He appears, on murdering his unfortunate victim, to have stripped the body entirely nude, cut off its head, and buried the body'.[21]

The evidence, much of it circumstantial, was put to the court. Both Beaumont and Mentz testified that Tepfar had one joint of his little finger missing. This was found to be the case with the body. Another miner, John Leavell, identified the body as that of Augustus Tepfar 'by the first joint of the little finger on the right hand being gone and by the nail having grown over the end of the thumb'. He also said he believed the dead dog found buried nearby was Tepfar's. His identification was backed up by Tepfar's employer, Rudolph Klemptz. As the examination of each witness was completed, Seery 'contented himself with merely saying, "I have no questions to ask"'. When the proceedings concluded, Seery was asked if he had anything to say in his defence. 'He replied, in a firm tone, "I deny the charge"'. The bench complimented Constable Lloyd 'very highly on his gallant behaviour' and committed the accused to stand trial in Sale on 25 October.[22] The *Gippsland Times*, in its report of the committal hearing, added: 'The accused, it will be remembered, was brought before the Sale Bench some time ago on the charge of insanity, and after his release from custody he returned to Crooked River, where it would seem two, or three other demented persons have been roaming at large in the ranges'.[23] Two days later (a Sunday) Seery was brought down from Grant and lodged in the Sale gaol ahead of his trial.[24]

At both the committal and subsequent trial, evidence of an apparent motive was absent:

> The only reason which could be assigned for Seery's murdering Tepfar was that there was an old grievance between them as to the possession of a claim on the creek, and it is surmised that meeting Tepfar alone on the creek he took advantage of the circumstance to gratify his bloodthirsty revenge.[25]

A Speedy Trial

Seery's trial was set before judge and jury at the Sale Circuit Court on 25 October 1870. Sittings of the Supreme Court outside Melbourne had begun in 1850 at Geelong. As the new colony of Victoria grew rapidly, the court began to travel to a small number of regional centres.[26] The first sitting of the court in Sale was on 27 April 1867. The presiding judge on that occasion was Chief Justice Sir William Foster Stawell (1815–89), who would return on circuit to hear Seery's case in 1870. Anglo-Irish in origin, Stawell was appointed Victoria's first attorney-general upon Separation from NSW in 1851. A prominent member of the Melbourne Bar since 1843, he led the unsuccessful prosecution of the Eureka rebels in 1853. From 1857, Stawell headed the Supreme Court for the next 29 years. He was a noted jurist, who was reputed to preside with some compassion over a number of murder trials, punctilious in demanding that the prosecution make its case (Figure 3).[27]

Figure 3: Sir William Stawell 1872. Photographer Thomas Foster Chuck 1826–1898
(Courtesy State Library Victoria, H96.160/17490)

Seery's was not the first capital case to be heard in Sale after the circuit court came to town, but each excited considerable local interest (Figure 4). A murder charge had previously been brought against Shady Creek publican Nicol Brown for the 1868 killing of mail contractor William Laughton, who he believed was having an affair with his wife.

Brown confessed to his crime. He was found guilty by Justice Edward Williams (1813–80)[28] and sentenced to death, although this was later commuted to life imprisonment.[29] An earlier trial in May 1867 for the stabbing murder the previous December on the Upper Dargo goldfield of Chinese miner Ah Kee at the hands of Carl Wilhelm (also known as Charles Williams) again involved allegations of spousal intrigue. A jury found Wilhelm not guilty.[30]

Figure 4: Sale Court House, Foster Street. Photographer John T. Collins 1907–2001
(Courtesy State Library Victoria, J.T. Collins Collection, La Trobe Picture Collection)

Seery would have no such luck. A plea of not guilty was put to the court when proceedings began on 25 October.[31] The evidence at the trial largely mirrored that given at the committal hearing. One additional witness was the government analytical chemist, William Johnson, who said that blood found on a shirt with the body and similar to one worn by the accused appeared to be human, but that he could not swear to it. Nor could he swear that the teeth found were human.[32]

The *Gipps Land Mercury* reporter noted:

The prisoner during the trial maintained an apparently quiet, cool demeanour, but a close observer might have noticed a nervous twitching of the muscles of the mouth. When the skull of the murdered man was produced, Seery showed symptoms of strong nervous

agitation, and he appeared to listen to the charge of the judge most attentively.[33]

In his charge to the jury, Chief Justice Stawell said they needed to establish answers to three questions: was the body discovered that of Augustus Tepfar, had he been murdered, and who was the murderer? The jury took just 50 minutes to reach a conclusion on all three questions and to find the accused Seery guilty of murder. 'On hearing the verdict the prisoner appeared to become perfectly insensible to anything about him; the expression on his countenance was quite vacant, and he did not seem to hear one word of the sentence the judge proceeded to pass upon him.'[34] In contrast, Stawell was said to be 'much affected'. Nonetheless, he counselled Seery to 'make his peace with his maker for the cruel sin he had been guilty of'. He also added that, on reviewing his notes, he could see little that might cause the Executive Council to exercise its prerogative of mercy. He then passed the sentence of death. The trial had taken half a day.

The Quality of Mercy Was not Strained … It Was Absent

Two key factors suggest that Seery should never have been a candidate for the gallows. The first relates to the adequacy of his legal representation. The second centres on his mental health.

In 1870, just over half of the criminal defendants in Victoria were represented by legal counsel. Sale was one of three regional locations (the others were Bendigo and Castlemaine) that actually had a higher rate of legal representation than Melbourne.[35] By all accounts, Seery had no legal representative at the magistrate's hearing in Grant, where Inspector Sadleir put the police case (Figure 5). In its heyday, Grant attracted a small number of resident lawyers, focused largely on mining matters, but this time had already passed. So, there would not have been a ready supply of counsel available in the remote settlement, some 125 kilometres to the north of Sale.

When the case came to trial, William Patten,[36] a noted Sale attorney and one-time mayor, was appointed to defend Seery. To be represented by an attorney (the equivalent of a modern-day solicitor) in such a serious matter as a murder trial was highly unusual. Appearances in the Supreme Court were then, as now, almost exclusively the province of barristers, even when the court was on circuit. For example, a leading member of the Victorian bar, B.C. Aspinall,[37] represented Nicol Brown
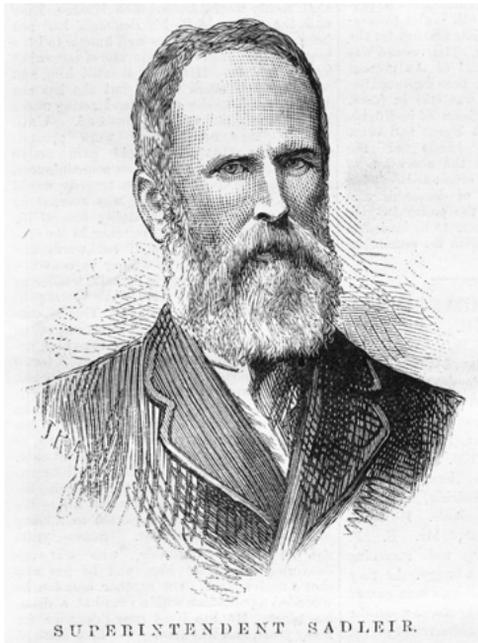
Figure 5: Superintendent Sadleir, wood engraving, *Illustrated Australian News*, 17 July 1880 (Courtesy State Library Victoria, IAN17/07/80/121)

in Sale in 1868, briefed by Patten. In the case of a murder trial, one might expect experienced senior counsel to represent the accused. Attorneys (and later solicitors) could appear before the Supreme Court on circuit as advocates on occasions 'when counsel were not available at all', but this was rare.[38] Criminal law was, however, one of the areas upon which attorneys were examined prior to their admission to practice at that time.[39] It was evidently a matter that exercised Patten's mind as he represented Seery:

> Mr Patten, in addressing the jury for the defence, said he could not help feeling a weight of responsibility in being called upon to defend the prisoner at the Bar, who it was to be regretted was deprived of the aid of a skilled counselor to plead his cause; and he would only express the hope that the unfortunate man would not suffer through any over-sight or want of ability on the part of his advocate. The difficulties in his way were somewhat lessened on that occasion, as he noticed on the jury mainly gentlemen who had frequently sat in that box in the court before, men of intelligence and experience, and who

were therefore less likely to be led away by anything they might have heard or read out of doors.[40]

Just why Seery was not represented by more senior counsel is unclear. While the crown prosecutor, Alfred Wyatt, had travelled up from Melbourne, there is no evidence in the Sale circuit court report for 25 October of any other barristers appearing. Other matters heard that day by the chief justice seem to have been defended solely by local attorneys. So it was that, while Seery certainly had an experienced legal representative—and the law demanded as much[41]—the quality and ability of his counsel on such a serious charge as murder might have been open to challenge. However, Seery reportedly considered his defence adequate. The newspapers noted that 'by chance he saw his advocate in the gaol since his conviction, and thanked him in a rational manner for the efforts he had made to save him'.[42] But the extent to which Seery was actually capable of acting in a rational manner is another matter. A number of people questioned Seery's sanity, which would in turn affect his fitness to plead let alone be subjected to the death penalty.

There is no suggestion in reports of the trial that Patten adopted a defence of mental impairment. The M'Naghten rules surrounding the application of the insanity defence had been in place since 1843. All defendants were presumed sane unless evidence was led to the contrary. In Seery's case, this does not appear to have happened despite the misgivings of some familiar with the defendant and the circumstances of the crime. Writing to the chief commissioner of police the day after Seery's trial concluded, Inspector Sadleir seriously questioned the convicted man's state of mind:

> While the prisoner has been confined in Sale Gaol, his demeanour has been quiet. He has in fact shewn a stolid indifference to his position. This circumstance leads me to doubt his perfect sanity. The prisoner's conduct on 1 January last, as described by Senior-Constable Hopkinson (571) was such as to lead to the belief that the prisoner was not of sound mind.[43]

In a report to Sadleir dated on the day of Seery's trial, Hopkinson noted that he had first arrested the prisoner at Stratford on 21 December 1869. He was brought before the Stratford bench on a charge of insanity on the following day and remanded for medical examination at Sale. He was discharged on 24 December. He was subsequently arrested on

a warrant on 1 January 1870 at a house near Stratford, then bound over at Sale Police Court four days later to keep the peace for three months. Unable to find sureties he was held in Sale Gaol for the entire time. He was then put on the road to Crooked River and was believed to have been in the Grant area until his arrest for murder. Hopkinson added that the first time he went to arrest Seery, it took four men to secure him 'so strong was his passion at the time'. On the second occasion he was armed with a knife in one hand and a tomahawk in the other and was only subdued with some difficulty.[44] Local media reports cast Seery as a loner. The *Gipps Land Mercury* observed 'he appears to be a man of morose and sullen temperament, always living and working by himself'.[45]

While Sadleir and others questioned Seery's mental state, others harboured no such doubts. In his summary to the Executive Council, Chief Justice Stawell noted that no evidence of a motive had been advanced, but he seemed content to accept the jury verdict without challenge: 'The jury returned a verdict of guilty and I see no reason to doubt the soundness of their conclusion'.[46] The police surgeon, Dr William Forbes,[47] visited Seery in Sale Gaol on three occasions in the week before his October trial and observed the prisoner in secret: 'I have examined him as to his sanity or otherwise and can find no symptoms which would lead one to suppose he is of unsound mind. He eats and sleeps well and is very quiet in his demeanour and shows no symptoms of eccentricity of conduct'. He added that Seery 'seems quite indifferent as to the serious nature of the charge against him'.[48] Constable Coleman, the investigating police officer at Grant, recorded that Seery had been well known in the Crooked River district for the past eight or nine years, and several people considered him 'to be of sober habits', working mainly in isolated locations.[49]

Less than a week before the execution date, a correspondent to the *Gippsland Times* signing off as 'Justice' and claiming to be 'no humanity-monger, nor an advocate for the abolition of the punishment of death', went on to plead for a sensible review of Seery's circumstances. He did not question Seery's culpability in committing the crime but argued that:

> If one half the reports be true of his many eccentric acts and frequent violent conduct from no known or reasonable motive whatever, I certainly am of the opinion that there is quite sufficient ground for an enquiry, more particularly as it appears that he is a poor man with

few friends able to bear the expense of making any great exertions in his favour …

Seery's anonymous supplicant continued to the effect that, if nothing was found to stay the hand of the executioner, then justice should be done. However, 'after the very many instances in which the plea of insanity has spared the life of criminals, the public mind would be more satisfied that everything had been done as required by law and justice for and against this convict'.[50]

The law at the time did not impose a duty on the crown to hold an inquiry into the sanity of a prisoner condemned to death, even where there was evidence to suggest a *prima facie* case of insanity. However, the *Lunacy Statute 1867* provided that, in the case of a prisoner under sentence of death, 'if it shall be made to appear by any means whatsoever to the Chief Secretary that there is reasonable ground to believe that such prisoner is then insane, such Chief Secretary may himself appoint two or more medical practitioners to inquire into the insanity of such prisoner'.[51] The statute went on to provide that, should the prisoner be found to be insane, the chief secretary could detain him or her in an asylum indefinitely. If the prisoner recovered sufficiently to the point where they became of sound mind, they could be returned to their former place of imprisonment and proceed to execution.

A common law rule explicitly prohibited the execution of insane prisoners and provided that the tribunal that ordered execution by its sentence of death was bound, if insanity was established, to grant a reprieve or stay of execution of sentence until the ensuing session. The question of whether this was overridden by later statutory provisions became the centre of extensive legal debate some 90 years later during the infamous Tait case.[52]

An Execution without Reprieve as Doubts Abound

The applicability of the insanity provisions in Seery's case was simply never tested, despite significant doubts cast over his mental competence. Beyond the medical assessments when he was in custody in Sale and despite Sadleir's grave doubts, there was no re-examination of Seery's mental state or capacity ahead of his execution. Just two days before the execution date, the *Australasian* reported 'the convict Seery, who is to be hanged on Monday, for the murder of his mate, is not at all settled

in his mind' but noted that he was quiet in behaviour and trying to attend to the ministrations of the Roman Catholic chaplain, Reverend Daniel Lordan.[53]

Asked by prison authorities if there were any family members that he would like contacted, Seery said he had a cousin in New Zealand but that they would get all they needed to know from the newspapers.[54]

The Executive Council determination that the sentence should be carried out was conveyed to Seery on Monday 7 November. 'The condemned man took the matter very quietly, only remarking that he could not be worse than he was at present.'[55] As his time came to an end, Seery would encounter hangman William Bamford,[56] who performed this role in Victoria from 1857 until shortly before his own death in 1873. During this time, he executed more than 60 men (and one woman)—roughly one in every three judicial hangings in Victoria's 125-year history of capital punishment. (One of Bamford's little rituals was to shake the hand of the pinioned prisoner and utter his own final blessing before pulling the bolt. In Seery's case, he pointedly did not do so.)[57]

The execution proceeded on Monday 14 November. When the sheriff appeared at the door of the condemned cell,

> Seery appeared very calm and apathetic, but had changed frightfully since his condemnation, having greatly fallen away in flesh. He was pinioned by the hangman … Seery fervently kissed the crucifix offered to him, and the bolt being withdrawn, his crime was at once expiated with his life. Death must have been instantaneous, as not a tremor, not a single quiver of the muscles, was noticeable after the drop fell.[58]

The governor of the Melbourne Gaol, John Buckley Castieau (1831–85), was evidently relieved when the execution went off without incident. He had been apprehensive that something untoward might occur, as he also clearly had concerns about the condemned man's state of mind. His diary entry for that day records:

> November 14 Monday 1870. A fine day. Got up at half past five & went into the Gaol, where I gave directions with regard to Seery who was Executed this morning at ten o'clock. Seery was a strange kind of man & I was in some fear of a scene at the last & felt in consequence very glad when all was over. The Inquest was held in the Gaol at twelve o'clock.[59]

At the inquest before the coroner, Dr Richard Youl (1821–97), twelve jurors attested to Seery's execution. Governor Castieau gave evidence as to the presentation of the warrant to the gaol and its execution. Constable John O'Shea (No. 1889) of Sale identified the body as that of James Seery, tried and sentenced by the chief justice at Sale Circuit Court.[60]

Figure 6: Melbourne Gaol in sunlight from the Public Library grounds 1884. Artist Frederick McCubbin 1885–1917 (Courtesy State Library Victoria, H29648)

There was simultaneously an inquiry running into penal administration in Victoria. After Seery's execution, Castieau walked for a while with Dr Youl. The pair discussed the changes afoot and the expansion of the new Pentridge Prison at Coburg at the expense of the Melbourne Gaol (Figure 6). Castieau went on to note that later in the day he 'drank more grog than I should have done for I got nervous about Seery & then was excited with the talk I had with Dr Youl.'[61]

Nagging doubts remained. A month after the execution, the *Age* opined:

It is characteristic of Australian murders—unhappily they are sufficiently frequent for characterisation—that, although often

extremely brutal, they are very seldom deliberate or premeditated. Insanity, drunkenness, some sudden and irresistible gust of passion—such is generally the origin of such outrages, as a sample of which we may cite the recent murder of August Tepfar, miner, by his mate James Seery, at the Crooked River, Gipps Land.[62]

Moreover, lodged in the Melbourne Gaol on death row at the same time as Seery was another convicted murderer, Gerald Henry Supple (1823–98). The contrast between the two convicted men could hardly have been more pronounced. Supple was a barrister, journalist, poet and an Irish patriot. He was reputedly a member of Young Ireland, a splinter group of Daniel O'Connell's Repeal Association. After a failed rebellion in 1848, a number of its leaders (including the activist John Mitchel, who later escaped to the United States) were convicted of treason–felony and ultimately transported to Van Diemen's Land.

Supple, who had studied law, history and literature in Dublin, left for London where he worked as a journalist. In 1857 he migrated to Victoria, where he again found work as a journalist while he read for the bar. Supple wrote for the *Herald* and the *Australasian*, and eventually worked on a more permanent basis for the *Age*. His poor eyesight proved an impediment to pursuing his legal career, along with an unstable nature that was quick to find both personal and national insult, imagined or real.[63]

It was the perception of the latter that would land him in the dock. George Paton Smith was also a Melbourne barrister, member of parliament and briefly attorney-general. He was for a time editor of the *Age* when Supple worked there in 1862. The latter took exception to the way in which the newspaper covered the Irish question. On 17 May 1870, he sought out Smith as he walked between the law courts and parliament. Near the intersection of Spring and Latrobe streets, Supple confronted Smith and shot at him twice with a revolver. Smith was struck in the arm by a third bullet and fled to a nearby reserve, where he tried to shelter behind a telegraph pole as a fourth shot was fired. He called to a bystander, John Sesnan Walshe, to help him. Walshe tackled Supple and was mortally wounded by a fifth bullet before Supple was apprehended and subdued by George McCullagh, a former Irish policeman who was in fact there to meet Smith. Walshe died two days later. Smith, Supple's intended target, was probably saved by his assailant's poor eyesight.[64]

Supple was charged with murder. At his trial in July 1870 before Chief Justice Stawell, he was defended—without fee—by George Higinbotham[65] (himself later to become chief justice), B.C. Aspinall and Dr Frank Dobson.[66] There was no shortage of evidence as to Supple's precarious mental state. The crown drew medical evidence to suggest that he was capable of differentiating between right and wrong, but his defence argued a form of diminished responsibility tending to insanity. 'He was a sensitive, despondent man', Higinbotham told the jury. 'He is no more responsible for these dreadful acts than a child.' A second prong of the defence was that the shooting of Walshe was, in any event, accidental. The jury found Supple guilty but suggested the pistol did discharge accidentally. Stawell referred the matter to the full court, which ruled against Supple, who was condemned to death.

Supple's plight garnered significant public interest. A reprieve from execution was granted by the Executive Council pending an appeal to the Privy Council. Supple denied he was insane and insisted he was undertaking a public duty in attacking slander and vilification. In September 1871, the death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. He was released less than seven years later on compassionate grounds after George Paton Smith died. Supple moved to New Zealand and resumed work as a journalist, dying in penury twenty years later.[67]

The contrasting experiences of Seery and Supple could hardly be starker. Supple was provided with the best available legal counsel. The evidence against him of both the crime and his own fragile mental state went unchallenged (except by the accused himself!). He was fortunate to have influential supporters in politics and the law. Seery had none of these advantages in Gippsland or Melbourne, and so the prerogative of mercy was exercised in favour of only one of these men condemned to death just weeks apart.

A Curious Bystander

The eighteen witnesses to James Seery's execution comprised the usual assortment of prison officers (including Castieau), the sheriff, a police officer, doctor and pressmen. Curiously, the *Victorian Government Gazette* notes that also among them was 'Daniel E. Bandman [*sic*], comedian'.[68]

Daniel Edward Bandmann (1837–1905) was a German-born American actor, better known for his Shakespearean repertoire than

any comedic endeavours. He toured extensively through Europe, Asia and the Pacific, including Australia and New Zealand, from the 1860s to the 1880s. A figure who courted controversy, Bandmann 'would today be regarded as prime tabloid fodder and was indeed seen as such in his own era'.[69] A physically imposing man, intelligent and well read, he was also known for having a quick and fiery temper. 'He was handy with his fists, occasionally punching people in the face with whom he had disagreements. He was a bully, probably a wife beater, a short-term bigamist, and a vigorous defender of his honour in the press or in the courtroom.'[70] Bandmann was also a very physical actor, graceful in his movements, and, while the quality of his performances was regarded by the critics as somewhat variable, he would in time earn both a global reputation and renown. In later life he would also become well known as a farmer in the western US state of Montana.

Just how or why he came to witness Seery's execution is not known. He was certainly on tour in Victoria at the time. His presence at Seery's hanging was also noted in the newspapers.[71] Gaol Governor Castieau was a cultured man who evidently enjoyed the theatre and attended frequently, according to his diaries. His immediate circle included a number of writers and artists. It may well have been he who invited Bandmann to attend the execution, although there is nothing in his diaries to suggest their close acquaintance.

In a memoir of a later grand tour that included the antipodes, *An Actor's Tour: or Seventy Thousand Miles with Shakespeare*, published in 1885, Bandmann writes with some respect for Melbourne's physical attributes: 'a very beautiful city, pre-eminently modern in type' with fine wide streets and elegant homes. The library, Parliament House, the Post Office and Town Hall were all fine public institutions. 'The Botanical Gardens cannot be praised too highly', he adds.

The older Bandmann reserves his real opprobrium for the citizens themselves: 'The public of Melbourne is no longer what it used to be. In former years the people might very deservedly be denoted among the most intelligent, generous, and appreciative of civilised communities but now all is unlike the days of yore'.[72] He was largely referring, as might be expected, to a perceived decline in interest in the performing arts. Yet, while he had much to say about Melbourne and its people in his memoirs, Bandmann's response to witnessing Seery's demise in 1870 remains unrecorded. That he should not have reflected upon witnessing

an execution on his earlier visit to the city is singularly odd. Even in an era when capital punishment was relatively common, to be in the front row was surely an occurrence upon which someone like Bandmann might have reflected (Figure 7).[73]

Figure 7: Herr Bandmann, wood engraving, from a photograph by C. Hewitt, *Illustrated Australian News for Home Readers***, 8 November 1869**
(Courtesy State Library Victoria, IAN08/11/69/211)

The Irish Question: Following in his Father's Footsteps?

> It's as clear as day that this young Irishman, just like his dad, was an innocent victim murdered by the British.[74]

It was widely reported in the colonial press at the time of his execution that James Seery was related to Brian Seery, executed 24 years earlier in Ireland on 13 February 1846, outside Mullingar Gaol. The precise nature of the relationship was unclear. Inspector Sadleir reported to his superiors that James Seery had identified himself as Brian Seery's nephew.[75] Other sources suggest he was, in fact, his son.[76] The elder Seery was a tenant farmer, behind in his rent. He was charged and found

guilty of the attempted murder of Sir Francis Hopkins, the local landlord. Brian Seery, unlike James, consistently and loquaciously protested his innocence. The evidence against him was circumstantial, far flimsier than that presented against the younger Seery a quarter of a century later. His trial became a celebrated one, as many—including the author Charles Dickens—considered the case against him had not been made. He was tried twice, the first jury failing to reach a verdict.

The prosecution of Brian Seery should be considered in the context of Ireland at that time. Ireland's Great Famine, sometimes referred to as the Potato Famine, spanned the years 1845 to 1849 and triggered the great Irish diaspora. Mullingar was on the edge of the worst affected areas of the great hunger, but for tenant farmers such as Seery its impact would have been especially hard felt. When Brian Seery died, he became known to some as 'Seery the Martyr'. He left behind a wife and young family of five children.

In a recent polemical account, Irish author Jack Kiernan posits a number of somewhat speculative theories as to what happened half a world away at Crooked River. Kiernan came to the story of James Seery by chance when researching the story of the execution of Brian Seery. For Kiernan, the attraction of the idea that two members of the same family should be executed at the hands of the British upon dubious evidence is overwhelming. He places the deaths of both men firmly in a 700-year continuum of British oppression.[77]

In the case of James Seery, Kiernan speculates that the murdered man was not, in fact, August Tepfar, but offers no suggestion as to whom the victim might have been. Another curious theory is that the victim was murdered several miles away by at least two other men and his body dumped at Seery's hut, which they then set alight. The only evidence he cites is a suggestion by police that 'two or three' dangerous and demented men were believed to be roaming the mountains (a gleaning from a single contemporary newspaper report). He places great stock in the fact that Tepfar used the alias 'Charlie Deptford', suggesting this meant he was on the run from the law. However, the use of anglicised aliases in colonial Victoria by non-British immigrants was fairly common at the time.

Kiernan identifies James Seery as Brian's son but points out that in Mullingar there was practically no recollection of a Seery Australian connection or of James Seery's execution. Nor was his name included on the family headstone in County Westmeath. Kiernan makes much of

Tepfar's supposedly missing horse, which just one miner claimed Seery was leading to his hut on the evening of this demise. Others suggested Tepfar was leading his large dog. He also focuses on the killing of the dog, claiming this would have been difficult without attracting attention from the rest of the village.

Brutal Murderer, Mentally Ill or Political Martyr?

The public record of a murder 150 years ago in a distant corner of a colony not yet twenty years old is almost inevitably scant. What we do know about the death of August Tepfar is that he was murdered and that a man was convicted and hanged for that crime. What is not clear from the published reports is why. There is plenty of speculation that Seery and Tepfar argued over a mining claim, for this was a common cause of dispute on the goldfields at the time.[78] Seery remained mute through most of the legal proceedings. At his committal he had no questions regarding the allegations against him, did not give evidence and offered no more than a firm plea of not guilty of the charge of murder. Similarly, at trial he remained silent, as was his legal right.

Life on remote fields such as Crooked River was lonely and harsh. As noted, the *Age* speculated that Tepfar's murder was possibly, like others at the time in Australia, extremely brutal but neither deliberate nor premeditated. It posited 'insanity, drunkenness, [or] some sudden and irresistible gust of passion' as among the potential causes.[79] Alcohol abuse—compounded by the dubious quality of much of the liquor consumed—was a significant problem in colonial Victoria. A prohibition law had been enacted on the goldfields in 1852 in response to the level of alcohol abuse, but ironically it led to the rise of 'sly grog' shops. By 1870 the liquor laws were more relaxed, with permissive trading from 6 a.m. to midnight on every day except Sunday.[80]

The link between excessive alcohol and mental illness was drawn in the lunacy law, which allowed for those suffering from drunkenness and *delirium tremens* to be sent to an asylum. Other forms of mental illness were also evident on the goldfields. In her history of Victoria's early attempts to deal with this problem, Jill Giese draws a direct connection between the 'gold hysteria' that consumed the colony and the incidence of mental illness: 'More than a few went mad in the process'. The first asylum opened in Melbourne in 1848, while by 1867 rural institutions such as the Beechworth asylum were also in operation.[81]

The high-country goldfields were not spared. In a report of an apparent suicide by hanging on the Upper Dargo just a month after Seery's execution, the local correspondent of the *Gippsland Times* reported: 'Judging by the swag lying at the foot of the tree, it is surmised that the unfortunate creature was one of those many lunatics for which the Crooked River district is so rapidly acquiring a notoriety'.[82] A decade after Seery's execution, another Crooked River miner, Thomas Norton, was confined *in durance vile* after behaving in an irrational manner for some weeks. Diagnosed with 'dementia', he would spend the remaining 41 years of his life in mental health institutions.[83]

Nor is there any contemporary evidence to suggest that Seery was somehow the victim of a politically motivated execution. While 40,000 Irish convicts were sent to Australia, the majority—like Seery—came as free settlers. Some Irish in Australia were undoubtedly victimised by the authorities; the story of Ned Kelly is bound up in a romanticised tale of Irish Catholic oppression. By the time Seery was executed a decade earlier, one quarter of the Australian population was Irish born, and they could, in fact, expect better treatment from the law here than at home. Some 80 per cent of police in Victoria were also of Irish extraction.

More plausible in the death of August Tepfar is the sort of spontaneous eruption of the type that the *Age* supposed—a violent argument, fuelled by alcohol, mental ill health or both. More evident is that the accused in this case should never have gone to the gallows without his mental capacity to form an intention to murder being fully tested at trial and upon review. That was the great failing in the system that executed James Seery.

Notes

1   Trevor Poultney, *Victims of the Rope: Executions in Port Phillip and Victoria 1842–1967*, Melbourne, Trevor Poultney, 2016, pp. 110–14.

2   Alfred William Howitt was an explorer, anthropologist, naturalist and public servant. He led the recovery mission for the abortive Burke and Wills exploration party, was a discoverer of the Crooked River goldfield and became an early authority on Victorian Aboriginal culture. In 1863, he was appointed police magistrate and warden of the Omeo goldfields, the beginning of a 38-year career as a public official, 26 of these years as a magistrate. He would also serve on two royal commissions, become acting secretary of mines and water supply and a member of the Public Service Board. See W.E.H. Stanner, 'Howitt, Alfred William (1830–1908)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (*ADB*), http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/howitt-alfred-william-510; Mary Howitt Walker, *Come Wind, Come Weather: A Biography of Alfred Howitt*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press,

1971; Luke Steenhuis, *Ghost Towns of the High Country* (2nd ed.), Melbourne, Luke Steenhuis, 2019, p. 55; R.W. Christie and G.D. Gray, *Victoria's Forgotten Goldfield* (2nd ed.), Dargo, High Country Publishing, 2016, pp. 12–14.

3   Biographical information on Seery is scant. His death certificate notes Seery's birthplace as Westmeath, his age as 33 years and residence in the colony for nine years. It provides no details as to his birthdate or parents: Death Certificate, James Seery, Births Deaths and Marriages, Victoria, 1644/1870; *Empire*, 23 November 1870, p. 4.

4   *Ballarat Star*, 29 September 1870, p. 4.

5   See entry at https://www.geni.com/people/Julius-August-heinrich-Friedrich-Topfer/6000000071586735823. He was reportedly married with one living child at the time of his death, although no reference is made to this in the contemporary accounts.

6   *Argus*, 24 September 1870, p. 6.

7   *Ballarat Star*, 29 September 1870, p. 4.

8   Death certificate, Augustus Tepfar, Births Deaths and Marriages, Victoria, 6967/1870.

9   There are several variations of the spelling of Klemptz, this being the most common in the contemporary records. The Klemptz (or Klemtz) family story is detailed in J.G. Rogers, *Lone Graves of Gippsland*, Bendigo, J.G. Rogers, 2017, pp. 102–03.

10   *Age*, 28 September 1870, p. 3; Rogers, pp. 191–2.

11   *Argus*, 15 October 1870, p. 6; *Gippsland Times*, 18 October 1870, p. 3.

12   *Gippsland Times*, 18 October 1870, p. 3.

13   *Argus*, 15 October 1870, p. 6; *Gippsland Times*, 18 October 1870, p. 3.

14   There was often a cash reward payable to constables in such circumstances. A sum of £5 was awarded to Constable Lloyd out of the Police Reward Fund, for his services in arresting James Seery: *Gippsland Times*, 13 December 1870, p. 2.

15   *Argus*, 15 October 1870, p. 6.

16   *Age*, 28 September 1870, p. 3.

17   Death certificate, Augustus Tepfar.

18   *Leader*, 8 October 1870, p. 20.

19   John Sadleir (1833–1919), then based in Sale, would later gain notoriety for his leadership in the capture of the bushranger Ned Kelly. See Richard Sadleir, 'Chasing Ned Kelly: A Working Policeman's Diary for 1879: John Sadleir', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 87, no. 1, June 2016, pp. 156–60.

20   *Gippsland Times*, 18 October 1870, p. 3.

21   *Illustrated Australian News*, 10 October 1870.

22   *Argus*, 13 October 1870, p. 7.

23   *Gippsland Times*, 8 October 1870, p. 2.

24   *Gippsland Times*, 11 October 1870, p. 2.

25   *Argus*, 24 September 1870, p. 6.

26   Don Garden, 'The Court on the Move', chap. 9 in Simon Smith (ed.), *Judging for the People: A Social History of the Supreme Court in Victoria 1841–2016*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, pp. 193–213. A long and uncomfortable overland coach trip to reach Sale was not eased until the extension of the railway in 1877.

27   Charles Francis, 'Stawell, Sir William Foster (1815–1889)', *ADB*, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/stawell-sir-william-foster-4635.

28 Justice Edward Eyre Williams (1813–80) read law in London and joined the Melbourne Bar in 1842. Appointed to the Supreme Court in 1852, he resigned on medical advice in 1874 and returned to England. He was knighted in 1878. See Robert Miller. 'Williams, Sir Edward Eyre (1813–1880)', *ADB*, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/williams-sir-edward-eyre-4855/text8109.

29 Shady Creek, near Moe, was a stopping point on the old coach road into Gippsland that preceded the railway line. The mail run at this time was made on horseback from Shady Creek to Walhalla. Brown eventually served nineteen years in prison, then moved to Western Australia. He later returned and bought a farm in Trafalgar. Brown died in 1916 aged 98. See *Traralgon and District Historical Society Bulletin*, vol. 21, issue 5, December 1990, pp. 14–16; *Morwell Historical Society News*, vol. 5, 1966, pp. 33, 56–7.

30 *Gippsland Times*, 1 January 1867, p. 3; *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, 4 May 1867, p. 2; Christie and Gray, p. 54. Only two other capital cases heard at Sale ended in executions. In 1893, John Conder was convicted of a murder at Buchan. Charles Strange was convicted of a murder at Cunninghame in 1895. Both were executed in Melbourne. Poultney, pp. 157, 167.

31 *Gippsland Times*, 29 October 1870, p. 3.

32 *Gippsland Times*, 29 October 1870, p. 3.

33 *Argus*, 29 October 1870, p. 5.

34 *Argus*, 29 October 1870, p. 5.

35 Alana Piper and Mark Finnane, 'Access to Legal Representation by Criminal Defendants in Victoria, 1861–1961', *UNSW Law Journal*, vol. 40, no. 2, May 2017, pp. 638–63, at p. 648.

36 William Patten (1830–1910) was born in 1830 in Rochester, Kent, England, and migrated to Australia in the 1850s. He came to Sale in February 1861, and took up the role of managing clerk in Webb's solicitor's office in Desailly Street. Patten eventually bought out Webb before joining forces in 1888 with Langton Staveley to become Patten & Staveley. A councillor for the Borough of Sale, in 1865 he became the town's second mayor. Active for many years in local politics, he was also a keen cricketer. His wife Harriet (m. 1864) died in childbirth in 1865. Neither of their two children survived infancy. Patten died in Sale in 1910.

37 B.C. (Butler Cole) Aspinall (1830–75), born in Liverpool, gained prominence as a journalist, barrister and MP. He served briefly as attorney-general and later as solicitor-general. As a defence lawyer for the Eureka rebels, he gained notoriety as a radical lawyer and was often briefed in criminal matters. In 1868, he unsuccessfully defended John O'Farrell, the would-be assassin of HRH Prince Alfred in Sydney. See Joanne Richardson, 'Aspinall, Butler Cole (1830–1875)', *ADB*, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/aspinall-butler-cole-2905.

38 Geoffrey Sawer, 'Division of a Fused Legal Profession: The Australasian Experience', *University of Toronto Law Journal*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1966, pp. 245–66, at p. 249.

39 John Waugh, *First Principles: The Melbourne Law School 1857–2007*, Melbourne, Miegunyah Press, 2007, p. 17. The title 'attorney' disappeared in Victoria with the passage of the *Legal Professional Practice Act 1891*, which in principle if not practice amalgamated the profession of 'barristers and solicitors'. See Simon Smith, *Solicitors and the Law Institute in Victoria 1835–2019: Pathway to a Respected Profession,* Melbourne, Law Institute of Victoria, 2019, p. 76.

40 *Gippsland Times*, 29 October 1870, p. 3.

41 *Prisoners' Counsel Act 1836*, 6 & 7 Wm 4, c 114.

42 *Herald*, 2 November 1870, p. 2.

43 Inspector Sadleir to Chief Commissioner of Police, 26 October 1870, VPRS264/P0/Unit 6, Public Record Office Victoria (PROV).

44 Letter, Hopkinson to Sadleir, 25 October 1870, VPRS264/P0/Unit 6, PROV.

45 *Argus*, 24 September 1870, p. 6.

46 William Stawell, 'Report on the Case of the Prisoner James Seery', Sale, 26 October 1870, VPRS264/P0/Unit 6, PROV.

47 William Forbes, MRCS, LRCP practised briefly on the Crooked River goldfields in 1865 and then in Sale for over 30 years until early 1899, in both private practice and as a senior public health officer. He died on 5 April 1901 in Nice, France, having retired to Scotland at the turn of the century. *Gippsland Times*, 9 September 1865, p. 3, 9 June 1866, p. 2; *Maffra Spectator*, 30 May 1901, p. 3; *Gippsland Times*, 16 March 1899, p. 4.

48 Report by Dr William Forbes, Police Surgeon, Sale, 26 October 1870, Capital Case file VPRS264/P0/264, PROV.

49 Report by Constable Coleman (No. 713) to Inspector Sadleir, Sale, 26 October 1870, Capital Case file VPRS264/P0/264, PROV.

50 *Gippsland Times*, 8 November 1870, p. 3; *Gippsland Times*, 9 June 1866, p. 2.

51 Section 6, *Lunacy Statute 1867*. For a broader discussion of the issue, see: J.D. Feltham, 'The Common Law and the Execution of Insane Criminals', *Melbourne University Law Review*, vol. 4, 1964, pp. 434–75.

52 Robert Peters Tait (1924–85) an alcoholic, sexual psychopath and transvestite with sadistic and masochistic tendencies, was convicted of a brutal murder at Hawthorn in 1961. Sentenced to death after the jury rejected an insanity plea, the issue of Tait's mental state before, during and after the crime was considered at length during a determined appeal process in the face of the Bolte government's determination to execute him. Under immense pressure from the High Court, which intervened to stop his execution, and community pressure, Tait's sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. His file was marked 'never to be released' and he died while still incarcerated. See Mike Richards, 'Tait, Robert Peters (1924–1985)', *ADB*, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/tait-robert-peters-15812.

53 Rev. Daniel Lordan (1812–78) was an Irish-born priest who had served in British Guiana and Barbados before transferring to Melbourne. His ministry included time at St Patrick's and St Francis's churches and several years as chaplain to the Melbourne Gaol. See 'Summary of the *Advocate* 1868–1900', vol. 7, Loison to McMullen, http://www.cam.org.au/Portals/0/2018/MDHC/Advocate/Vol%207-1868-1900%20Loison%20to%20McMullen.%20Pages%201%20-%20334.pdf; *Australasian* 12 November 1870, p. 18.

54 Poultney, p.114; *Empire*, 23 November 1870, p. 4.

55 *Geelong Advertiser*, 9 November 1870, p. 3.

56 William Bamford (1800–73), a former soldier, was transported to Van Diemen's Land in 1841. He came to Victorian during the gold rushes. A notorious drunkard, he was thereafter either imprisoned or vagrant for the rest of his life but always available as either hangman or flagellator as required.

57 Poultney, p. 114; *Rockhampton Bulletin*, 22 November 1872, p. 2.

58 *Age*, 15 November 1870, p. 2; *Empire*, 23 November 1870, p. 4.

59 Mark Finnane (ed.), *The Difficulties of My Position: The Diaries of John Buckley Castieau 1855–1884*, Canberra, National Library of Australia, 2004, p. 100.

60 Inquest deposition file, James Seery, VPRS24/P0, unit 246, item 1870/997 Male, PROV.

61 Finnane (ed.), p. 100.

62 *Age*, 5 December 1870, p. 3.

63 E.M. Finlay, 'Supple, Gerald Henry (1823–1898)', *ADB*, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/supple-gerald-henry-4670.

64 P.A. Jacobs, *Famous Australian Trials*, Melbourne, Robertson and Mullens, 1943, pp. 47–54.

65 George Higinbotham (1826–92) was a noted reformist colonial politician and judge, with a strong interest in land reform and education. He served as attorney-general and later as chief justice of the Supreme Court. See Gwyneth Dow, 'Higinbotham, George (1826–1892)', *ADB*, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/higinbotham-george-3766/text5939.

66 Frank Stanley Dobson (1835–95) was a politician and barrister who taught law at the University of Melbourne for more than 30 years. A Doctor of Laws from Cambridge (1870), he also served as solicitor-general and later became a Queen's Counsel. See Waugh, pp. 59–60.

67 Finlay.

68 *Victoria Government Gazette*, 25 November 1870, No. 22, p. 1726.

69 Lisa J. Warrington, 'Herr Daniel Bandmann and Shakespeare vs. the World', *Journal of Global Theatre History*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2016, pp. 56–70, at p. 57.

70 Warrington, p. 57.

71 *Empire*, 23 November 1870, p. 4.

72 Daniel E. Bandmann, *An Actor's Tour: Or Seventy Thousand Miles with Shakespeare*, Boston, Cupples, Upham and Company, 1885, p. 91.

73 The press at the time was more interested in Bandmann's mysterious and unexplained departure for Sydney just days later, leaving a theatre production dangling and prompting a newspaper report of a dalliance with a young woman in his dressing room. The report prompted threat of a libel action from Bandmann against the *Sydney Morning Herald*, which duly published an unreserved apology. See *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 November 1870, p. 5; *Ballarat Star*, 5 December 1870, p. 4.

74 Jack Kiernan, *I Declare Before My God*, Dublin, The Manuscript Publisher, 2019 (ebook), chaps 12, 11 of 13.

75 Sadleir to Chief Commissioner, 25 October 1870, Capital Case file VPRS264/P0/Unit 6, item James Serry [*sic*], PROV.

76 *Age*, 5 December 1870, p. 3; Poultney, p. 114; Kiernan, Introduction, p. 2 of 3.

77 Kiernan dedicates his book 'to the memory of all innocent men and women put to death by the British authorities, especially, two innocent Irishmen murdered by the British ascendancy'. Kiernan, p. 1 of 1.

78 See, for example, *Ballarat Star*, 29 September 1870, p. 4.

79 *Age*, 5 December 1870, p. 3.

80 Victorian Parliamentary Library, 'Liquor, Temperance and Legislation: The Origins of Six O'clock Closing in Victoria during WWI', *Heritage Note*, no. 2, October 2016, p. 2.

81 Jill Giese, *The Maddest Place on Earth*, Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2018, pp. 1, 36, 62, 67.

82 *Gippsland Times*, 17 December 1870, p. 3.

83 *Gippsland Times*, 3 March 1880, p. 3. The archaic term '*durance vile*' suggests physical restraint; Alphabetic List of Patients, Kew Asylum 1871–1885, VPRS7446/P1/6, PROV; Alphabetic List of Patients, Sunbury Asylum 1879–1884, VPRS7446/P1, PROV; Register of Patients, Males No. 1–481, Females No. 1–501, VPRS8236/P1/1, PROV; Proceedings of an Inquest Held upon the Body of Thomas Norton at Sunbury Hospital for Insane, 9 June 1921, VPRS24/P0/1008, item 1921/593, PROV; Death Certificate Thomas Norton, Births Deaths and Marriages, Victoria, 1921/7709.

'Independence, thrift and industry': David Andrade's Turn Back to the Land in the 1890s

Rachel Goldlust

Abstract

Historians have often downplayed the impact of late nineteenth-century co-operative settlement largely because of the failure of the village settlement program as a vehicle of public policy. The career of anarchist–socialist and settler David Andrade reveals how some settlers used the village settlement program to go 'back to the land' as a form of natural and social justice. While advocating for the right of every worker to access arable land, Andrade also promoted ideas of 'independence, thrift and industry' as a way of creating a 'more just, more merciful, more equitable, [and] more harmonious' society. In re-examining Andrade's life, this article looks beyond his failure to establish a utopian socialist agricultural system to illuminate his call to live closely with the natural world by growing, doing and making for oneself as a challenge to some of the precepts of industrial capitalism.

> But how can we do it? How can we get from the present unjust, destructive system, into one in which justice and happiness shall be the distinguishing characteristics? How shall we fight out of the present blood-thirsty system without the shedding of blood and, how shall we walk from bondage into liberty?
>
> David A. Andrade, *Our Social System, and How It Affects Those Who Work for their Living*, Melbourne, D.A. Andrade, 1887, p. 5.

In December 1887, an emerging young activist named David Andrade (Figure 1) gave a rousing lecture at Gordon Hall, an intimate venue in Port Melbourne that regularly hosted forums and discussions on themes such as freethought, secularism, democracy and morality.[1] Contributing to a growing debate over the organisation and character of Australian society in the lead-up to Federation, Andrade pointed to the failings of a capital-driven system to deal with issues of inequity and franchise challenging the modern worker. Calling to account the booming metropolis of 'Marvellous Melbourne' with its prosperous economy and industrial workforce, Andrade claimed that the city's progress was

unjustly based on 'appropriation and exploitation'.[2] The only way to create just alternatives, he reasoned, was to break the monopoly over land tenure, lead the workers from 'bondage into liberty', and encourage a mantra of 'independence, thrift and industry'.[3]

This article re-examines the life of David Andrade, an obscure but noteworthy character in Melbourne's radical socialist circles from the late nineteenth century, significant for his role in establishing Australia's first anarchist club and first vegetarian restaurant, and for his tireless advocacy for worker's rights.[4] His presence in the historical record has generally ended in 1893 when he forsook public life at the centre of Melbourne's activist and intellectual circles and retreated to a settlement in the nearby Dandenong Ranges.[5] I argue that, although his story ends tragically and could be used to exemplify the failure of the vision of the village settlement scheme to alleviate poverty and as a vehicle of government policy for closer settlement, there is more of historical significance that we can extract from the activities of David Andrade and his wife Emily after they left Melbourne.[6]

Figure 1: The only remaining photograph of David A. Andrade. Photographer unknown
(Cited at https://www.marxists.org/glossary/people/a/n.htm)

Andrade's engagement with popular socialism, which led him to advocate for workers' rights to access land, also led him to reconstruct the notion of independence through self-sufficiency as an extension of natural and social justice. While existing scholarship has generally emphasised Andrade's anarchist sympathies, it has largely overlooked

his broader social critique, for his attempts to turn a capitalist and 'individualist' society into a collective liberal social democracy were seen as fundamentally misguided.[7] However, Bruce Scates reminds us that while the decade of the 1890s inspired critical counter-hegemonic programs, it also managed to preserve the 'possibility of change' within the limits of contemporary historical parameters for reform.[8] Further study, he urged, involves expanding the narrative beyond the antithesis of 'capitalism versus socialism, liberalism or communalism, self-improvement versus radicalism' by drawing on lived experience and social context. In Andrade's contribution to the work of a radical periphery that challenged the terms of Australia's move into industrial modernity during a period of unprecedented economic crisis, we can find calls for equity, justice and opportunity that are just as relevant to our current moment of 'unprecedented' social and economic upheaval as they were over a hundred years ago.[9]

Going Back to the Land as Social Pioneering

In the late 1880s, David Andrade's urgent plea to deal with the land issue was neither new nor unique amidst growing discontent with a system that had alienated arable land through freehold selection throughout the nineteenth century.[10] Following the 1850s gold rushes, particularly in Victoria, radical English immigrant settlers looked to mobilise by re-imagining the agrarian myth of an idealised yeomanry.[11] Knowing that the eighteenth-century Enclosure Acts in England had forced large numbers of small farmers and farm labourers off the land to seek factory work in the growing industrial towns, this new class of Australian workers saw land as a panacea for all social ills, and was determined to prevent a similar forfeiture following land grabs and industrialisation in the colonies.[12] Contributing to a progressive program of moral reform that included a turn back to nature, a new generation of urban workers thus looked for security, autonomy and opportunity in a new 'Arcadia' based on rural self-sufficiency.[13]

The already legendary exploits of Henry Thoreau at Walden Pond in the 1840s proved poignant for activists such as Andrade who could see that, 'living as he did in the woods, he enjoyed a life such as not one in a thousand of the city laborers has any taste of, and was never troubled with the demon of Want'.[14] If this solitary individual could produce so much with such little labour, Andrade wondered, 'how much more could these poor city wage-slaves produce by their united

efforts, assisted by the wonderful industrial appliances of civilised life, were they also free to produce their own necessities without having to bear the yoke of legalized robbery?'[15]

Following a significant mood change across colonial society as poverty infiltrated every class and aspect of life after the economic collapse in 1891, the cities for many came to symbolise the 'sin and suffering' of the colonies, while the countryside embodied purity and sanctity, and land represented the original source of goodness, harmony and community wealth.[16] But while the 1880s had seen a desire to seek out untrammelled wilderness and the solitude of the bush, 1890s colonial society, as historian Graeme Davison notes, reached out to the land not for primeval solitude but for a rich and active community life.[17] Across the colonies, reformers had begun promoting co-operation as an alternative vision of social organisation, and, as one pamphlet from 1880 claimed, 'co-operative industrial settlement' could solve widespread unemployment and a general urban 'malaise'.[18]

As the long financial boom began to wane in the late 1880s, speculation in land had begun to retract, while at the same time communal settlement movements emerged in almost every colony pressuring colonial governments to redistribute proximate pastoral lands into small acreage settlement.[19] As land companies continued to fold daily, legislation for new village settlements was enacted whereby the land would remain the property of the state, leased in perpetuity to a collective that would work under co-operative principles.[20] Following a visit by the acclaimed American 'Single Taxer' Henry George to Australia in 1890, public discourse escalated around the potential of small lands schemes, including a lively discussion in the northern suburbs of Melbourne convened by the now well-established newsagent and agitator David Andrade.[21]

Andrade was generally supportive of 'Georgist' ideas that questioned why it was that poverty had generally accompanied economic and technological progress. However, he argued that a single tax left the worker vulnerable to the market since land values 'could not possibly be taxed as they only existed in the imagination'.[22] To resolve this dilemma, he floated a 'Social Pioneering' company that entailed a comprehensive land-based employment scheme to be secured by collective investment.[23] He started to canvass his prospectus across Melbourne at workers' leagues and unemployment associations and

Figure 2: David A. Andrade, 'Prospectus of the Social Pioneering Company Ltd', 1890
(Courtesy State Library Victoria, Merrifield Collection, MS13045, Box 139)

later ran weekly meetings and information sessions from his bookshop and printery.[24] Aiming to further social progress through 'agricultural, pastoral and industrial pursuits, and the establishment of homesteads facilitating peaceful communal and other social experiments', the proposal crystallised a multiplicity of problems into a simple, tangible, solution: engage an active citizenry in beneficial work, including opportunities to come into closer relations with nature on the land.[25]

Preceding the enactment of small lands legislation in Victoria, Andrade's prospectus looked for more than a solution to increasing unemployment. It sought a collectivist approach to independence through 'pioneering work' to 'make every laborer a capitalist and every tenant a landlord and encourage habits of thrift, temperance, and industry'.[26] In order to mitigate the effects of a fluctuating marketplace, Social Pioneers would be working not only for their own survival but to seek a 'solution to the many difficulties which beset our complex civilisation'.[27] Few of the land settlement programs floated at this time, such as those proposed by the celebrated Christian Socialist, the Reverend Horace Tucker, a year or so later, were leveraged with enough financial backing or support to be successful. This did not stop Andrade from disseminating his idea for a 'Scientific Village Settlement' to the unemployed workers associations, the homesteading leagues, and anyone interested in throwing off the shackles of the dirty, insalubrious city and heading to the hills (Figure 2).[28]

From Jewish Mercantile to Overthrowing Systems of Exploitation

To appreciate Andrade's political and social vision, it is pertinent to trace his intellectual and social progression and the context in which it evolved. Born in inner-city Collingwood in 1859 to Jewish storekeepers Abraham and Maria Da Costa Andrade, who migrated in 1852 from England, David was the eldest of five children. When he was thirteen, the family relocated to the more affluent South Yarra, their grocery business catering to an aspiring middle class of artisans and professionals; it was a move that elevated David's education opportunities and appreciation of class and social mobility. An enthusiastic writer, well educated, principled and a keen observer of the politics of his time, he was only twenty when he won a first-class certificate at the 1880 Intercolonial Industrial Exhibition in Melbourne for his 'Essay on Truth'. Demonstrating from a young age David's sophisticated anti-establishment and secularist leanings, the essay challenged the dangerous and coercive traits of

religious doctrine, advocating instead modern scientific reasoning as part of the emergent progressive civil society.[29]

In 1882 David Andrade married Emily Anders, who had grown up in Fitzroy and came to share his passions and social grievances. In 1886, David and his younger brother, William, joined prominent anarchist John Andrews in the newly formed Melbourne Anarchist Club. By 1887 they had established a co-operative home in Victoria Avenue, Albert Park, inspired by international thinkers such as William Goodwin, Peter Kropotkin and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.[30] With a deep commitment to individual liberty and a mutual distrust of and hostility to both church and state, around a dozen men shared the house for about a year, and the Melbourne Anarchist Club gathered momentum from a loose affiliation of debaters into an active organisation.[31] Members of the club continued to meet regularly until early 1889; they released their manifesto soon after they began, dedicating their third principle to the French revolutionary mandate of 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity', and explaining that:

> By Liberty we mean "the equal liberty of each, limited alone by the equal liberty of all." By Equality we mean "the equality of opportunity for each individual." And by Fraternity we mean "that principle which denies national and class distinctions, asserts the Brotherhood of Man and says, "The world is my country."[32]

As the club's secretary and one of its key spokesmen, Andrade published prolifically in radical journals, including the local Secular Association's *Liberator,* the Anarchist Club's *Honesty*, and the Australian Socialist League's *Australian Radical* in Sydney.[33] Beyond anarchist circles, Andrade's reputation grew through a self-published series of pamphlets that received wide acclaim. In an 1886 lecture titled 'What is Anarchy?' he argued for the reorganisation of society around the principles of self-sufficiency, seeing the only natural right as one of self-preservation, 'exercising every function of one's nature to one's best ability, and taking upon oneself the necessary responsibility of every action so performed'.[34] In *An Anarchist Plan of Campaign* (1888), he went one step further and outlined the future of labour and fiscal self-sufficiency where co-operators would overthrow major 'systems of exploitation' and retain a surplus for their own sustenance. Such a future would mean individual labourers would be in 'possession of their own

homesteads … others have taken up their abode in the co-operative homes, and most are directly settled upon the land'.[35]

From the American periodical *Liberty*, Andrade cultivated a commitment to Proudhonist anarchism, a libertarian doctrine focused on individual emancipation (in his case consciously artisan-orientated) over mass revolution.[36] By the time he gave his rousing speech at Gordon Hall in 1887, he had melded co-operation, natural justice and artisanal self-sufficiency, and was increasingly alienated from his middle-class origins as he continued campaigning for individual liberty and collective advancement. In late 1888, a split occurred in the Melbourne Anarchist Club over the role of property and the fruits of labour in a future anarchist society. Anarchist–communism, so eloquently expounded by Peter Kropotkin, had become the dominant philosophy among anarchists in Europe and North America. In Australia, individualists like Andrade remained focused on the idea of private property and argued that producers should enjoy the full fruits of their labours.[37]

David and Emily, along with David's brother William, opened their first newsagent in Sydney Road, North Brunswick, in 1884 and established Australia's first anarchist bookshop. Here they loaned and sold anarchist publications, and their promotional material noted that 'Socialistic Literature of all kinds (both Communist, Collectivist and Anarchist) are well represented, both in books and pamphlets, and newspapers supplied from all parts of the world'.[38] In 1890 they helped form the first co-operative society in Brunswick. Continuing as a stationer and newsagent, Andrade established Liberty Hall bookshop and free library in July 1892 at the newly constructed Tetis Building at 213 Russell Street, in the centre of what had been boomtown Melbourne.[39] Andrade's ideas of natural justice had extended from people to animals, and the venue incorporated the city's first vegetarian restaurant overseen by Emily, alongside a venue upstairs for lectures devoted to progressive topics. Andrade's vegetarianism was based on his belief in non-violence and equity, an extension of his anarchist principles to the unequal power relations between humankind and other animals. Combining two of Andrade's passions, the bookstore was one of a few that appealed to modern Melburnians wishing to learn more about vegetarianism, anti-vaccination, hydropathy, and other 'advanced subjects of a like nature' (Figure 3).[40]
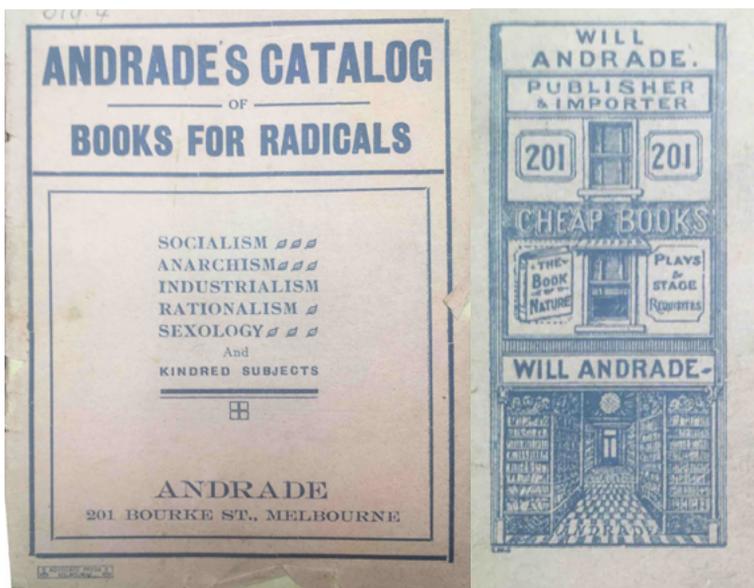
Figure 3: *Andrade's Catalog of Books for Radicals: Socialism, Anarchism, Industrialism, Rationalism, Sexology and Kindred Subjects*, **Melbourne, Andrade, 1898** (Courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW)
William Andrade set up a second bookstore in 1898 after his brother's move to the Dandenongs.

Andrade quickly became one of Melbourne's renowned booksellers and established himself at the epicentre of an expanding network that responded to the emerging economic crisis of a collapsing land boom through meetings and self-education. The subject matter ranged from the philosophy of anarchism and revolutionist thinking to health advice and medical superstition. Another, more cynical, member of the press observed that the opening of Andrade's bookshop was of interest to the 'few people in this benighted city who may be described at thinkers', and, as soon as it boldly displayed 'radical literature in the window', it called for special notice.[41] The continuing downturn in the economy saw a rise in the demand for radical reading, and Andrade's provided some welcome respite as the bookshop increased its holdings and the restaurant advertised meals at 'exceedingly low prices to suit the times.'[42]

At the close of 1892, the bookery boasted several hundred volumes to accommodate 'every conceivable cure to the social problem', including literature on socialism, freethought, spiritualism, theosophy,

mesmerism, chiromancy, phrenology, and anti-vivisection that tapped into the growing mania for health and hygiene.[43] While a certain moral anxiety characteristic of Victorian-era propriety was attached to Andrade's, it nevertheless provided, according to Jeff and Jill Sparrow, a key progressive outlet where one could 'read Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman,* purchase a sex education title [such as] *Our Sexual Relations and Social Natures*, refresh yourself with a bowl of beans and then wander up to Liberty Hall for a lecture series on free love'.[44]

Speaking out on another intimate concern, David and Emily Andrade also helped establish the first anti-vaccination society. Between 1891 and 1893 David faced court in three Melbourne municipalities. According to a much-beleaguered local policeman, his persecution was not 'for a candid expression of opinion, but for his refusal to comply with the law'.[45] The Andrades became notorious anti-vaccinators and agitators across Melbourne and used their own venue on numerous occasions to pronounce upon their grievances and ideas. In 1891, Emily was arrested for wilfully making a false statement about the birth of their child, Hypathia, to avoid vaccination.[46] She pleaded guilty and was released, but a sympathetic editorial appeared in the *Coburg Leader* to defend both Andrades, as they had demonstrated, in the editor's view, the difference between the 'judicious control of individual liberty and legalised tyranny and coercion' and:

> Whether vaccination is, or is not a preventive or mitigative of small pox, is subsidiary to the question of continuing by legal enactment, a medical monopoly … The monopoly of practice and profit which has been granted to the legalised superstition is now, however, one of the "vested interests" which our mania for legislation has created …[47]

Continuing to resist this perceived growing mania for legislation, Andrade also found cause to agitate against the Victorian government's tariff policy and its role in education, temperance, health and the postal service. He continued to canvass his land settlement scheme through regular meetings at Liberty Hall, and significantly boosted his profile with the publication of his first full utopian novel, *The Melbourne Riots and How Harry Holdfast and His Friends Emancipated the Workers.* It was released in late 1892 to mixed reviews and acclaim.[48] One reviewer lambasted the visionary novel for its fantastical and whimsical vision of the potential for escape to a veritable 'Eden'. Clearly, the author

chided, 'close intimacy' with such a 'myriad-minded' man would leave a sane citizen no alternative but to choose 'either Pentridge or the Kew Asylum as our permanent residence, for the term of our natural life'.[49] *The Melbourne Riots* was released soon after William Lane published his widely noted polemical novel *A Workingman's Paradise*, and both expressions of revolutionary socialism found resonance as practical solutions to the vague aspirations for change that were now so widespread in the community.

In step with the wider literary tradition, Andrade's novel claimed to be allegorical but revealed itself to be both utopian and largely autobiographical, the protagonist, Harry Holdfast, being wrongly convicted and imprisoned. Upon his release, Harry enacts a scheme of 'social salvation' by establishing a co-operative settlement named 'Freedom' on Lake Boga, 300 kilometres to Melbourne's north west near Swan Hill, where 'fruit and vegetables may be planted' to sustain a small community of dedicated 'social pioneers'.[50] Andrade's novel pointed towards the spectre of authoritarianism represented by the stifling of freedom in the darkening industrialised cities. And he believed he had provided a realistic solution that was 'far from utopian', though not many reviewers agreed.[51] As with William Lane's ill-fated adventures in Paraguay, stories like Andrade's were seen as romantic but unrealistic by the local press, and they warned their readers that the authors should be given a 'very wide berth indeed'.[52]

As part of his vision of social justice, Andrade continued to promulgate the rights of animals, and he also challenged the institution of marriage.[53] In his novel, Andrade's female protagonists held strident views on marital relations, arguing that women should be 'relieved' from the 'sexual slavery' to which they were destined by the institution of marriage.[54] *The Melbourne Riots* may have contributed to the growing slew of utopian treatises, but it did also depict a society in which co-operation could replace competition, and the evils of class and restrictions of marriage could be eradicated in the idyllic and life-giving landscape of rural Victoria. Andrade saw himself as the hero of this story, and, much like the protagonist spotlighted on the cover, he felt betrayed and persecuted by the society he hoped to liberate (Figure 4).
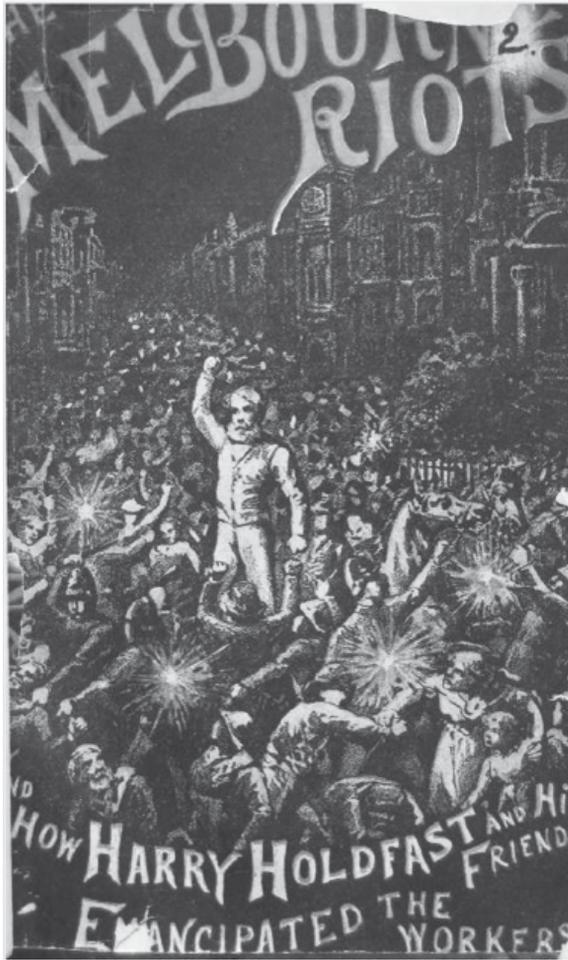
Figure 4: The dramatic cover of David A. Andrade, *The Melbourne Riots and How Harry Holdfast and His Friends Emancipated the Workers: A Realistic Novel*, Melbourne, Andrade & Company, 1892 (Courtesy State Library Victoria)

In his enthusiasm, Andrade had forwarded a copy of his novel/manifesto to the governor, John Hope, Earl of Hopetoun, whose response was restrained but still syndicated across the newspapers. Far from dismissing the work outright, the governor took his mandate seriously: 'His Excellency has read the work with much interest', came the reply, 'and though he fails to agree with you in your remark that

"he is the head representative of the oppressive ruling classes in these colonies," he is quite in accord with you as to the utility of getting people into the country districts'.[55]

Having received moderate, but unsatisfying, responses to his novel, and reportedly going into debt to self-publish, Andrade scaled up his agitations. In early 1893, he attended a packed public meeting at the Melbourne Town Hall attended by Solicitor-General Isaac Isaacs as well as a number of senior ministers, legislators and political dignitaries. As the long-time secretary of the Unemployed Workers Association, Andrade was there to represent the interests of the unemployed and was regarded by the press as one of the three 'prominent agitators' in the 'movement' towards establishing labour colonies.[56] While accounts of the meeting acknowledged that not all urban unemployed wished to move onto the land, the report hailed the fact that the attending ministers were finally heeding the urgent calls for relief. The archbishop of Melbourne was present and lent his support to the initiative, appealing to the 'good Samaritans of Victoria' to give the labour colony initiative fair attention since it allowed men unaccustomed to agricultural work to 'exchange the smoke and dust of poverty of the city as they knew it for the sunshine and freedom and comfort of the country'.[57] Coming after a year of parliamentary discussions that had seen the Village Settlements Bill vigorously debated, the meeting highlighted the widespread desperation and a growing impatience with the failing economy and labour system.[58]

A Move to the Village

The Victorian *Settlement on Lands Act* finally passed in July 1893, and the amendments outlined provisions for the creation of between 2- and 20-acre allotments, mirroring legislation already in place across South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales that established similar small-lands schemes, with allotments ranging up to 160 acres.[59] Ahead of the rush towards co-operative settlement in Victoria, David Andrade decided on the leafy hills of the Dandenong State Forest 50 kilometres out of Melbourne.

Caught up in the continuing downturn in the economy, Andrade filed for bankruptcy early in 1893, one of 509 scheduled bankruptcies filed that year, up from 420 the year before.[60] In February creditors began selling off his printing hardware and stock, and a notice to creditors was soon advertised.[61] Just prior to the banks suspending trading in

April 1893, Andrade visited the new settlement in Victoria of South Sassafras, choosing a more proximate location than Lake Boga on the Murray River as envisioned in *The Melbourne Riots*. Writing to the *Argus* on the same fateful weekend that saw a slump in shares and a run on the banks, he claimed the new settlement could provide for a hundred families divided into groups of ten, over a thousand acres. All he asked on behalf of the Unemployed Workers Association was a 'chance to work and prosper and to make a home for its members and their families and every risk will be cheerfully faced'. [62]

Andrade left Melbourne during winter, and, like others who joined the land settlement programs being enacted across the country, he possessed little experience in practical building or farming. He moved a pregnant Emily and their three children onto the block; their youngest, Proudhon, was born in their newly constructed slab hut. Since the Andrades moved before the *Settlement on Lands Act* was passed, they were advised to build first and ask later for remuneration to clear, fence and buy basic materials for their allotment. To support their venture, Andrade was forced to look for other work, which he found as a local journalist, mailman and delivery agent carrying letters, papers, bread and meat by packhorse. Leaving much of the farming duties to his wife, Andrade established the first shop in the settlement as part of their original dwelling. [63]

Soon after their move to the Dandenongs, the Andrades became active in a range of local social and political causes and organisations. Both David and Emily joined in discussions for the railway extension, for a local newspaper to be established, and for the creation of municipal organisation. In January 1894, the Andrades hosted a meeting of settlers on their block, as residents gathered to consider the construction of roads, trams or railways and to petition the minister for lands. [64] Agitating on behalf of the settlers, Andrade became the secretary for the group in petitioning the government and composing the necessary communications with the authorities. In his move to the country, David Andrade had not lost his spirit for community and political agitation and continued to advocate on behalf of those who might not have had a voice or the means to write letters to the authorities themselves.

In 1897, after years of correspondence, Andrade wrote a long heartfelt letter to the minister for lands reflecting on the difficulties his family had faced without capital, claiming they had been 'penniless and

destitute' when they arrived four years earlier. He continued to bemoan arbitrary decision-making with regard to granting access to the benefits of the settlement scheme, claiming his commitment to establishing a permanent home was never in doubt. In one of the few documents that gives some detail about the family's day-to-day life, Andrade describes how he had cleared and fenced much of the ten acres with financial support from his sister, built a 'decent three room paling cottage and outhouse, [and] a strong comfortable stable', and planted '100 fruit and nut trees, 200 young stocks, a number of smaller fruit and vegetables, and 3 acres of grass'.[65]

As was the case for much of the scheme, the allotted land proved marginal and challenging with long-term viability heavily reliant on capital and government support. Andrade had predicted this over ten years earlier in his tirade against the 'Social System' and the problematic dynamic with regard to 'free trade':

> how do you expect to trade freely, when you own nothing to trade with, when the land on which you work belongs to others, when the tools and machinery you employ are theirs, your exchanges are hampered by a monopolized money system, you are bled by interest, and capitalistic monopolists form rings to defeat and rob you and eternally extort profit out of your labors? Free trade, indeed?[66]

In the process of his transformation from rebellious Jewish youth, anarchist bookseller, political agitator and inner-city publisher to self-sufficient farmer, Andrade had finally stumbled on the issue of capital and labour. Establishing systems of co-operative economies required either complete co-operative investment or government support for survival.[67] Andrade faced the reality of working and living from the land, and much of his political rhetoric and vitriol against structures of governance, control and power—the radical ideological positioning he had become renowned for in the city—is notably absent from the limited material left from his time in Sassafras. Andrade had quietly acquiesced to the system, which, with the stroke of a pen, could provide the necessary assistance to ensure settlers could remain on the land for a minimum of four years, after which they could apply to own and fully occupy their blocks.[68]

While Andrade managed in this way to enact a version of radical idealism, none of his anarchist comrades joined him in the venture.

Following the move to Sassafras in 1893, his political writing ceased, and he no longer published widely on the benefits of small farming settlement, no doubt because his time was occupied with providing for his family. There are few records or diaries giving detail of their experiences, owing to the tragedy that soon befell them, but it is clear that their attempt to achieve social salvation remained as elusive as the dreams of basic survival amongst many other participants in village and closer settlement schemes of the period.

The final unravelling of the Andrades' dreams came in December 1897 as devastating bushfires swept the area, preceding the famous Red Tuesday fires that saw over 260,000 hectares burn from the Dandenong ranges into adjoining forests. During that hot January, much of the community, including the Andrades, was burnt out, and it was the Andrades' tragedy that featured prominently in the daily press. 'They escap[ed] only with their lives', said one report, while their 'food, clothing, groceries, medicines and haberdasheries' were destroyed.[69] Another report recorded, 'at 5:30 am, by hearing one of the children crying … the family were awakened … for had not the youngest girl been awakened by the fire in time there is no doubt but that they would all have been burned in their beds'.[70]

Within the week, the mayor of Melbourne had called a public meeting about the unfortunate circumstances that had befallen the family. Andrade's attorney and long-time friend John Sincock quickly lobbied the *Tocsin,* a prominent socialist newspaper, for support. Calling out to their community, many of whom had progressed through the Anarchist Club and become prominent figures in radical politics, the journal petitioned for funds to help the Andrades. The broader socialist community mobilised around the family's tragedy and claimed:

> few Victorians have lost more, or suffered more for their consistency to high principle and devotion to liberty, than David Andrade, and it is very hard that just as he was seeing his way clear through the difficulties that a village settler's life in the Dandenongs implies, the bush fires should have come and robbed his family and him of all but the clothes on their backs.[71]

Following their dramatic escape, David Andrade continued to plead with the minister to be incorporated into the settlement scheme by referring to the devastating situation in which his family and the

wider community now found themselves. Soon after, however, on 7 April 1898, at the age of 39, Andrade was committed to Yarra Bend Lunatic Asylum.[72] His decline was attributed to the conditions facing him after the fires destroyed his home and livelihood, his 'reason having been broken down' as one supporter claimed.[73] The precise nature of his collapse is not disclosed, but historian Mark Finnane points out that nineteenth-century asylums were regularly used to offer sanctuary for those who had given up 'the struggle for existence', and that they thereby provided a convenient 'dumping ground for a heterogeneous mass of physical and mental wrecks'.[74] Coming to terms with the demise of his business and the loss of all he had built following years of hard-earned toil in the mountains had taken a toll on Andrade's mental health, no doubt compounded by years of frenetic activism and political agitation in the city. From an examination of Andrade's collected writings and communiqués with the minster, it is evident that the move to Sassafras formed the apex of a personal process of self-discovery, providing salvation and a pro-active response to 'dispelling the darkness which overhangs and threatens to engulf us', as he revealingly wrote in his first manifesto ten years earlier in 1887.[75]

Historian Bruce Scates has claimed that to be a socialist in nineteenth-century Australia was a matter of personal as well as political allegiance.[76] For a man who lived and breathed politics and sought to redress the failings of industrial capitalism through collective empowerment, the demise of his personal dream left irreparable scars. David Andrade spent the next 30 years in mental asylums where little detail of his experiences remains, aside from the recollections of a nurse that he was 'very amusing, eccentric—he probably suffered from paranoid schizophrenia … given to writing humorous poetry'.[77]

The term 'utopian' describes an ideal state or system that is both unattainable and impractical; although the label persisted, Andrade rejected this characterisation of his schemes, believing on the contrary that they were eminently practical, and a completely rational response to the deteriorating economic system and lack of opportunities provided in the city. As Guy Featherstone has pointed out in his article in the *Victorian Historical Journal*, there is more work to be done to ascertain whether village settlement communities did indeed 'collapse', as is often thought, and to assess whether the official records can illustrate the extent to which settlers did find a certain 'stability' and 'belonging' by

returning to the land.[78] For Andrade, the move to Sassafras epitomised a very personal political commitment that also sought to protect his family from the worst of the Depression of the 1890s but in fact exposed them to a new set of problems and circumstances that undoubtedly contributed to his mental and physical collapse.

Following her husband's admission to the asylum, Emily briefly considered using funds raised by the community to start a small poultry or dairy business, but her situation continued to deteriorate. In the coming months Emily applied to have two of her children committed to the state under the control of the Department for Neglected Children.[79] In 1909, their son Alfred, then 24, was admitted to the Melbourne Hospital suffering from 'hysteria'. During his stay he managed to slip his straps and jumped from a bathroom window to a grass plot 24 feet below and died a few days later.[80] Some years afterwards, in 1913, their youngest child Proudhon also died, at the age of twenty. Emily continued to live in suburban Melbourne, while David was moved at some point to an institution in Wendouree, near Ballarat. Emily passed away six years after her husband in 1934, with a single devoted child, Gertrude, present at her death.

A Radical Periphery

The story of David and Emily Andrade is indeed tragic, but their writings and personal politics delineate them from most of the village settlers of the period. Their motivation—to encourage the workers and unemployed to experience a form of liberty through self-provision— illustrates a radical component of the earliest back-to-the-land impulse that envisioned a total transformation of society through a process of individual reform connecting the self and the soil. With the cities increasingly viewed as sites of human degradation and a symbol of corruption and exploitation, the 'bush' had become a key source of revitalisation and fulfilment. In describing part of the broad movement towards small acreage and agriculture, this article shows how a certain nostalgia for the rural idyll became a critical component of the modern condition, since it provided a space for new relationships to the land to emerge and a means by which individuals could advance the progress of civil society. Contributing towards what Verity Burgmann has called the 'heroic age' of utopian socialism, David Andrade's 'social pioneering' was one of the first examples of the move towards the 'simple life' that became popular in subsequent generations as a reprieve from urban

living, and as an equitable, harmonious and prosperous alternative to city life based upon rural self-sufficiency.[81]

Through each of their ventures, the Andrades promoted a form of resistance to the status quo that maintained classically Thoreauvian ideas of 'thrift, temperance and industry'.[82] David Andrade believed in a thoroughly secular vision of the 'common good' as a natural form of justice for average working people. Leaning less to anarchism and more towards socialism, he resisted ideas of 'capitalist individualism' to promote instead a model that would 'exalt the individuality of the labourer' across the classes and within supportive structures of co-operation and mutual interest to assist the poor as necessary. Although the Andrades' vision for the 'wilderness to be transformed into paradise' and Lake Boga to become a sanctuary for those weary of 'a dingy and crowded metropolis' was short lived and largely utopian, their move indicates that, as part of the broader land settlement program, the goal of self-sufficiency also included an overarching commitment to individual emancipation in response to the failings of modern capitalism.[83]

Much of the discourse surrounding early land settlement has downplayed the essential radicalism of settlers' desire to form co-operatives as an answer to industrial capitalism. Instead it has been overshadowed by the very short-lived and limited success of the settlement scheme project as a vehicle of public policy. Across economic, labour and environmental histories, small acreage settlement has been assessed as a function of land development and agricultural progress, or as 'important innovative legislation' that 'frequently succeeded in changing the political, economic and social life of the colonists'.[84] Notwithstanding the fact that the various programs and schemes resulted in few net benefits for the land, or positive economic outcomes for those who lived on or from it, the longing for a 'New Arcadia' provided a new sphere of action for agitators at the radical periphery to challenge a 'collective faith in capitalism' through social experimentation and community empowerment.[85]

In his appraisal of communal settlements, Bill Metcalf asks whether they should be viewed as a social laboratory or simply as a place of exile. He argues that government-supported small acreage settlements were conceived as a way to move radicals out of the cities to where they could make revolution, 'albeit as communards … safely out of the way'.[86] While this assessment could conceivably be applied

to Andrade since the radical edge to his demands was notably blunted during his time in the hills, there is also a case to be made for this venture to be considered an early experiment with smaller and more accountable economies. Although it was by no means a complete social and economic transformation, Andrade's move away from the hustle of city life towards a slower and more localised country life looked to challenge the central premise of industrialisation and modernisation—a challenge that vaulted the rise and progress of the individual as well as promoting co-operation to overcome the dreaded 'demon of Want'.[87]

Beyond simply escaping or defying the politics of his time, Andrade's return to the land engaged with questions of morality, social responsibility and the modern condition as part of the individual and collective response to economic hardship and political unrest.[88] In their efforts to re-focus the yeoman ideal as a co-operative exercise for the twentieth century, the Andrades were part of the first wave of ex-urban migrants in Australia to realise the value of practical self-sufficiency within a broad vision of collective empowerment. Andrade saw that growing, doing and making for oneself could not only provide a more secure means of livelihood but could also lead to a 'more just, more merciful, more equitable, [and] more harmonious' society.[89]

Conclusion

Beyond its contribution to the state and developing ideas about nationhood, the 1890s campaign for land settlement also provided a critical platform for a range of political and personal discourses. Contributing towards the development of labourist ideals of economy and political identity, the socialists' desire to secure a living wage and call no man master points to an emergent battle between capitalistic monopolies, socialism and co-operation as Australia debated the values relevant to the future society.[90]

Andrade's calls for 'thrift, temperance, and industry' have since become hallmarks of the simple life movement, echoed recently in 2008 by farmer and poet Wendell Berry, who used the same terminology in response to 'prodigal extravagance [and] an assumed limitlessness'. In a recent collection of essays, Berry rebukes supporters of the modern economy for having no sense of 'temperance or thrift or the ecological law of return', which he argues has led society to believe in the possibility of 'limitless growth, limitless wants, limitless wealth, and limitless debt'.[91]

Given this article is being written during a similar moment of social, political and economic uncertainty as the COVID–19 pandemic bites, Andrade's writings and visions are particularly apt. Like many socialists he pointed to the limitations of centralised government systems, particularly during periods of instability, and explored the problematic relationship between labour and personal and collective empowerment. In re-visiting the words of David Andrade, we can look beyond his problematic negotiation with capitalism and failure to establish a working socialist or co-operative agricultural system. His writings pre-empted the goals of generations that followed in looking towards a closer living relationship with the natural world, and realising the sense of security that comes from practical self-sufficiency in whatever form it might take during periods of crisis and turmoil. Both of these ideas still resonate powerfully today.

Notes

1   'Advertising', *Standard* (Port Melbourne), 24 December 1887, p. 3.

2   David A. Andrade, *Our Social System and How It Affects Those Who Work for Their Living*, Popular ed., Melbourne, David A. Andrade, 1887, pp. 11–12.

3   David A. Andrade, 'Prospectus of the Social Pioneering Company Ltd', 1890, p. 2, Merrifield Collection, MS13045, State Library Victoria (SLV).

4   Bruce Scates, *A New Australia: Citizenship, Radicalism and the First Republic*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 111–18; Jeff Sparrow and Jill Sparrow, *Radical Melbourne*, Melbourne, Vulgar Press, 2005.

5   Andrew Reeves, 'Andrade, David Alfred (1859–1928)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (*ADB*), http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/andrade-david-alfred-5024; P.D. Gardner, 'David Andrade 1859–1928', and John Sendy 'David Andrade—Melbourne's First Anarchist Bookseller', both at http://www.takver.com/history/andrade.htm, accessed 11 July 2016.

6   Guy Featherstone, 'Village Communities in Victoria: A Re-Assessment of the 1893 Response to Depression', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 83, no. 2, 2012, pp. 215–34; Jennifer A. McLennan, 'The Village Settlement Scheme in Victoria, 1893–1915', PhD thesis, Monash University, 1996; Monica Keneley, 'Closer Settlement in the Western District of Victoria: A Case Study in Australian Land Use Policy, 1898–1914', *Journal of Historical Geography*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2002, pp. 363–79.

7   L.K. Kerr, 'Communal Settlements in South Australia in the 1890s', MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1951; R.B. Walker, 'The Ambiguous Experiment: Agricultural Co-Operatives in New South Wales, 1893–1896', *Labour History*, no. 18, 1970, pp. 19–31.

8   Scates, *A New Australia*, p. 206.

9   Bruce Scates, 'The Utopians—And Early Socialists Who Lost Their Way', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 54, no. 4, 1983, pp. 19–26; Verity Burgmann, '*In Our Time': Socialism and the Rise of Labor, 1885–1905*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1985; Verity Burgmann, 'Refuting Marx and Engels: Australian Utopianism in the 1890s', *Arena Journal*, no. 31, 2008, pp. 21–45.

10 Joseph M. Powell, 'Patrimony of the People: The Role of Government in Land Settlement', in R. Leslie Heathcote (ed.), *The Australian Experience: Essays in Australian Land Settlement and Resource Management*, Melbourne, Longman Cheshire, 1988, pp. 15–17.

11   A.E. Dingle, *Settling*, Sydney, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon, 1984, pp. 58–60; Marilyn Lake, *The Limits of Hope: Soldier Settlement in Victoria, 1915–38*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1987, pp. 12–16.

12   David Goodman, 'Gold Fields/Golden Fields: The Language of Agrarianism and the Victorian Gold Rush', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 23, no. 90, 1988, pp. 19–41; Richard Waterhouse, 'The Yeoman Ideal and Australian Experience, 1860–1960', in Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw, Kiera Lindsey, and Stuart Mcintyre (eds), *Exploring the British World: Identity, Cultural Production, Institutions*, Melbourne, RMIT Publishing, 2004, p. 447.

13   'The New Arcadia', *Melbourne Punch*, 17 May 1894, p. 4. The term 'Arcadia' was popularised in the late 1880s in reference to a vision of pastoralism and harmony with nature that became a poetic byword for an idyllic vision of unspoiled wilderness. It was used to represent a lost, Edenic form of life that sat in contrast to the progressive nature of utopian desires.

14   Andrade, *Our Social System*, p. 12.

15   Andrade, *Our Social System*, p. 12.

16   Graeme Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1978, pp. 321–2.

17   Davison, p. 321.

18   George Lacy, *Co-Operation: The Social Equalizer, the Pacificator of All Antagonism between Capital and Labour, the Goal of All Industrial Enterprise: An Essay Addressed to the Working Men and Women of New South Wales*, Sydney, Turner and Henderson, 1880; Thomas Richard Roydhouse (Rata), *The Land and The People—A Scheme of Settlement*, Sydney, Edwards, Dunlop & Co., 1890.

19   John D. Adams, 'Village Settlements in Victoria in the 1890s with Particular Reference to Gippsland', MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1971, p. 67.

20   Expanding homestead and settlement leagues pressed for the first piece of legislation to address the problem of 'idle hands' and 'idle lands', the South Australian Land Act of 1885, with clauses for plots between two and twenty acres. See 'Idle Lands, Idle Hands', *Evening News* (Sydney), 12 February 1890, p. 5; G.L. Buxton, 'South Australian Land Acts 1869–1885', BA Hons thesis, Adelaide University, 1966; Michael Cannon, *The Land Boomers*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1966, pp. 13–18.

21   'News of the Day', *Age*, 5 April 1890, p. 8.

22   'News of the Day', *Age*, 5 April 1890, p. 8. Henry George believed poverty sprang from the unequal distribution of wealth but rejected any sort of socialism. See Henry George, *Progress and Poverty : An Inquiry into the Cause of Industrial Depressions, and of Increase of Want with Increase of Wealth : The Remedy*, Garden City, NY, Doubleday, Page and Company, 1879; Henry George, 'The Origins of Wealth', 1892, in Kenneth C. Wenzer (ed.), *The Works of Henry George*, Madison, NJ, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2015.

23   David A. Andrade, 'Prospectus of the Social Pioneering Company Ltd', 1890, Merrifield Collection, MS13045, Box 139, SLV.

24   'Meetings/Lectures', *Age*, 24 February 1892, p. 1.

25   Andrade, 'Prospectus of the Social Pioneering Company Ltd', p. 1.

26   Andrade, 'Prospectus of the Social Pioneering Company Ltd', p. 1.

27   Andrade, 'Prospectus of the Social Pioneering Company Ltd', p. 2.

28   'Social Pioneers Land Settlement Scheme—Lecture', *Age*, 2 September 1892, p. 1; Horace F. Tucker, *Back to the Land: The Story of an Australian Enterprise in Closer Settlement*, Melbourne, Alma Mater, 1900; Guy Featherstone, 'Co-Workers with Christ: George A. Brown and Christian Socialism in Victoria 1885–1894', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 77, no. 1, 2006, pp. 16–33; Melissa Bellanta, 'An Ideal Synthesis: Agrarianism & the Utopian Imagination in Australia, 1884–1900', PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2005.

29   David A. Andrade, *Essay on Truth*, Melbourne, E.W. Cole, 1880, p. 9.

30 'Co-operative Home', Andrews Papers, Box 5, in Merrifield Collection, MS13045, SLV.

31 Sam Merrifield, 'The Melbourne Anarchist Club 1886–1891', *Bulletin of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History*, no. 3, 1962, pp. 32–43.

32 'The Prospectus of the Melbourne Anarchist Club' is reproduced in Merrifield, p. 53.

33 The *Australian Radical* emerged in response to land nationalisation debates in March 1887.

34 David A. Andrade, 'What Is Anarchy?', *Liberty* (Boston), May 1887, p. 6. Originally a lecture given in Melbourne in May 1886.

35 David A. Andrade, *An Anarchist Plan of Campaign*, Melbourne, Co-operative Publishing Co., 1888, p. 11.

36 Pierre-Joseph Proudhon was a French politician (1809–1865) who was the first to declare himself an anarchist as the founder of mutualist philosophy. Andrade's fourth child Proudhon was named in his honour.

37 Tom Goyens, 'Anarchy at the Antipodes: Australian Anarchists and their American Connections, 1885–1914', in Greg Patmore and Shelton Stromquist (eds), *Frontiers of Labor: Comparative Histories of the United States and Australia*, Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2018, pp. 4–5.

38 Gardner.

39 Graeme Butler, *Little Bourke Precinct Conservation Study 1989*, Vol. 3, Melbourne, G. Butler, 1989, pp. 46–7.

40 Edgar Crook, *Vegetarianism in Australia—1788 to 1948: A Cultural and Social History*, Huntingdon, Pa, Huntingdon Press, 2006, p. 47.

41 'Advertising', *Age*, 2 August 1892, p. 8.

42 'Advertising', *Age*, 2 August 1892, p. 8.

43 Scates, *A New Australia*, p. 53.

44 Sparrow and Sparrow, p. 141.

45 'Anti-Vaccination. The Andrade Case', *Coburg Leader*, 7 December 1892, p. 2. Vaccination of children against diseases such as cholera and smallpox had been mandated under the *Compulsory Vaccination Act 1875* and a 'hearty enforcement of the act' was encouraged at municipal and state levels for those who actively disagreed. See 'Regulations under the "Compulsory Vaccination Act", no 501', *Victorian Government Gazette*, No. 51, 23 July 1875, p. 1395.

46 'An Alleged False Declaration of Birth', *Argus*, 3 December 1891, p. 7.

47 'Plain Talk', *Coburg Leader*, 16 December 1891, p. 4.

48 David A. Andrade, *The Melbourne Riots and How Harry Holdfast and His Friends Emancipated the Workers: A Realistic Novel*, Melbourne, Andrade & Company, 1892; 'Literary Notes', *Australasian*, 24 December 1892, p. 41; 'Recent Publications', *Age*, 3 December 1892, p. 9.

49 'Lunatic Literature', *Table Talk*, 2 December 1892, p. 6. Pentridge refers to the main state prison, and the Kew Asylum was a notorious mental asylum in Melbourne in the late nineteenth century.

50 Andrade, *The Melbourne Riots*, pp. 39, 44.

51 'Literary Notes'; 'Recent Publications', *Age,* 3 December 1892, p. 9.

52 'Lunatic Literature', p. 6.

53 Andrade, *The Melbourne Riots*, p. 49.

54 Andrade, *The Melbourne Riots*, p. 39.

55 'Melbourne Gossip', *Hay Standard and Advertiser for Balranald, Wentworth, Maude*, 10 December 1892, p. 2.

56 'The Distress in Melbourne. Meeting In the Town Hall. Labour Colonies to Be Started', *Argus*, 28 April 1893, p. 6.

57 'The Distress in Melbourne', p. 6.

58 'Village Settlements Bill', *Victorian Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 69, 20 July 1892, pp. 567–8.

59 'Settlement on Lands Act 1893', *Victoria Government Gazette*, 5 September 1893, p. 3757; *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 25 July 1893, p. 5854; 'The Land Laws of Queensland', *Argus*, 14 September 1893, p. 9.

60 Cannon, p. 19.

61 'Advertising', *Argus*, 2 March 1893, p. 3.

62 'Correspondence', *Argus*, 29 April 1893, p. 14.

63 Helen Coulson, *Story of the Dandenongs, 1838–1958*, Melbourne, Cheshire, 1969, pp. 279, 332.

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Woman's Sphere Remodelled: A Spatial History of the Victorian Woman's Christian Temperance Union 1887–1914

Ruby Ekkel

Abstract

The Victorian Woman's Christian Temperance Union at the turn of the twentieth century was an organisation deeply concerned with ideas of public and private space. However, no spatial analysis of the organisation yet exists. In this article I aim to redress this omission by examining the ways the organisation negotiated the idea and reality of separate spheres for women and men between 1887 and 1914. I argue that the VWCTU worked within the ideological framework of 'separate spheres' to expand the definition of the 'private sphere' women were allowed to occupy. Second, I demonstrate how the VWCTU's sphere-expanding rhetoric was physically manifested in public spaces throughout Victoria.

In 1891, a thirsty male visitor to the Cumberland and Durham Hotel on Bridge Street, Ballarat East, would have entered a male-dominated space where alcohol flowed freely and the only women present were those pouring it. By 1892, the same visitor would have been struck by the building's transformation; not only would he have been surrounded by women, he would also have failed to procure a beer from any one of them, because the building had become the headquarters of the Ballarat Woman's Christian Temperance Union. This dramatic conversion of a deeply gendered public space is one example of the Victorian Woman's Christian Temperance Union's attempts to expand the sphere of physical space available to women in Victoria at the turn of the twentieth century.

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was born out of the evangelical women's 'Crusade' against alcohol, which overtook the northern states of the United States in 1874. When temperance missionaries for the World's WCTU came to Victoria in the late 1880s to spread the gospel of temperance and social purification and to establish new WCTUs, they met with both a strong drinking culture—allegedly the worst in the continent—and a strong temperance movement to combat it.[1]

The scattered local unions formed as a result of missionary visits were joined together officially as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Victoria (VWCTU) in 1887, with a mission to accomplish 'all that women can do, when inspired by the love of Christ, to rescue those who are enslaved by strong drink, and in every way consistent with women's sphere to help the suffering and lead the sinful to a better life'.[2] Both this mandate and the 'women's sphere' to which it referred were open to broad interpretation. The VWCTU's major concerns were temperance and women's suffrage, but their departments encompassed health matters like nutrition and dress reform, and 'social purity' issues such as prostitution and the age of consent, as well as matters of more general welfare like the eight-hour day and world peace.[3] Most VWCTU members were white, middle class or lower middle class, between the ages of 25 and 50, and Protestant.[4] Unlike their counterparts in the United States, VWCTU women were typically married, lacked high levels of education and mostly ran households without the aid of paid help.[5] Ian Tyrrell has estimated national membership of the WCTU in 1894 at 7,400, before a slump to 5,500 in the 1910s.[6] The Victorian branch was the largest in numbers and the most active of all the Australian WCTUs.[7]

As a deeply Christian organisation striving for alcohol prohibition and the upholding of 'traditional' family values, the VWCTU has often been cast as an inherently conservative institution more concerned with controlling men's drinking than with seriously challenging sexist societal structures and norms.[8] Feminist historian Marilyn Lake identifies a tendency, a mistaken one in her view, to characterise nineteenth-century Australian feminists like the WCTU as 'repressive moralists acting out their assigned role as God's Police'.[9] Partly, this reputation can be attributed to a distaste amongst historians, including some earlier feminist ones, for the so-called 'wowserism' of the temperance movement—the slogans 'total abstinence' and 'social purity' lack contemporary appeal.[10]

A more significant factor in the portrayal of the WCTU as conservative or limited in outlook is the idea that it only sought women's suffrage as a means towards temperance. This is especially the case in the Australian context, where the emergence of the WCTU coincided almost exactly with the growth and early success of the women's suffrage movement. Histories of Australian women's suffrage, such as

Audrey Oldfield's *Woman Suffrage in Australia*, have incorporated a study of the WCTU into a wider narrative of women's suffrage, thereby focusing attention on one particular aspect of the organisation's goals: votes for women.[11] Where Australian and Victorian unions are referred to in international or American-focused histories of the WCTU, they are depicted as almost exclusively interested in procuring the vote in the pursuit of moral reform and therefore as less relevant to the broader history of feminist progressivism.[12] British historian Richard J. Evans described the Australian WCTU as 'a peculiarly narrow movement with limited objectives'. More detailed Australian studies, such as Anthea Hyslop's close analysis of the VWCTU and Patricia Grimshaw's work on early feminist activism, have expanded this view without downplaying the organisation's primary concerns for temperance and suffrage before 1908.[13] In particular Grimshaw has complicated traditional understandings of the WCTU in Australia by highlighting the organisation's early silence on Indigenous issues, including the exclusion of Aboriginal people in the 1902 *Commonwealth Franchise Act*, which gave white women the national vote.[14] Although written from a markedly different perspective, the Australian WCTU's internally produced history has also contributed to a more nuanced picture by portraying a multifaceted and evolving organisation that could not be solely defined by its relationship to suffrage or any other singular issue.[15]

More recently, Australian historians including Ellen Warne, Clare Wright, Marian Quartly and Judith Smart, as well as Grimshaw, have reassessed the role of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women's organisations, including the WCTU, emphasising their significant contribution not only towards the achievement of white women's suffrage but also towards broader feminist goals.[16] Warne's book, *Agitate, Educate, Organise, Legislate*, published in 2017, is an important example of the trend towards rethinking the role of 'prominent but historically neglected' activist women in Australia and New Zealand, including those who may have been uncomfortable with the label of 'feminist'.[17] Such publications have brought well-deserved attention to women's organisations in this period, and encouraged a reinterpretation of the diverse beliefs, methods and goals they encompassed.

The WCTU has generally eluded a spatial analysis by historians, even as the widely acknowledged 'spatial turn' has encouraged scholars across disciplines to reimagine space as a subjective and elastic

phenomenon, both culturally produced and culturally reproductive. Instead of viewing space as an inert backdrop for human interaction over time, many historians have repositioned space at the centre, rather than at the margins, of their analyses, recognising that: 'Geography matters, not for the simplistic and overly used reason that everything happens in space, but because where things happen is critical to *how* and *why* they happen'.[18]

Historian Prudence Flowers has written about the American WCTU's interaction with the ideology of separate spheres, arguing that the so-called 'White Ribboners' were willing to transgress the boundaries of the masculine sphere in a more radical way than has been typically recognised.[19] While she provides valuable insight into the 'separate spheres' as a spatial metaphor, her analysis does not interrogate that metaphor's geographical implications at a tangible level. As many scholars of the spatial turn have demonstrated, spatial analogies are not empty metaphors, but 'epistemological statements', which assert a correspondence between our 'real' physical world and social reality.[20] The VWCTU's deep and productive engagement with a concept so explicitly spatial as 'separate spheres' offers rich opportunities for spatial analysis.

In this article I seek to undertake such an analysis by examining the ways that the WCTU, in particular its branch in the burgeoning colony of Victoria, negotiated the idea and reality of separate spaces for women and men between 1887 and 1914. First, I will argue that, while the VWCTU ostensibly accepted the premise of separate spheres for the two sexes, they worked within that ideological framework to expand the definition of the 'private sphere' women were supposed to occupy. Second, I will demonstrate how the VWCTU's sphere-expanding rhetoric was manifested in tangible interventions into public spaces around Victoria. An understanding of the complex and often reciprocal nature of space, articulated in anthropologist Shirley Ardener's assertion that 'people define space' even while 'space defines the people in it', will underpin this article and its exploration of how a largely disempowered societal group succeeded in creating and changing the meaning of space for themselves in the public sphere.[21]

In the nineteenth century, the ideology of 'separate spheres' that emerged in Britain and the United States held that women and men belonged to distinct, although notionally equally valuable, domains. The

domains of government, politics and citizenship were explicitly defined as masculine, while women, especially white middle-class women, were relegated to home and family affairs. In other words, the private sphere was for women and the public sphere for men. In an influential 1966 essay that continues to inform writing about the 'cult of domesticity' and 'domestic feminism', American historian Barbara Welter laid out the cardinal virtues that women were alleged (and expected) to hold: piety, purity, submission and domesticity.[22] Any departure from their designated sphere would lead to the corruption of women's special nature.

Since the publication of Welter's essay, a large body of feminist historiography has focused on the ways that many women in this period actively employed the ideology of the separate spheres to their advantage.[23] Although the confinement of women to this particular role entailed significant societal restrictions on their working opportunities and other freedoms, it also created a basis for later attempts at extending their rights by endowing women with a moral clout that implicitly justified the expansion of their influence outside their immediate domestic surroundings.[24] Rather than being passive victims of a dogma that sidelined them from public life, many women took advantage of the idea of women's and men's separate roles, with all its attendant implications of women's moral and spiritual superiority, in order to advance their situation.

The WCTU was one such women's organisation, which, while avowedly subscribing to the paradigm of the separate spheres, actively worked within that paradigm to expand women's influence and opportunities. As a highly visible, politically active women's organisation, the WCTU was forced since its beginnings in the United States to take a position on the so-called rightful place of women. The WCTU did not dispute the idea that women belonged in the domestic sphere. Instead it employed ideas about women's supposedly maternal, morally superior nature to justify and facilitate their greater participation in public life through application of the values of the domestic sphere to politics, business and citizenship.[25] WCTU founder Frances Willard's famous slogan of 'Home Protection', together with her injunction to 'Do Everything', drew on societal associations between womanhood and the home to mobilise thousands of women across the United States and eventually the world into highly public work.[26] The argument ran

that the United States was experiencing its current problems—mass intemperance, the neglect of children, political corruption—because women had not been allowed to extend their natural nurturing abilities into wider society.[27] Thus the American WCTU gained considerable political influence not by rejecting separate spheres as such but rather by adapting the ideology and extending its application.[28]

In Australia, concerns about the appropriate areas for women to occupy were especially salient in the context of the concurrent debate over women's suffrage, which dragged on in Victoria until 1908. In 1893, six years after the VWCTU's foundation, the editor of the *Australian Christian Standard* wrote in a letter to temperance newspaper the *Alliance Record* that, 'If nature teaches one thing more clearly than any other it is that womans [*sic*] place is in the home where she has the supreme privilege'.[29] In 1913, anxiety about women's changing role was again expressed in spatial terms by Anglican Archbishop Henry Lowther Clarke in a sermon called 'The Problems of Womanhood'. He complained: 'How was man to look forward to marriage and the maintenance of a wife and family when the sphere he regarded as his own was invaded by the other sex?'[30] Such interventions provide insight both into the dominant belief in women's innate domesticity and into the fear in this period that accepted gender norms were under threat.

As early as the 1840s, influential women reformers like Caroline Chisholm aimed to advance disempowered women within male-dominated spaces by reminding others of women's 'special value'.[31] Historian Clare Wright has argued that female publicans in Australia used the 'cult of domesticity' to their advantage, redefining the role in respectable terms as domestic and nurturing.[32] The Victorian WCTU followed in this tradition of asserting women's right to public space within the ideological framework of separate spheres, though with a very different understanding of the value of hotels and women's place in them.

Concerns about defining, defending and transforming woman's sphere were paramount for the VWCTU between the late 1890s and 1910s. Articles in the *White Ribbon Signal*, the union's monthly magazine, reflect a preoccupation with defining the relationship of public space to womanliness, often defending the right of WCTU women to enter public areas without abandoning their womanly essence. The 'Christmas Greeting' of December 1908, which encouraged readers to 'realise that our duty is not confined to the four walls of our own

homes, precious as they are to every true woman', typifies the awkward balance struck by an organisation striving to expand woman's sphere without threatening its existence.[33] A poem entitled 'Mother' highlights the geographical restrictions placed on a sacrificial mother accustomed to 'staying home from prayer meetings or church because somebody else danced herself or played himself into a headache'.[34]

These publications reflect a keen awareness of the vulnerability of the VWCTU to criticism about members' involvement in the public sphere. As an organisation that actively encouraged women to commit themselves to public work, it attracted objections from those who would prefer to see women stay at home. Articles and cartoons in the *Bulletin* routinely mocked the WCTU and other members of the 'shrieking sisterhood' for their unwomanly betrayal of home and family in pursuit of their goal of ruining men's enjoyment.[35] A 1909 *White Ribbon Signal* responded to the tendency to 'represent active membership with the W.C.T.U. as antagonistic to good home keeping' by arguing that the WCTU was, rather, 'amongst those who are striving for the wider and truer maintenance of home happiness and for the application of scientific methods to household management'.[36]

The WCTU did not seek to undermine the idea that there *were* spheres to which men and women could be fairly accurately consigned. At least officially, they complied with the existing ideology of a private sphere suited to women and a public sphere suited to men. In their acceptance of the existence of a delimited woman's sphere, no matter how much they might debate its boundaries, the WCTU differed from other more radical Australian suffragists; Vida Goldstein's suffrage magazine, *Australian Woman's Sphere*, featured on its masthead the quotation 'I am a human being, and I believe nothing human is outside my sphere'.[37]

However, in adopting Frances Willard's injunction to 'Do Everything', the VWCTU did not leave unchallenged the ideological framework that dictated women's and men's space. Both in their writing about space and in their negotiation with it at a tangible level, the union's members expanded the definition of what it meant to exist as a woman in the domestic sphere. Put differently, they expanded and blurred the boundaries of 'woman's sphere' without doing away with the sphere altogether. This reframing was crucial to the success of the VWCTU's activism. Indeed, historian Judith Smart argues that the WCTU's

extension of the idea of what she terms 'mother-heartedness' to a civic mission, and the home from a place of sanctuary and nourishment to a model for the nation and world, was the organisation's most important contribution towards helping define a purpose for women's activism that included but also went beyond achieving white women's suffrage in Australia.[38]

VWCTU writing is replete with examples of this approach, which accepted women's 'natural' place in the home at the same time as radically rethinking what 'home' could encompass. In a September 1893 edition of the *White Ribbon Signal*, editor Marie Kirk begins by asserting 'probably universal agreement' on the fact that: 'No matter how we act, none of us in words would repudiate our obligations to live so as to promote the best interests of our homes'. Having reassured readers of the VWCTU's commitment to maintaining women's natural position as homemaker, she argues that women's success in this role obliged them to extend their motherly care outwards: 'having done all we can for our own homes, it is unquestionably our duty to work for universal well-being'.[39] In a similar way, an edition from the following year calls for an extension of maternal concern, giving a creatively domestic definition of the state of Australia: 'The mother directs and controls her household, and what is the State but a collection of homes?'[40] By defining the state or society as an expanded home, the VWCTU encouraged and justified women's participation in more public roles and spaces.

The idea that women can work within existing gender ideologies to advance their own position is not a new one. The purpose here is to trace how the VWCTU expanded 'woman's sphere' in both a metaphorical *and* a literal sense. The VWCTU's preoccupation with the spaces in which women could exist extended beyond rhetoric to the many and varied spaces where they interacted with others in their public activity.

Ardener writes that 'the fact that women do not control physical or social space directly does not necessarily preclude them from being *determinants* of, or *mediators* in, the allocation of space'.[41] One significant way that VWCTU branches across Victoria became the determinants and mediators of space, thus expanding the idea and reality of woman's sphere, was by organising gatherings named 'Drawing-room Meetings', or 'At Homes'.[42] Sometimes the drawing-room meetings were intimate affairs held in an actual drawing room offered by one of the members.[43] More often, however, they were held in larger, public spaces like

church halls offered by sympathetic clergymen, VWCTU headquarters buildings, or local temperance halls owned by other temperance societies.[44] Drawing-room meetings were 'untrammelled by any rules as to procedure' and so could differ in style and content from branch to branch.[45] Indeed, they were an adaptable constant in every VWCTU context. What the meetings had in common with each other was a nominally informal, home-like setting in which WCTU members and guests gathered to listen to musical performances, enjoy (non-alcoholic) refreshments, socialise with like-minded women and sometimes men, and hear speeches or discussions about political issues.

Where the drawing-room meeting was not actually being held in a home, special effort was devoted to transforming the chosen venue into a domestic-style environment where women could feel 'at home'. A report from the Warrnambool WCTU in June 1908 details the process by which the local Temperance Hall was redecorated for their quarterly drawing-room meeting: 'The hall was decorated very prettily, and was quite transformed by flower stands, curtains, plants and occasional tables into an ideal drawing-room'.[46] The Castlemaine WCTU marked its fourth anniversary with a drawing-room meeting held at the local mechanics' hall. The domestic decorations in this case included 'green and art muslin' as well as delicate card tables holding parlour games for the 200 guests who attended. After a program of singing and recitations, the union members reported feeling 'quite cheered'. Thus, what might otherwise appear to be a large, forbiddingly public–political context to potential female converts to the temperance cause was transformed into a home-like environment: a private rather than public affair.[47]

This domestication of public spaces was no accident. Operating as it did in a period of ideological separation of men and women into public and private spheres, the VWCTU consciously catered to women who might have felt reluctant to challenge their own identities as wives, mothers and housewives by entering the realm of public and political activity. The VWCTU leadership felt that the informal and domestic atmosphere of drawing-room meetings enabled them to 'attract ladies who are not likely to go to the usual public temperance meetings'.[48] Indeed, they were reported in 1906 to be 'the best means of gaining members'.[49]

The VWCTU's carefully decorated drawing-room meetings and At Homes provide part of the explanation as to why the WCTU

was a context many women found more accommodating and safer for their public lives than suffrage societies or other types of reform organisations.[50] They attracted women who saw themselves first and foremost as homemakers, belonging in the private spaces of kitchen or nursery and hesitant to forge a public existence for themselves. The simple act of adding flower stands to a church hall adapted the space into a transitional one between public and private, between social and political, and between 'woman's' and 'man's'. Thus, the VWCTU mediated space for women by adapting public places, usually owned and controlled by men, into spaces in which women could feel comfortable participating actively in civic and political life.

One of the VWCTU's most significant spaces was its headquarters building. As an independent space managed, frequented and eventually owned by WCTU women, the headquarters had both symbolic and practical purpose, changing the imaginary and experienced gendered landscape of Melbourne at the turn of the twentieth century. Rachel Bohlmann's study of a planned headquarters for the Chicago WCTU in the same period conveys the symbolic potency of an inner-city WCTU headquarters, which could empower its members by 'eliminating the separation between household and public spaces'.[51] Just as the proposed Chicago headquarters redefined office space in the business district as a form of 'home' and union work as 'home protection', the VWCTU consciously made its headquarters both a domestic and a public zone.

From the moment of the VWCTU's inauguration, there was a strong sense that the organisation required its own space from which to conduct its activism. Two years after the VWCTU was first convened, a special meeting of the executive committee was called to 'consider the advisability of renting premises for the purpose of headquarters'.[52] Colonial Secretary Marie Kirk, who called the meeting, felt particularly keenly the need for a designated headquarters. She would later reflect that, 'if the organisation was to command the respect due to it, and do the work that was evidently waiting for it, it should have a habitation of its own'.[53] Here we can see an allusion to the double meaning often attached to WCTU spaces; the headquarters were meant not only to advance the union's moral and societal aims but also to serve as a means of achieving recognition and respect in the public sphere. After her plan was initially rebuffed by a financially cautious executive, Kirk raised enough funds and support to facilitate the lease and furnishing of premises on

Russell Street three months later—the VWCTU's first headquarters. Maintaining an independent headquarters was symbolically as well as practically important to a women's organisation working as part of a male-dominated temperance movement. A correction published in the *White Ribbon Signal* reminded the editors of the *Alliance Record* that the WCTU was a separate organisation from the Victorian Alliance, with 'our own officers, *headquarters*, and methods of work'.[54]

It was the acquisition and opening of a new headquarters at 188 Flinders Street in 1894, however, that revealed the most about VWCTU thinking on the importance and purpose of women's space. The third iteration of the VWCTU headquarters, 188 Flinders Street was the largest building the union had yet occupied. The December 1893 edition of the *White Ribbon Signal* informed readers of the planned move, describing the strong need for a new headquarters that would allow the union to better pursue its 'onerous' and 'unlimited' work.[55] An edition published after the headquarters' inauguration elaborated on the point; the new headquarters would both advertise the organisation and strengthen the 'bonds of unity' essential to a successful temperance crusade.[56]

The union's high hopes for its new headquarters found expression on 13 February 1894, when crowds of women and men crammed the building to capacity to witness the official opening. Communal hymn singing and a reading of the 'Crusade Psalm' and a short history of the WCTU began the afternoon's proceedings, after which Mayoress of Melbourne Elizabeth Snowden duly pronounced the building to be 'open'. The *White Ribbon Signal* reported that the solemnity of this declaration was appropriately recognised by the 'subdued clapping of hands and tapping of umbrellas'. A subsequent address by the minister for education, Richard Baker, who suggested that, although WCTU women were ready for the suffrage, Australian women in general were not, was received less magnanimously. Kirk replied that it was the government, not women, who were apparently not ready for female suffrage.[57] Even at this first event, the new headquarters functioned as an unusual space, open to men but operated *for* women, which allowed radical political discussion between women and their male leaders in a home-like setting.

Once the afternoon's formalities were concluded, those present were offered tours of the premises. Their tour would have taken them

past typical features of a well-organised union building—the registry office and large rooms for public meetings—as well as less predictable features, like a large drawing room, bedrooms offered to girls and women whose city jobs prevented them from living in their family homes, and a restaurant providing 'cheap and wholesome meals' to the general public.[58] Furniture donated by members along with later refurbishment and renovation soon rendered the space 'very nice and comfortable'.[59] Such 'homey' characteristics encouraged VWCTU members to view the headquarters not only as a practical facilitator of their goals or as a symbolic 'temperance temple', but as their 'home'.[60]

Here, large-scale events featuring international WCTU celebrities and large audiences were advertised as 'At Homes,' or 'drawing-room meetings' and decorated accordingly with bouquets and doilies.[61] In adopting the role of 'home away from home' as well as business centre, the headquarters deliberately trod, and blurred, the line between public and private space. The building both accommodated the expectations of those who believed women belonged in domestic settings and challenged the restrictive binary of private and public spheres that deterred women from pursuing representation in public institutions and societal change generally. Perhaps deliberately, the 1894 *White Ribbon Signal* report on the opening of the new headquarters was followed a few pages later by an article questioning 'whether it is good for a woman to have her whole heart and mind and energy set upon the concerns of her home to the exclusion of everything outside'.[62] The WCTU headquarters, by straddling the categories of domestic and public space, broke down this dichotomy between home and 'everything else', encouraging women's participation in public and political affairs.

Despite the VWCTU's hopeful vision for an effective, 'homey' business centre that could facilitate state-wide temperance efforts, the Flinders Street headquarters were also a site of intense contestation. In 1908, tension over the costs involved in maintaining this space erupted into a union-wide controversy of unprecedented scale and ferocity. Although the original accusatory letters are absent from the VWCTU's otherwise meticulously kept records, commentary in later editions of the *White Ribbon Signal* and in local newspapers makes it clear that the expenses incurred for the headquarters' upkeep were at the root of the controversy.[63] VWCTU secretary Marie Kirk and her committee stood accused by the newly elected state president, Julia Kelso, of spending too much on the maintenance and renovation of the Flinders Street

headquarters, and especially of drawing too much money from local unions' funds for the building's maintenance.[64]

The case of the Flinders Street headquarters speaks to the multifaceted and contested nature of WCTU negotiation of women's space. It is important to note that most of the controversy was contained within the bounds of the VWCTU, no matter how gleefully it was reported in external newspapers.[65] It was WCTU women themselves who disagreed about the role and worth of a headquarters building in Melbourne. There was no consensus on whether it was proper or important to maintain a central women's space for coordination and gathering, especially when so much work needed doing in cash-strapped unions around Victoria.

The fraught dynamics of headquarters spaces were played out even more dramatically in Ballarat, where the local WCTU won control of a former pub and transformed the building into its own headquarters. In 1891 a local option poll was held in Ballarat East, in which residents voted on whether to reduce or maintain the number of licensed hotels in their area.[66] As part of the 'local option party', the well-established Ballarat WCTU drew on its domestic associations to argue for reduction, promoting slogans like 'For home and mother's sake' and 'For hearth and home'. To the WCTU women's delight, the majority of residents voted for the number of licensed hotels to be reduced from 68 to 28.[67] Not satisfied, however, that the closure of 40 hotels marked the sum of their ambitions, the Ballarat union decided to lease and repurpose the premises of one of the closed pubs: the Cumberland and Durham.[68] A sympathetic observer wrote to the *White Ribbon Signal* to describe the place as it was left by the departing publican: 'there were the empty bottles, cases and straw littering the floor'. Once the enthusiastic new occupants had finished cleaning and redecorating, the building had become a 'bright, nice' headquarters, featuring ten bedrooms for lodgers, a 'tastefully decorated' meeting room, parlours and a shop.[69]

At the opening social for the headquarters in December 1892, the guests—including most of Ballarat's leading temperance figures—delighted in the space's physical and symbolic transformation. The Reverend A. Rogers celebrated the fact that the building was 'now to be used for a far better purpose than that of a hotel', while another guest thanked the WCTU women for serving as the 'mighty lever which had changed the hotel into a coffee palace'.[70] The *White Ribbon Signal* stressed the spatial significance of the Ballarat union's success: 'During

the past year they have taken up their quarters in one of the devil's strongholds, namely the Cumberland and Durham Hotel, where they have ample accommodation for visitors'.[71] The same militant fervour inspired a local observer to describe the building as 'a trophy from the enemies' camp, a veritable devil's castle transformed into a temperance home and coffee palace'.[72]

The take-over of space where alcohol—synonymous for the WCTU with all things antithetical to female and family happiness—had been served, and where men had been dominant, was a symbolic victory for the Ballarat WCTU in a number of ways. For WCTU women themselves, the closure and annexation of a place previously dedicated to alcohol consumption represented a tangible victory in their struggle against the evils associated with the demon drink. It was a triumph about which they were understandably smug. However, the take-over of the Cumberland and Durham Hotel was also a symbolic desegregation of men's space. Although Clare Wright has demonstrated that female hoteliers could hold positions of power in colonial Victorian pubs, public drinking venues were nevertheless male dominated and predominantly male led.[73] In general, pubs were the places from which women waited for their husbands to return. Often, as the WCTU lamented, they returned drunk, prone to violence, and with too little remaining money to provide for their families. The conversion of a pub into a headquarters building for a women's organisation was also a transformation of a male space, where women's main role had been to serve the alcohol men drank, into a female space, where men were permitted to contribute but not to dominate.

Outside of the relatively controlled context provided by dedicated headquarters buildings, the VWCTU worked in many other ways to intervene in the public sphere, creating and adapting space for women where they might otherwise not feel welcome, safe, or able to fully participate. Local unions had to create space in often inventive ways by claiming and occupying portions of male-dominated spaces or, as we have seen, by repurposing their own homes and church halls for VWCTU activities. One other important method by which rural WCTU women staked out space for themselves in their communities was the organisation of temperance stalls or 'tea booths' at public events. At often male-dominated events such as shows, agricultural fairs, public exhibitions, regattas and sports days, WCTU groups set up small booths providing non-alcoholic refreshments and a place to rest for women and

the wider community, competing with and occasionally displacing other booths selling the alcoholic drinks the WCTU so abhorred.

Figure 1 depicts a temperance booth held by the active Maryborough WCTU, most likely at a Maryborough Show during the 1890s. A large tent provides tired show visitors with shelter from the sun, while banners reading 'DARE TO DO RIGHT' and 'DELIVER US FROM EVIL' indicate the refreshment stall's higher calling. A row of sober-faced women stands proudly behind the counter, taking their position in the foreground with their husbands and other male allies behind them. A small group of children can be seen to the left, possibly a contingent of the Loyal Temperance Legion, a children's branch of the WCTU. Behind the second row of men on the left can be glimpsed a banner advertising 'tea or coffee'. Although the 'foes' of the Maryborough Union made it pay the high price of £18 for the privilege of occupying the space, the union was satisfied that 'through this means many were kept from the temptation of strong drink'.[74]
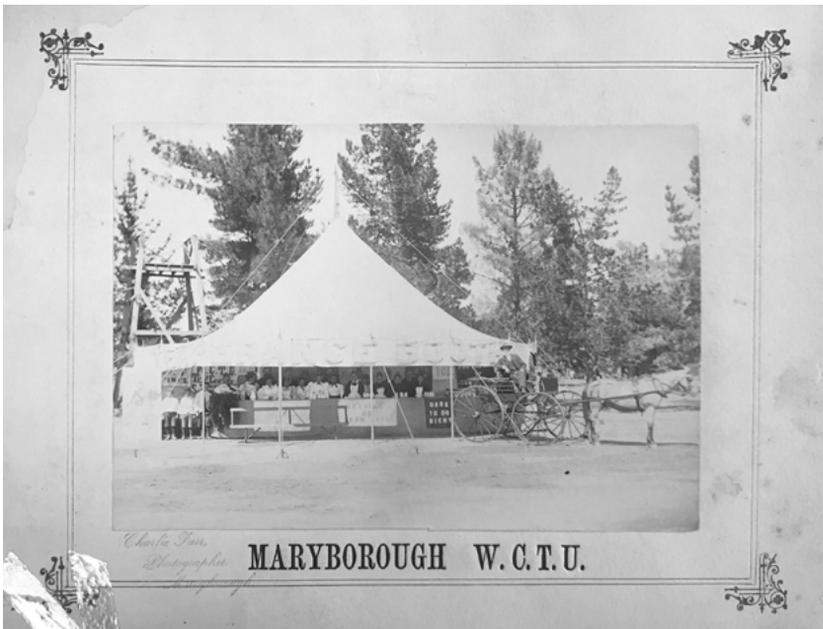
Figure 1: 'Maryborough W.C.T.U.' Mounted photograph 14cm x 20cm. Photographer Charlie Fair (Courtesy University of Melbourne Archives, WCTUV, 2001.0085)

Reports in the 'Union Echoes' section of the *White Ribbon Signal* describe many other examples of successful temperance booths in this period, administered both by larger rural unions like Bendigo and Ballarat and by smaller and more remote unions in Beeac and Ararat.[75] In 1908, for example, the Bendigo WCTU was commended for its 'valuable work' at the annual Bendigo Easter Fair, where the women provided luncheon, afternoon tea and sweets for children and were 'praised and approved of by the whole community'.[76]

While claims of ubiquitous admiration may be called into question, what can be gauged more directly is the importance that the WCTU women themselves placed on this kind of work. 'Sports Booths' was one of the first twelve departments inaugurated at the VWCTU's founding conference, and it was placed under the leadership of the omnipresent state secretary Marie Kirk.[77] By 1908, the *White Ribbon Signal* was encouraging more unions to take up the work of the renamed 'Temperance Booth Department', explaining that, through the establishment of these temperance spaces, 'many ways are opened up for bringing our principles before the public'.[78] The commemorative presentation of the photograph in Figure 1 and the solemn, proud expressions and stances of the WCTU women together suggest the seriousness with which they viewed their endeavour. Perhaps the clearest evidence of how much the VWCTU valued temperance booths is that it was willing to go all the way to court to fight for its right to hold them.

At Ararat, when a refreshment booth privilege for the Australian Natives' Association (ANA) Sports Day went up for sale in January 1894, the small but active Ararat WCTU saw an opportunity to insert a female and temperate presence into an important public space.[79] The ANA held relatively progressive views on women's rights; in that same year, the society would announce its support for women's suffrage. However, women were not allowed to become members of the influential organisation until 1964, making it an unambiguously male organisation and its spaces unambiguously male dominated.[80]

The Ararat WCTU paid £10 for the privilege of selling refreshments at the annual ANA Sports Day. In a move that suggests the union foresaw opposition to its claim, it applied for the purchase under the name of 'a gentleman friend' so that the ANA organisers did not realise that the applicants planned to offer only non-alcoholic refreshments. Only after the licence had been awarded by the auctioneer did the ANA and local

publicans find out their mistake, causing 'much vexation'.[81] Significantly, there had been only one licence available, so that the WCTU was in direct competition with local publicans for the space it was claiming. When a second licence was sold to a publican, the Ararat WCTU successfully argued in court that it should be voided, 'on the ground that the sole right to keep a refreshment booth on the ground had been previously sold to the W.C.T.U.'[82] The *Age* reported a few days before the event that: 'The result of the W.C.T.U action so far appears to be that no intoxicants will be sold at the A.N.A. sports'.[83]

At face value, the rural WCTU's modest temperance booths may appear insignificant and non-threatening incursions into public space: helpful to weary mothers and to thirsty visitors not inclined to drink beer. However, the case of the ANA Sports Day in Ararat indicates the significance of the WCTU's presence at community events. First, it demonstrates how contested their presence could be, especially when, as in this case, they were competing for the only available space for refreshments. Second, it reveals how strongly the WCTU wished to occupy public space and make their presence felt, even in the face of public backlash. The staking out of space for women to control, occupy and use in their own interests was not incidental to VWCTU women's work but a crucial way that the organisation sought to change, expand and perform women's role in public life.

These interventions by the VWCTU into public or masculine space through the maintenance of temperance booths were not confined to rural or regional areas. In Melbourne, the VWCTU erected and operated a makeshift 'Rest Room' at the annual ANA Exhibition held at the Exhibition Building.[84] Offering refreshing non-alcoholic beverages, comfortable chairs to relax on and temperance literature to read, the rest room was designed to be a 'haven of rest' for the 300 to 400 exhibition visitors who sought refuge there each day.[85] The VWCTU valued the space, both for its service as a 'veritable boon' to tired mothers with children who might otherwise find it difficult to attend the exhibition, and for its highly public location for the spreading of temperance messages.[86]

In January 1900, a contingent of Victorian soldiers was encamped at Flemington before their departure to fight in the South African War. Alarmed at the prospect of hundreds of young men tempted into drink by the canteens provided for them, the VWCTU quickly applied for and

was granted the right to provide temperance refreshments at the site free of charge.[87] The coffee rooms offered tea, coffee, cocoa, sandwiches, biscuits, scones, cakes, and writing materials to enable the men to write home to family and friends.[88] The stall's provision of domestic comforts seems to have been popular with the soldiers. Corporal Andrew Sarkies wrote to express his contingent's 'very warm thanks for, and appreciation of, the great kindness shown to them while in camp' and offered a donation to the union as an expression of their gratitude.[89] At the VWCTU anniversary celebrations later that year, the Reverend Major Holden invoked the Flemington coffee rooms as an example of the compatibility of the organisation's 'grand public service' with a healthy respect for 'woman's proper sphere', the home.[90]

The VWCTU reconfigured the metaphorical and literal boundaries of women's position in public life by expanding what it meant to be in the 'private', 'domestic', or 'female' sphere. They achieved this both by creating new spaces either exclusively occupied or dominated by women, and by making space for women in typically male-dominated public areas. By looking at the activities of one of the most prominent Victorian women's organisations through a spatial analysis, we can gain fresh insights into the motivations and tactics of women's rights movements, and investigate how ideological notions of private and public, domestic and political, men's and women's, can be played out in real spaces. Acknowledging the spatial elements of the VWCTU's work also means complicating any vision of the union that presents it as inherently conservative, or as in opposition to other more 'radical' women's groups. The VWCTU was not conservative, nor were its members chastely picnicking 'wowsers' intent on spoiling men's fun while leaving prevailing gender relations intact. A spatial approach helps us to see this, recasting the 'tea and scones' politics of drawing room and church hall as part of a movement to integrate women into a masculinist society from which they were typically excluded.

Notes

1   Ian Tyrrell, 'International Aspects of the Woman's Temperance Movement in Australia: The Influence of the American WCTU, 1882–1914', *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1983, p. 286.

2   'Annual Report', 1888, p. 20, Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Victoria, 2001.0085, Box 13, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne (UMA).

3   Anthea Hyslop, 'Temperance, Christianity and Feminism: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Victoria, 1887–97', *Historical Studies*, vol. 17, no. 66, April 1976, p. 33.

4   Hyslop, p. 30.

5   Patricia Grimshaw, 'Gender, Citizenship and Race in the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Australia, 1890 to the 1930s', *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 13, no. 28, October 1998, pp. 199–214.

6   Tyrrell, p. 285.

7   Hyslop, p. 27.

8   Patricia Grimshaw and Jane Carey, 'National Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Australia', in Judith Smart and Shurlee Swain (eds), *The Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia*, Australian Women's Archive Project, eScholarship Research Centre, University of Melbourne, 2014, http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0774b.htm. Tyrrell exaggerates in describing the typical historian's depiction of the WCTU as 'a group of religious bigots and fanatical wowsers'. Tyrrell, p. 285. However, this is certainly the negative image portrayed in the popular history by Keith Dunstan, *Wowsers: Being an Account of the Prudery Exhibited by Certain Outstanding Men and Women in Such Matters as Drinking, Smoking, Prostitution, Censorship and Gambling*, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1974.

9   Marilyn Lake, 'Feminist History as National History: Writing the Political History of Women', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 27, no. 106, April 1996, pp. 158–69. See, for an example of this approach, Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police*, 2nd rev. ed., Melbourne, Penguin, 2002.

10   Tyrrell, p. 285.

11   Audrey Oldfield, *Woman Suffrage in Australia: A Gift or a Struggle?* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992.

12   Richard Evans, *The Feminists*, New York, Barnes and Noble Books, 1977, p. 62.

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14   Grimshaw, 'Gender, Citizenship and Race'.

15   Judith Pargeter, *For God, Home and Humanity: National Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Australia: Centenary History 1891–1991*, Adelaide, National Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Australia, 1995.

16   Ellen Warne, *Agitate, Educate, Organise, Legislate: Protestant Women's Social Action in Post-Suffrage Australia*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Publishing, 2017; Clare Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom : The Australians Who Won the Vote and Inspired the World*, Melbourne, Text Publishing, 2018; Marian Quartly and Judith Smart, *Respectable Radicals: A History of the National Council of Women of Australia 1896–2006*, Melbourne, Monash University Publishing, 2015.

17   Warne, p. 2.

18   Barney Warf and Santa Arias, *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, London, Routledge, 2008, p. 1.

19   Prudence Flowers, 'White Ribboners and the Ideology of Separate Spheres, 1860s–1890s', *Australasian Journal of American Studies*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2006, pp. 14–31.

20   See for example Jane Rendell, 'Introduction: "Gender, Space"', in Iain Borden, Jane Rendell and Barbara Penner (eds), *Gender Space Architecture: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, London, Routledge, 2002, p. 107; and Shirley Ardener, *Women and Space: Ground Rules and Social Maps*, New York, St Martin's Press, 1981, p. 112.

21 Ardener, pp. 12–13.

22 Barbara Welter, 'The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860', *American Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1966, pp. 151–74.

23 See Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood : 'Woman's Sphere' in New England, 1780–1835*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1977; Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (eds), *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*, New York, Routledge, 1993; Carroll Smith Rosenberg, 'Beauty, the Beast and the Militant Woman: A Case Study in Sex Roles and Social Stress in Jacksonian America', *American Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 4, 1971, pp. 562–84; Mary P. Ryan, 'The Power of Women's Networks: A Case Study of Female Moral Reform in Antebellum America', *Feminist Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, Spring 1979, pp. 66–85.

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25 Suzanne M. Marilley, 'Frances Willard and the Feminism of Fear', *Feminist Studies*, vol. 19, no. 1, Spring 1993, p. 125.

26 Marilley, p. 125.

27 Flowers, p. 16.

28 Alison M. Parker, '"Hearts Uplifted and Minds Refreshed": The Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the Production of Pure Culture in the United States, 1880–1930', *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 11, no. 2, Summer 1999, pp. 135–58.

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30 'Problems of Womanhood', *Leader*, 25 October 1913.

31 Patricia Grimshaw, 'In Pursuit of True Anglican Womanhood in Victoria, 1880–1914', *Women's History Review*, vol. 2, no. 3, September 1993, p. 332.

32 Clare Wright, *Beyond the Ladies Lounge: Australia's Female Publicans*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2003, pp. 9, 120, 128.

33 'Christmas Greeting', *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 December 1908.

34 'Mother', *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 October 1908.

35 Marian Quartly, 'Women Citizens of the New Nation: Reading Some Visual Evidence', *Lilith: A Feminist History Journal*, no. 11, 2002, pp. 6–7.

36 *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 May 1909.

37 Janette M. Bomford, *That Dangerous and Persuasive Woman: Vida Goldstein*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1993. The phrase is a quote from playwright and freed Roman slave, Publius Terentius Afer, known as Terence, who lived during the Roman Republic.

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39 *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 September 1893.

40 *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 June 1894.

41 Ardener, p. 17.

42 These events were not exclusive to the WCTU—other Victorian women's associations held similarly styled gatherings—but they were certainly the WCTU's dominant mode of bringing together members and potential members.

43 'Union Echoes', *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 July 1908.

44 'Union Echoes', *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 November 1908.

45 *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 February 1894.

46 'Union Echoes', *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 June 1908.

47 *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 August 1895.

48   *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 February 1894.

49   *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 November 1906.

50   Judith Smart, 'A Mission to the Home: The Housewives Association, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and Protestant Christianity, 1920–1940', *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 13, no. 28, October 1998, pp. 215–34.

51   Rachel Bohlmann, 'Our "house beautiful": The Woman's Temple and the WCTU Effort to Establish Place and Identity in Downtown Chicago, 1887–1898', *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 11, no. 2, Summer 1999, pp. 110–34.

52   This meeting was recalled later in the *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 November 1908.

53   *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 November 1908.

54   'Foreword', *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 April 1894. Italics added for emphasis.

55   *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 December 1893.

56   'The Need of a Headquarters for the WCTU', *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 September 1894.

57   'Opening of our New Headquarters', *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 March 1894.

58   These features are described in *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 March 1894.

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60   *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 September 1908.

61   *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 April 1908.

62   *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 March 1894.

63   'House Report', *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 November 1908; 'Reports of the Committee Appointed by the Executive Council to Reply to the Various Documents, etc., Issued by the State President, etc.', 6 October 1908, Minute Book 1906–1912, Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Victoria, 2001.0085, Box 1, UMA.

64   'Reports of the Committee Appointed by the Executive Council'.

65   'Melbourne Gossip', *Bairnsdale Advertiser*, 13 October 1908.

66   'Local Option at Ballarat East', *Leader* (Melbourne), 4 July 1891.

67   'Local Option in Ballarat East', *Ballarat Star*, 27 June 1891.

68   *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 November 1893.

69   'Ballarat', *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 January 1893; *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 March 1893; 'W.C.T.U. Social', *Ballarat Star*, 20 December 1892.

70   'W.C.T.U. Social'.

71   *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 November 1893.

72   *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 March 1893.

73   Wright, *Beyond the Ladies Lounge*.

74   M.A. Moizer, *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 February 1893.

75   'Union Echoes', *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 June 1908; 'Union Echoes', *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 February 1909; 'Union Echoes', *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 December 1893; 'Union Echoes', *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 November 1906.

76   'Union Echoes', *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 June 1908.

77   'First Executive & Convention Minute Book', 1887–1892, Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Victoria, 2001.0085, Box 46, UMA.

78   'Temperance Booth Department', *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 August 1908.

79   'The W.C.T.U and Ararat A.N.A Sports: Teetotal Refreshments Only', *Age*, 19 January 1894.

80   National Museum Australia, 'Australian Natives' Association', updated 2019, https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/australian-natives-association, accessed 10 March 2019. Women did, however, establish a sister organisation, the Australasian Women's Association, in 1900. See Marian Quartly, 'Mothers and Fathers and Brothers and Sisters: The AWA and the ANA and Gendered Citizenship', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 17, no. 37, 1993, pp. 22–30.

81 'Temperance Booth at Agriculture Shows, &c.', *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 February 1894.

82 'Disputed Rights', *Kyneton Observer*, 20 January 1894.

83 'The W.C.T.U. and Ararat A.N.A. Sports: Teetotal Refreshments Only'.

84 *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 March 1907; *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 November 1908. The 'Royal' prefix was granted to the Exhibition Building in 1980.

85 *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 March 1907.

86 *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 March 1907.

87 'The Troops and Teetotalism', *Age*, 8 January 1900.

88 Marie Kirk, 'An Acknowledgement', *Herald* (Melbourne), 18 January 1900.

89 'The W.C.T.U. Canteen', *Herald*, 9 January 1900; 'Thanks to the Women's Temperance Union', *Herald*, 12 January 1900.

90 'W.C.T.U. Anniversary', *Age*, 30 October 1900.

Was the Mahogany Ship Built by Escaped Convicts? Questioning Murray Johns's Hypothesis

Ruurd Snoekstra

Abstract

In the 2011 Victorian Historical Journal, *Murray Johns gave an excellent overview of writings about the Mahogany Ship and tested some of the hypotheses. At the end of the article he proposed a new one: that convicts partially built but did not complete the mysterious Mahogany Ship, using timber from a schooner they stole in Van Diemen's Land while escaping in 1813. Johns argued there were thus two unknown ships called the 'Mahogany Ship', that timber recovered from one of them was of Australian origin; and that the stolen schooner was beached by convicts near Warrnambool where it was taken apart for the new ship. In disputing this theory I will suggest there were probably three not two ships, that the timber analysed as Australian may not be from any of these ships, and that the stolen schooner may never have reached Warrnambool. I will argue in short that Johns's hypothesis is weakened by selectiveness and inadequate standards of proof in his evidence.*

Introduction

The story of the Mahogany Ship has intrigued historians and others for well over a century and has produced much conjecture as to the ship's origins as well as its very existence. Was/is it a Portuguese caravel from the sixteenth century?[1] Perhaps it was a Chinese junk from one of Zheng He's fleets,[2] or maybe a Dutch exploration vessel?[3] These are just some researchers' suggestions about the provenance of the Mahogany Ship since it first attracted widespread attention in the 1890s. In his 2011 *Victorian Historical Journal* article, Murray Johns conducted a forensic and systematic analysis of each of these hypotheses before rejecting them all.[4] He then proposed a new theory: escaped convicts from Van Diemen's Land built the Mahogany Ship from the timbers of a vessel they had stolen to get away.

This article will review Johns's arguments for this new hypothesis in context and will show weaknesses in the evidence he brings to bear that must cast doubts on the credibility of his theory, thus leaving open

the long-standing questions about the existence, identity and location of the ship.

The Context of Johns's Hypothesis

Johns's article has two main objectives.[5] His first is to reassess and correct the evidence on which past researchers have made claims about the Mahogany Ship. He concludes that they based their speculation about the Mahogany Ship's origin on old evidence, unfounded speculation and unreliable sources. As an example of problems with the evidence, Johns begins by examining accounts of its European discovery. He decides, despite the 'fibs' of one whom researchers had considered a reliable eyewitness, that the accounts are generally dependable. There was something there, and Europeans in 1835–36 did discover an unknown shipwreck near what is now Warrnambool.[6] His second aim is to use this reassessed evidence to test the main hypotheses for the origin of the Mahogany Ship.

Johns's reassessment of the evidence for the Mahogany Ship can be divided into three issues. First, two unknown shipwrecks were in the Mahogany Ship area. Second, at least one of these unknown ships was built of Australian timber. Third, the onshore ship was crudely built and was like a lighter, except larger. It did not look like an eighteenth-century (or earlier) European ship. Also, an experienced seaman did not think the onshore shipwreck was a whaling or coastal trading ship.[7]

He then considers the main origin hypotheses for the Mahogany Ship. These hypotheses are McIntyre's claim it was Portuguese, Herve's claim it was Spanish, Menzies' claim it was Chinese, and McCrae's claim it was Dutch. In each case, Johns considers their evidence for their hypotheses is inadequate. I am largely in agreement with Johns's assessment of these hypotheses and do not intend to discuss them further in this article. Rather, my focus is John's own hypothesis and the revised account of the Mahogany Ship that emerges from it.[8] Johns suggests that two interconnected ships were known as the Mahogany Ship. One was the *Unity*, which was stolen by escaped convicts in Van Diemen's Land in 1813 and beached near what is now Warrnambool. These convicts were building or had built an onshore ship, with material from the *Unity*, but it was never launched and remained where it was found two decades later. In summary, Johns's hypothesis is that escaped convicts built the Mahogany Ship from the timber of the schooner they stole.

Johns ends his article with an invitation: 'this article's reassessment and new identity "story" of this "ancient Wreck" first sighted near Warrnambool in 1835–36 invites further thought and historical exploration'. My article is a response to this invitation and will first consider the three issues driving Johns's reassessment of the evidence for the earlier hypotheses, and then conclude with an assessment of the evidence for his own new origins theory.

First Issue: Two Unknown Ships

Johns's article claims there were only two unknown shipwrecks, one offshore and the other onshore.[9] He considers eighteen eyewitness reports. Four of these reports place a shipwreck in the sea, four on the beach and ten as partially embedded in the sand dunes. As he finds the distinction between the two latter categories unclear, he concludes that the eyewitness accounts refer to only two shipwrecks, one in the sea and one onshore.[10] Further, he argues that two eyewitness reports that identified just two shipwrecks confirm his claim. He goes on to consider the three locations searchers have identified for the Mahogany Ship, but, finding one of the locations disputable, he dismisses it, thus leaving only two unknown ships. (Figure 1)[11]

Figure 1: Beach and dunes, south of Werronggurt House (Courtesy Ruurd Snoekstra)

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Johns's conclusion that eyewitness accounts confused beach and dunes locations deserves reconsideration. In my view many of them did make the distinction clear in identifying the position of the shipwrecks they described. Johns notes four accounts of shipwrecks on the beach, and in two, those of Kell and Stevens, the eyewitnesses specifically described them as on the beach away from the dunes. Johns quotes ten accounts of shipwrecks in the dunes, and six—those of Mills, Mason, Osburne, Allan, Begley and M.C. Donnelly—reported the shipwreck as on top of, or in, the dunes. Two more accounts, Jellie's and Rollo's, implied the shipwreck was in the dunes. Although Mason and Kell saw the Mahogany Ship together, their accounts differ on where they saw it, and I will propose later that they reported different shipwrecks. About half the accounts Johns uses thus clearly distinguish between the beach and the dunes for the location.

Reports of two shipwrecks are not definite evidence for only two shipwrecks. Johns bases his claim on two reports by local people, who each reported two unknown shipwrecks there.[12] But they may not have mentioned a third shipwreck because they were unaware of it. In arguing for two wrecks rather than one, Johns makes the same argument: 'Many people who reported seeing the "Mahogany Ship" did not make mention of a second "wreck" in the area, presumably because they were not aware of it'.[13] Logically this argument could also apply to the existence of a third wreck (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Track through dunes, east of Gormans Road (Courtesy Ruurd Snoekstra)
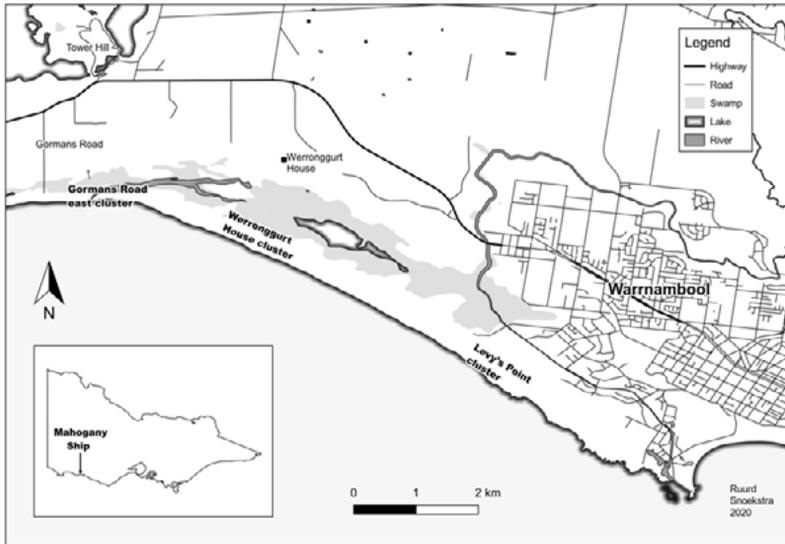
Figure 3: Location of sightings clusters (Courtesy Ruurd Snoekstra, based on cartographic resources from Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning, provided under Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence)

Three researchers who have methodically analysed eyewitness accounts of the Mahogany Ship in their search to locate it believed they found three possible locations for it.[14] Johns claims one location is debatable. But the researchers identified a shipwreck there and presented evidence to support their conclusions.[15] For example, in my 2015 article, I reviewed all historical eyewitness accounts of shipwrecks known to me. I used 110 accounts with geographical data to identify the general area of each sighting and found <u>three</u> major geographical clusters of sightings. Seventeen eyewitnesses provided 28 accounts of shipwrecks at the location that Johns finds debatable. Although not conclusive, previous research supports the view there were in fact three shipwrecks, not just one or even two.

Second Issue: Authenticity of the Timber

Johns's article claims at least one of his two unknown shipwrecks was built of Australian timber early in the nineteenth century.[16] In support of this he documents the results of analysis of three sets of timber claimed to have been from the Mahogany Ship. These are two pen handles and a cylindrical ruler, all privately owned, and two timber pieces held by the

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National Library of Australia (NLA). Analysis of the pen handles found they were made from an Australian timber, as was the cylindrical ruler. The NLA timber was Eucalyptus and, according to Johns, radiocarbon dated to 1810 +/- 50 years. Johns does, however, accept that this timber's provenance is unclear or uncertain.[17]

The basic issue with Johns's argument about the timbers is proving they are authentic: that the timber is from the Mahogany Ship. Robert Berkhofer, the distinguished American historian, provides a useful methodology to reveal the authenticity of found objects based on the answers to three questions concerning origin, lineage and history. To ascertain an object's origin or genesis he asks: 'who or what, when, where produced?' To identify lineage or genealogy he inquires whether the object is 'original, copy, copy of copy, and so on?' And to discover the object's history or provenance he asks: 'Where was it found? How was it found? Who found it? Who preserved it and how (and maybe why)? How did it come to be in the possession of its present owner?'[18]

The pen handles have a strong lineage and history, but their origin is less certain. The letter from A.R. Penfold, cited by Johns, documents their origin, lineage and history.[19] When he wrote, Penfold and his sister had care of the pen handles, which their mother had given them. Their mother had received the pen handles from her brother, who claimed to have removed timber from the Mahogany Ship and made pen handles from it. The pen handles were those their uncle made. So the origin, lineage and history would all seem to be strong, from the removal of the timber to their possession by Penfold and his sister. However, the origin claimed for the pen handles is weaker than the other two criteria, given that three shipwrecks all have verifiable claims to be the Mahogany Ship, that there may therefore be no single such ship, and that we do not in any case know which shipwreck Penfold's uncle removed the timber from.

The authenticity of the ruler is even less certain. David Hamilton documented its history in two letters.[20] Hamilton inherited the ruler from his uncle, William Rutledge Hamilton, who claimed it was from the Mahogany Ship. J.W. Powling implies in his 2003 survey of the Mahogany Ship evidence that Hugh Donnelly gave this ruler to the Rutledge family and that Donnelly was claimed to have cut the timber from the Mahogany Ship.[21] But this claim is unlikely to be true as Donnelly never actually saw the Mahogany Ship.[22] The ruler is not a copy of another ruler, so the lineage and history from their ownership

by Hamilton's uncle is strong. But who made the ruler and the source of the timber are both unknown, so it may not be authentic timber from any of the three wrecks identified together or separately as the Mahogany Ship.

The NLA is unsure about the source of its two timber pieces. In 2006, I reviewed the timber and its associated documentation at the NLA.[23] The accession sheet states the 'maker' of the timber is unknown and the provenance is, 'J.F. Archibald's father'. But an attached note, dated 6 July 1982, clarifies this claim. The timber source is 'only approximately known' and the NLA believes the two pieces were in the papers of J. F. Archibald (journalist and founder of the *Bulletin* magazine). The note continues: J.F. Archibald was the son of Joseph Archibald, and the Mitchell Library, Sydney, held Joseph Archibald's papers, which included parts of the Mahogany Ship. The NLA presumes these papers were stored in their library during World War II and that the NLA may have obtained the timber along with the papers at this time.

There are other claims that support the view that the NLA timber came from the Mahogany Ship. Joseph Archibald was curator of the Warrnambool Public Museum and from 1883 collected historical artefacts for it.[24] Tom Wicking, a Warrnambool historian, claims the museum held a piece of timber traditionally accepted as from the Mahogany Ship but cites no sources in support of his claim.[25] In 1980, John Lindsay claimed the NLA received the timber as a bequest from J.F. Archibald.[26] Lindsay was then chairman of the Warrnambool Mahogany Ship Committee. In a letter to me, John Lindsay wrote he believed Joseph Archibald had had the wood, which was subsequently given to J.F. Archibald to have identified and dated.[27]

There is no support for the claim that the museum or Joseph Archibald had timber from the Mahogany Ship. Archibald himself wrote in 1891: 'We have not even tangible evidence of that which, if established, would be a most important fact in connection with this enquiry, viz. the material of which she was built'.[28] Although not clearly expressed, his comment implies he did not have timber from the Mahogany Ship in 1891. This is reinforced by a newspaper report on the museum in December 1896, which remarked that it held no piece of the Mahogany Ship.[29] Because of public interest in the Mahogany Ship in the 1890s, if Archibald had had Mahogany Ship timber at that time, he would have displayed it. Archibald suffered a stroke in December 1896 and he left

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Warrnambool in 1897.[30] Powling speculates that Archibald was given the timber as a parting gift, but he provides no supporting evidence.[31] Further, Archibald does not mention timber from the Mahogany Ship in his papers.[32] As a man who meticulously documented his research, this former museum curator would have recorded such an important item, and he did indeed record timber he got from another shipwreck in his papers.[33] In the 1930s, Lucy Archibald, Joseph's daughter, wrote a series of letters about the Warrnambool Public Museum collection. She regarded her father's Mahogany Ship research as important and gave his papers to the Mitchell Library.[34] But Lucy emphatically states in one of these letters that there was never any Mahogany Ship timber in the museum.[35]

Like the cylindrical ruler, the authenticity of the NLA's two pieces of timber is therefore doubtful. The NLA accession documentation is tentative about their origin and history. No evidence was found that Archibald or the museum had timber from the Mahogany Ship, but there is evidence, on the other hand, that they did not.

Third Issue: The Onshore Ship

Johns's article makes three claims about the onshore ship, based on his interpretation of the testimony of eyewitnesses.[36] The ship was crudely built. It was like a large lighter and did not look like an early European ship. Furthermore, it was neither a whaling nor a coastal trading ship.

Johns bases his first claim, the onshore ship was roughly built, on his interpretation of an eyewitness's comment.[37] The eyewitness, John Mason, commented, '[the wreck] bespoke a very slight acquaintance of the builder with marine architecture'.[38] After noting that the particular wreck Mason was referring to is not clear, Johns goes on to speculate that he was suggesting the ship had been inexpertly built. In the letter from which this quotation is taken, Mason provided further details on the shipwreck he had seen in 1847. After describing the ship and providing more information, he speculated further on what he thought it was:

> As regards its nationality, I do not profess to be a judge, but if the ships depicted in the well known picture of "A Long forgotten Expedition," published some years back by the London Art Union, are accurately represented as being either of Spanish or Portuguese build, then I think there is little doubt that the wreck in question is of neither, as the highly ornamental prow and the deep shear, or longitudinal curve,

of the deck line of ships of those nations were here entirely absent, the general appearance and build resembling more the outlines of our own local lighters, only of greater dimensions, and bespoke a very slight acquaintance of the builder with marine architecture. From these and other circumstances, I incline to the belief that she had in all probability been one of the many vessels engaged in sealing pursuits on the south and west coasts of Australia in the early part of the present century, two of which, as we know, visited Port Fairy in 1829, and I see nothing inconsistent with that opinion in the appearance she presented as seen by me 18 years later.

In this extract, Mason begins by comparing the wreck with a contemporary painting of Spanish or Portuguese exploration ships. Next he states that the shipwreck's hull did not have the features of the ships in the painting, but looked more like a 'local lighter', though larger. Then he adds the comment in question, that the wreck 'bespoke a very slight acquaintance of the builder with marine architecture'. Mason goes on to suggest it was a sealing vessel from the early nineteenth century.

Johns's interpretation of Mason's comment that the shipwreck he saw was crudely built is, I believe, inconsistent with Mason's intention. Mason's main point was that it was not an early European exploring ship, but most likely a coastal sealing vessel. He wrote that it looked like a large 'local lighter', but according to Johns he also implied that it was crudely built. Mason wrote that he 'incline[d] to the belief' that the shipwreck was a sealing vessel from the early nineteenth century, which was certainly consistent with it being like a large local lighter. But it does not follow from his comment about the builder that it was crudely constructed. In the context, Mason's reference to 'a very slight acquaintance of the builder with marine architecture' relates to his view that the shipwreck did not look like an oceangoing ship, like the deeper hulled ships in the painting he described, but rather like a large local lighter—in other words, a shallower hulled, coastal vessel.

Johns bases his second claim, that the onshore ship was like a large lighter and did not look like an early European ship, on his assessment of six eyewitness accounts.[39] Although he notes it is not always clear which shipwreck eyewitnesses were referring to, Johns implies it was the onshore ship. But a closer examination of the six eyewitness accounts suggests his claim that the onshore ship was like a large lighter is not as strong as it first appears. As noted before, I have analysed the eyewitness

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accounts of the shipwrecks and there were probably three distinct locations for the Mahogany Ship, so there were probably three ships. These locations are identical to the locations Johns describes.[40] The table (Figure 4) summarises the locations of the ships for the eyewitness accounts used by Johns.

EYEWITNESS	EYEWITNESS DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
Mason[41]	'like a local lighter, though of greater dimensions'	Mills area[42]
Kell[43]	'like an old flat-bottomed punt'	Uncertain[44]
Osburne[45]	'like a large lighter, but not of special interest'	Mills area[46]
Murray[47]	'like a coal barge'	Levy's Point area[48]
Gallagher[49]	'like a sea-going fishing boat'	McCrae area[50]
Donnelly, M.C.[51]	'about the size of the lumber boats towed by tugs … on the Upper Shannon'	Uncertain[52]

Figure 4: Summary of the locations of the eyewitness accounts

The table shows his six accounts are for at least two shipwrecks not one, while the location of two accounts is uncertain. Kell and Mason were travelling together, but the differences in their accounts suggest they were referring to two ships. Kell was reported to have seen the ship on the beach, not in the dunes as reported by Mason. Also, Kell was reported to have seen a flat-bottomed punt, while Mason reported seeing a 70- to 80-ton lighter. M.C. Donnelly's accounts provide inadequate geographical information to locate the shipwreck he saw, and evidence exists that Gallagher fabricated his account.[53] But, as Johns notes, none of the eyewitnesses described the ship as an early European ship

Johns bases his final claim—that it was not a whaling or coastal trading ship—on the lack of recognition by Captain John Mills, an experienced seaman.[54] But Johns provides no source for this claim. James Lynar, who discussed the Mahogany Ship with Mills, wrote that Mills thought it was Spanish or Portuguese.[55] According to Lynar, Mills based his belief on a local Aboriginal tradition of 'yellow men coming amongst them', which Mills thought could be the crew from the Mahogany Ship.

But what type of Spanish or Portuguese ship he thought it was or how old is unknown.

An Assessment of Johns's Hypothesis

Johns's new hypothesis for the origin of the Mahogany Ship is that escaped Van Diemen's Land convicts built it, using timber from a schooner they had stolen.[56] In 1813, escaping convicts stole the *Unity* from Hobart, and then they and the ship disappeared. In his article, Johns suggests the convicts could have beached the *Unity* near what is now Warrnambool, salvaged timber from it and begun building a new ship in the dunes nearby. But for unknown reasons the convicts did not launch the ship. In this new 'imaginary', as Johns calls it, the Mahogany Ship is the dunes ship, while the *Unity* is the ship in the sea.

To support his hypothesis Johns must show the ship's timber came from the *Unity*, but this depends on there being only two unidentified shipwrecks. His hypothesis requires, and indeed demands, only two shipwrecks, because he has not been able to show which ship the timber samples he has examined came from. But we have to remember there is evidence of three unknown shipwrecks. With three shipwrecks, Johns must still show the timber samples came from the ship built by the convicts or the *Unity*, but this leaves the third wreck unexplained. Further, his hypothesis needs timber from one of the shipwrecks to be Australian and pre-date 1813, because the *Unity* was built in northern New South Wales. But, as I have shown, it cannot be established with certainty that the timber samples are authentic pieces of any of the wrecks that have claims to be the Mahogany Ship.

Although I have questioned Johns's three claims about the nature of the onshore ship, this does not fatally weaken his hypothesis. While I have shown Mason may not have claimed the shipwreck was crudely built, this does not actually disprove Johns's hypothesis. Johns assumes that if escaped convicts built the Mahogany Ship they were unskilled and had few tools. But the escaped convicts may have had carpentry skills and appropriate tools. Tools could have been on the *Unity* when they stole it, or the convicts might have pilfered them. When I examined Johns's evidence for the onshore ship being like a large lighter, I found the claim was weaker than it appeared. However, there was some evidence to support his claim as well as opinions that it did not look like an early European ship. Further, if it was like a large lighter, it could not

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have been a whaling ship or a coastal trading schooner, although the evidence Johns uses to support this claim is inconclusive.

One other consideration that casts doubt on Johns's hypothesis should be taken into account, however. The escaped convicts were unlikely to have reached what is now Warrnambool, even if they had sailed towards it. A newspaper account of the theft of the *Unity* reported seven convicts on board with limited supplies.[57] Further, Governor Macquarie in a despatch to Earl Bathurst wrote he did not know where they planned to go.[58] He added that they had few supplies or maritime skills, and concluded that the schooner was probably wrecked. While the convicts had enough maritime ability to sail the *Unity* out to sea, they would have needed considerable expertise to sail and navigate across Bass Strait against the prevailing winds and tides. Thus, given the available evidence, Macquarie's view is probably correct—the *Unity* is likely to have sunk at sea or to have been wrecked on an uninhabited part of the Tasmanian coast.

Conclusion

Johns's hypothesis is his answer to the ongoing and so far unsolved questions about the existence, location and identity of the Mahogany Ship. He proposes escaped Tasmanian convicts built it, using timber from a schooner they stole in 1813. But, as I have shown, much of his evidence is less convincing than he suggests.

While I have not refuted Johns's hypothesis, I have provided enough criticism of his evidence to cast doubt on its credibility. Nevertheless, although I believe it is unlikely, the convicts could have beached the *Unity* near what is now Warrnambool, then built the Mahogany Ship. Johns's hypothesis could be strengthened or further weakened by evidence of the skills of the escaped convicts. Did some of them have maritime or carpentry training or experience when they escaped? Answering this question requires research into the escaped convicts' lives before they were transported and their work experience as convicts.

Johns's hypothesis, in theory, can be positively refuted or confirmed. It would be refuted by finding the Mahogany Ship and identifying it as a sealer, or finding the *Unity* elsewhere. On the other hand, the hypothesis would be confirmed by finding the Mahogany Ship, showing that convicts had built it, and discovering the *Unity* nearby. In other words, new material evidence about the existence, identity and

location of the Mahogany Ship could strengthen or further weaken Johns's hypothesis.

A Portuguese caravel from the sixteenth century? A Chinese junk from one of Zheng He's fleets? A Dutch exploration vessel? Johns in my view has successfully refuted all these theories, but does his hypothesis that it was/is a vessel built by escaped convicts from a stolen schooner have greater validity? The only way to know is to find the Mahogany Ship, but this is looking increasingly unlikely. Several expeditions that have employed drilling, ground-penetrating radar and extensive magnetic surveying have so far failed to find any of the three shipwrecks in the area that are referred to by credible eyewitnesses and may therefore be candidates for the title. Until such material evidence is found, the question remains: What is the Mahogany Ship and exactly where is it?

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The Death of George Peter Cowper, Aged Less than Three Weeks

Marilyn Bowler

Abstract

George Cowper was killed by his mother Margaret at Deep Lead in the Wimmera district on 19 May 1950. Though Margaret Cowper was charged by the police with the murder of her son, after a coroner's inquest was held on 26 May no further legal action was taken against her. This article looks at Cowper's story in the context of post-war rural women's socioeconomic conditions, infant death and parental grief, contemporary community attitudes to infanticide, the availability of medical and mental health services, awareness of postpartum depression or the lack of it at this time, and understandings of domestic violence. The article then speculates on the contribution any, some, or all of these may have made to the death of George Cowper at his mother's hands.*

Introduction

> I dreamt my husband came back … He said he was going to take my kiddies. I said he couldn't have them. If he had any thought for them he would have came [*sic*] back before. Then he seemed to start hitting me and I was hitting him back. The next thing I knew I woke up and I was hitting the baby.[1]

Late in the evening of 19 May 1950, Dr Jeffree of Stawell received a phone call from Margaret Cowper, who said, 'I think my baby is dead'. Dr Jeffree travelled to the rural hamlet of Deep Lead where Margaret was living with her mother and stepfather in a bungalow on their farm (Figure 1). In 1950, Deep Lead was a small town, with one main street, a primary school, several churches, a regional hospital for those with disabilities, and a railway station, at the centre of a sheep and wheat farming area. Its population was fewer than 300 people during the twentieth century.[2]

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*   The child whose death is examined in this article has been given a pseudonym, as have members of his family, to protect their privacy. Though the coronial inquest papers are available at the Public Record Office Victoria and the reference numbers are accurate, the names of the family have also been altered in the references and quotations provided.

Figure 1: Exterior of the Cowper Bungalow. Photograph in proceedings of inquest held on the body of George Peter Cowper at Stawell, 26 May 1950
(Courtesy Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS00024/P/0000, Unit 001637, Vsc1, 1950/612. Image copied for research purposes by Marilyn Bowler)

Examining the child, Dr Jeffree discovered extensive bruising on the ears, left arm and left side of his chest. He reported his discovery to Stawell police, who interviewed Mrs Cowper at the farm and charged her with the murder of her son. From the beginning, Margaret Cowper admitted that she had hit the baby, but told Dr Jeffree, the police and the subsequent coronial inquest that she had been dreaming when she did so.

> It was a bad dream. I dreamt that I was talking to my husband and telling him that I was not going back to live with him again … I remember him hitting me, he slapped me a cross [*sic*] the face, the next thing I woke up singing out "Get away, I hate you" at the same time

I was hitting the baby, I had him in bed with me, I don't remember picking him up out of the bassinette but I was hitting the baby with my clenched fist. I don't know what made me do it, it must have been the dream. I wouldn't have hurt him for the world.[3]

The coroner, Mr P.R. Biggin, opened an inquiry the next morning. Dr Jeffree conducted the post mortem on 20 May, and the final inquest was held on 26 May 1950. The coroner concluded that George had died of a cerebral haemorrhage 'resulting from blows inflicted then and there by Margaret Cowper his mother being at the time of infliction of said blows under the influence of sleep and unconscious of the nature of her actions'.[4] No further proceedings occurred; Margaret Cowper was never prosecuted for either the murder or the manslaughter of her son.

George Cowper's death at his mother's hands and the subsequent coronial inquest illustrate parental loss and grief and may be linked to the difficulties of post-war rural parenting, especially for deserted mothers, the tough financial circumstances and living conditions of many country mothers, rural attitudes to infanticide, and the lack of medical or community knowledge, particularly an understanding of, and a language to talk about, postnatal depression.

Margaret Cowper and Motherhood

George Cowper was the second of Margaret Cowper's children to die in infancy. Margaret had married at the age of seventeen in 1945 and had had three pregnancies in just over four years. Her first son, Brian, was born in November 1946. Brian drowned on 12 April 1948 in a waterhole about twenty yards from the backdoor of the farm where Margaret and her husband Henry Cowper were living. A coronial inquest was held into Brian's death on 21 April 1948. Her daughter, Charlotte, was born the following November, so Margaret was pregnant when Brian died. Her third child George was born on 30 April 1950 and died on 19 May 1950, less than three weeks later.[5] By this time, Margaret's husband was an itinerant labourer and she was living on her mother and stepfather's farm.

The Coronial Inquest into George Cowper's Death

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, Australia was recovering from the effects of World War II. Wartime rationing of food, clothing, household goods and petrol was slowly being phased out. As industry only gradually returned to full capacity, shortages of goods such as

building materials continued. At the coronial inquest into the death of Margaret's first son, Brian, First Constable Victor Heather noted that: 'The waterhole in which the child was drowned became dangerous as the result of recent rains and Mr. Cowper was unable to obtain the necessary wire netting to make it safe'.[6] Life for country mothers like Margaret was more arduous than it was later in the twentieth century, and the lack of basic farming supplies contributed to her son's death.

The coronial inquest into George Cowper's death provides further details about the life of a young mother and deserted wife in rural Victoria. At the coronial hearing in the Stawell Courthouse (Figure 2) on 26 May 1950, depositions were given by Dr Jeffree, the police, Margaret's mother Muriel Farrer, her stepfather Harold Farrer, and by Margaret Cowper herself.[7] Only Margaret Cowper and her 18-month-old daughter Charlotte were present when George Cowper died, so the sole accounts of his death are Margaret's. An examination of the inquest depositions can help to assess her socioeconomic circumstances, her state of mind and the attitudes of those dealing with, or involved in, George's death.

Figure 2: Stawell Court House, Patrick Street, Stawell (Courtesy Stawell Historical Society)

Dr Jeffree's evidence is precise and formal. He presented the facts of George's death as he knew them and, when asked how George came to receive the injuries that killed him, agreed that Margaret's account was plausible. Jeffree detailed the telephone call he received, what he found on arrival at Deep Lead and the baby's injuries: 'I saw her [Margaret] in one of the paddocks at the back of the house. I examined the child and found that the baby was dead'. He then 'asked her "what happened". She said "I put the baby to sleep in its bassinette and woke finding myself beating and shaking the baby and saying "I hate you" repeatedly'.[8] Dr Jeffree described his conduct of the post mortem, giving cerebral haemorrhage as the cause of death. Having made his statement, he then answered questions from the coroner and Mr O'Driscoll, Margaret's legal representative. When asked to comment on matters that would impinge on Margaret Cowper's guilt or innocence of the murder of her son, Dr Jeffree's declarative sentences became conditional, stating the possible rather than the factual. However, he did acknowledge that 'Bruises evident on body of child [were] consistent with Mrs Cowper's statement'.[9] In response to Mr O'Driscoll, he replied that when he arrived he found Margaret Cowper was hysterical but reasonably coherent. After repeating Margaret's remarks about waking up to find herself hitting the baby, he commented that: 'It *would* be possible that while having a nightmare she *might* have struck the child as she stated … I *would* think that the bruising was the result of a series of blows or shaking rather than one or two heavy blows'. To the coroner, Jeffree responded: 'It *would* be possible to have been done by hitting the head with a flat blunt instrument or on a flat blunt instrument'. (The emphases are mine, not those of the inquest record.) Though his use of the conditional tense suggests Dr Jeffree was hesitant when discussing how George received his injuries, it also suggests that he recognised Margaret's account of what had happened was possible.

The typed deposition submitted to the inquest by Detective Bryan Rogers from Horsham Police is in the same official, detailed style as Dr Jeffree's. Detective Rogers explained that he had visited the Deep Lead home and questioned Margaret Cowper about George's death, and then accompanied her to Stawell Police Station where she was charged with her baby's murder. His statement contains additional information not present in the doctor's deposition. He described Margaret Cowper as wearing a dressing gown and having bare feet. His questions took

her through her evening: putting her daughter to bed, feeding George five ounces of Glaxo (a dried milk baby formula), reading a paper, and going to sleep. Roger's statement continued with Margaret's account of George's death quoted previously. He then went on:

> I said to her, "Have you ever had these bad dreams before?" She replied, "Yes, when I get worried I have bad dreams, I still dream about the boy I lost two years ago, he was drowned in the dam near our house."
>
> I said to her, "What do you do when you wake up out of these dreams?" She replied, "I usually wake up crying or screaming." [10]

Rogers' reference to the drowning of Margaret's first son Brian two years earlier evokes her ongoing grief at his death, evident in her comment that she continued dreaming about him. As well, her statement to Rogers indicated that the nightmare Margaret claimed she had had when she struck George was not her first. Her answer also indicated that she was going through an anxious time: 'when I get worried I have bad dreams'. Looking after a newborn and a toddler while living in a small bungalow on her mother's farm, Margaret had reason to be worried and was also clearly still suffering from the distress that Brian's drowning had caused her.

Rogers, questioning whether Margaret had killed George because she lost control, asked if she was sure that she had not struck the baby in temper because she was upset that he was crying and hard to manage. Margaret replied that she loved the baby, did not know what made her hit him and reiterated: 'I am sure it must have been the dream'. An additional cause of her worry became evident when Rogers asked where her husband was. Margaret replied that she did not know and had not seen him for five months, though she had had a telegram three weeks before. Despite the formal police style and Rogers' suggestion that she hit George in anger, Rogers' deposition presented the inquest with a picture of Margaret as a deserted mother, mourning the loss of her first child and plagued by nightmares from which she woke up weeping.[11] The fact that Rogers asked whether she had lost control and hit the baby hints that the detective might have been familiar with such conduct in other cases he had dealt with.

Though the depositions of Detective Rogers and Dr Jeffree are presented in the systematic formal style of official statements, their combined evidence presents a picture of a distraught woman, still

mourning the loss of her first child, deserted by her husband while pregnant, who, barefoot and clad in her night clothes, was walking the paddock with her dead baby in her arms.

The depositions of Margaret and her mother Muriel Farrer seem more spontaneous and more personal, given the limits imposed by the inquest. After providing the factual information identifying her family relationship to Margaret and George, Muriel's first comment was about her personal relationship with her daughter and the absence of her son-in-law, as if her key concern was her daughter's desertion by her husband and Margaret's need for support: 'I have been in close touch with my daughter since Xmas 1949 and she has not seen her husband since then. She has had the care of the children and has had several letters from husband'.[12] Her next comments suggested that all may not have been well with her daughter, but Muriel also emphasised Margaret's love for George: 'Prior to the birth of deceased child I noticed my daughter to be very quiet. She loved the baby. Prior to the birth of the child she kept saying she hoped the child would be a little boy'. Her next statement supported Margaret's defence that she had hit George in the throes of a nightmare. Muriel recounted an incident that had occurred two days before George's death. Margaret had left the baby with Muriel while she put Charlotte to sleep in the bungalow. Twenty minutes or so later, Margaret hurried in. She went to the bassinette, then pulled the clothes back to make sure the baby was all right.[13] Muriel stressed that Margaret had been dreaming: 'She rushed to the bassinette pulled the clothes & said "I must have fallen off to sleep & I thought someone had taken the baby"'.[14]

Muriel's deposition supports Margaret's statement to Detective Rogers that she was suffering from nightmares and reiterates her fears of losing her children. Muriel then went on to say how she and her husband left the farm early on 19 May, leaving Margaret alone with the two children. Again, she pre-empted the idea that Margaret was not coping by stating that Margaret 'appeared to be quite normal & was feeding baby with bottle. It took to the bottle quite easily. She had no trouble'. In response to a question from Mr O'Driscoll, Margaret's mother responded that her daughter had been home from hospital for a week and that during that time she had seen her 'constantly—day and night', assisting her with George's care. Muriel continued: 'She did not at anytime [sic] do anything, say anything, give the assumption that she did

not want the child'. Finally, in response to the coroner, Muriel returned to her previous point that the baby had been no trouble: 'It was a very good baby. Not fretful or troublesome in anyway'.[15] Muriel, with prompting from Margaret's legal representative, was indirectly defending Margaret against the implied accusation contained in Detective Rogers' question on the night of George's death, when he asked Margaret whether she 'had lost her temper and hit the baby because he was crying and hard to manage'.

The language of Margaret Cowper's deposition is in contrast to the way Dr Jeffree, Detective Rogers and her mother spoke. Her account is a minute-by-minute description of what happened. She talked about feeding the baby before going to sleep and then described her dream about her husband returning and threatening to take her children. Next, she described how in the dream Henry was hitting her, how she hit him back, and how she woke to discover she was hitting the baby. She mentioned switching on the light, the baby crying and how she 'cuddled him up to me and he stopped crying. Then he closed his little eyes and I thought he had gone to sleep'. When she laid George down, he began to cough up blood and Margaret picked him up, ran into the main house and called the doctor. In responding to a question from Detective Sergeant Tremewan, she replied that she had not been living with her husband Henry since 18 January that year, that she had not quarrelled with him prior to his leaving and, although she had had about six letters from him, she would not have received more than £15 in them. Only then did she describe her day—home alone, her only activity going to the store hoping to find a letter from Henry. After she called Dr Jeffree, Margaret said that she walked with the baby in her arms, corroborating the doctor's account of finding her walking in the paddock.[16]

Margaret Cowper gave three accounts of George's death. The coroner commented on the consistency of Margaret's story: 'She has told that story from the beginning at a time when she could not conceivably concoct the story'.[17] If Margaret had made up the story of the dream to excuse herself for losing her temper and assaulting the baby, that might have become evident if she had later contradicted herself. Remembering exactly what she had said to the doctor or the police at a time when she was deeply distressed would have been difficult. Conversely, a liar might rehearse a cover story and then repeat it exactly each time. Though the three accounts contain the same particulars, they do not read like carbon

copies. In all three accounts, she claimed that she was asleep when she began striking George. Recounting the dream violence, Margaret said to Detective Rogers that Henry had hit her across the face. In court, she stated that 'he seemed to start hitting me'—the same information, but not a word-for-word repetition. In describing George's death, Margaret told the police that: 'His little eyes opened and I laid him down next to me, his eyes closed, I thought he was asleep'. At the inquest, she declared: 'Then he closed his little eyes and I thought he had gone to sleep. I laid him down'—the same events, but not recounted the same way. One significant difference between the accounts is that Margaret told both the doctor and Detective Rogers that she was shouting 'I hate you' or 'Get away, I hate you'.[18] She did not repeat this in court. Her legal representative may have advised her not to, since it could have been taken as meaning that she hated George, not his father.

The inquest depositions combine to provide a picture of a young mother, still grieving for the loss of her son two years earlier, left alone by her husband while pregnant and provided by him with little money. The way she referred to dreaming about her husband hitting her and threatening to take her children suggests that these may have been real fears, and not just a nightmare. Despite her mother's assurance at the inquest that Margaret was not having problems, the stories of her previous nightmares suggest that she was deeply anxious, perhaps fearing that Henry would indeed return and take the children.

Community Attitudes and Media Views

The stereotype of women's *natural* motherliness prevalent in Australia in the post-war period acted to Margaret's advantage. In his inquest finding, Coroner Biggin concluded that 'George Peter Cowper … died from cerebral haemorrhage resulting from blows … inflicted by his mother Margaret Muriel Cowper the said Margaret Muriel Cowper being at the time of infliction of the said blows under the influence of sleep and unconscious of the nature of her actions'.[19] In the newspaper account of the inquest, though not in the inquest documentation, Coroner Biggin went further, stating that: 'A mother would be the last person to inflict injury on her own child—rather she would treat it with every loving care'. He appealed for sympathy for the mother,[20] and concluded that Margaret Cowper's action was involuntary.

The death and the inquest were reported both locally and interstate.[21] The *Stawell Times and Wimmera Advertiser* (*STWA*) and

the *Horsham Times* carried front-page accounts.[22] *The Stawell Times* set the tone of newspaper coverage with its 23 May headline: 'Boy's Tragic Death: Mother charged with murder'. The article's opening line reiterated the headline's theme of tragedy: 'One of the most pathetic cases the local police have had to deal with in their history came under notice late on Friday night, and it caused a wave of sorrow to spread over the district'.[23] There was no sensationalism here, no blaming of the mother, only an expression of the heartbreak experienced by the community at the loss of a young child. The *Stawell Times*'s account of the 26 May inquest noted 'a lack of morbidity on the part of local people and those who attended were interested parties'.[24] Later newspaper articles on the inquest followed the lead given by Coroner Biggins in his summation that the death was caused by the unconscious actions of the mother during a nightmare. The *STWA* described Margaret's behaviour in court, reporting that she showed the strain she was under, sat with her head in her hands and sobbed.[25] The *Horsham Times* headlined its account with the coroner's appeal for sympathy for the mother.[26] The local community and the media were supportive of Margaret Cowper rather than condemnatory. Several explanations for this are possible. Sympathy for Margaret may have prevented people gossiping or condemning her. In a small community, locals would know enough about her life to decide whether they believed her story. If she had been the victim of domestic violence and if locals knew about Henry's absence and his failure to send money, then they could be less likely to condemn her. The social position of the Farrers and the Cowpers within the community would also have played a role in determining how locals reacted.

Socioeconomic Circumstances of Rural Mothers

Margaret Cowper's socioeconomic position was a complex one. Evidence given about her husband's failure to send her enough money suggests poverty, but her mother was a wealthy woman on whom Margaret was probably financially dependent. Given Margaret's husband's failure to provide for her, it is likely that it was her mother who provided the money for Margaret's legal representation. Margaret Cowper's grandfather Graham Thorncroft had died in 1944, and her mother Muriel, as his only daughter, inherited his substantial land and savings. The inventory prepared for probate in the Supreme Court of Victoria (necessary because he died intestate) estimated his nett worth as £7,239 19s 10d.[27] Muriel was a wealthy woman and the owner of considerable

agricultural land.[28] As the daughter of a grazier, Muriel Farrer would have commanded respect in the local district. Added to this, although Henry Cowper had become an itinerant labourer, his brother Aubrey had prospered and was president of the Shire of Stawell three years earlier. Margaret would also have been eligible for some government financial assistance: £5 when George was born and ten shillings weekly in child endowment, though she probably would not have received this in the three weeks since George's birth.[29] But, in their article, 'Saving the Child and Punishing the Mother: Single Mothers and the State 1912–1942', Renate Howe and Shurlee Swain argue: 'The endowment payments were not large enough to enable a supporting single mother to care for her children if she was not in a well-paid job'.[30] Though Margaret Cowper herself may have had only a very limited income from her husband or the government, she did have a supportive family with substantial assets, who were likely to have been well respected in the community. Other mothers living on small rural farms, and, indeed, deserted mothers in all areas, were raising their children in straitened financial circumstances without the fallback of a wealthy parent.

But having money did not necessarily provide amenities in rural areas either. While only incomplete information about Margaret Cowper's specific living conditions is available, we know she was living on a farm in a sleep-out behind her mother and stepfather's house, with a 3-week-old baby and a toddler, the latter sharing her bed.[31] Police photographs of the bungalow indicate sparse living conditions. It was small, and the interior photograph shows only an older-style bed, a bedside table and a basic baby's bassinette (Figure 3).[32] Margaret had access to a telephone, because she called the doctor. She had some form of electric lighting as both she and the detective spoke of switching on the light, but this power was most likely run from a generator and stored in a battery.[33]

Figure 3: Interior of the Cowper bungalow. Photograph in proceedings of inquest held on the body of George Peter Cowper at Stawell, 26 May 1950 (Courtesy Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS00024/P/0000, Unit 001637, Vsc1, 1950/612. Image copied for research purposes by Marilyn Bowler)

Whatever Margaret Cowper's financial status, the inquest reports on the deaths of Brian and George Cowper indicate the difficult circumstances in which many rural mothers raised their children in the post-war period. At the time of Brian's drowning, Margaret was living in a farmhouse without running water. Giving her deposition about his death, Margaret testified that she was washing clothes in the kitchen and went outside to get water. So, she had no separate laundry and no running water, let alone hot water. When she found Brian in the waterhole, she took him in her arms, ran to the road and flagged down a passing motorist, so at that stage she had no telephone and no car available.[34] If the Cowpers did have a car or truck, it was with her husband who was not on the property at the time, so, like many rural women, Margaret Cowper was isolated.

This mirrors the conditions described in the 1940s reports by A.J. and J.J. McIntyre, *Country Towns of Victoria: A Social Survey* and Alan J. Holt's *Wheat Farms of Victoria: A Sociological Survey*, which provide a detailed picture of the socioeconomic context in which rural mothers, including those in the Wimmera, raised their children at the beginning of the post-war period.[35] In their study of small towns in the state of Victoria, the McIntyres commented on the need for public transport, the radio, the car and the telephone to end the social isolation of country people.[36] Most farms were not connected to the electricity grid, and having their own generator was often too expensive for farmers. The areas around Stawell were only connected to the electricity grid in the 1960s.[37] Household chores, cleaning, cooking, and washing, were, therefore, onerous and time consuming for rural women. In summer, farm wives cooked in hot kitchens heated by wood stoves, frequently without a sink or a hot water service. Just as Margaret Cowper did, women on small farms had to bring in water from outside and heat it to clean the house, bathe the children, and wash clothes, including the men's work clothes.[38] Though the McIntyres and Holt were describing wartime conditions, goods and building supplies were still in short supply in the early post-war years. Rural mothers were raising their children in homes lacking basic amenities and without the social contact and support that more densely populated neighbourhoods and better public transport facilitated in urban areas.

Rural Women's Isolation

Holt commented that women living on wheat farms were virtually 'social hermits' with their only social contact outside the home being attendance at church or a 'periodical visit to the country township. This undoubtedly has psychological reactions, which in turn affect not only the woman herself but her immediate family contact'.[39] Though Margaret Cowper was living near her mother and stepfather on the farm, her contact with others outside the farm would have been circumscribed. The day that George died, she had been alone from 2.15 a.m. when the Farrers had left for Melbourne.[40] A number of people I interviewed from the local area for my research on parenting commented on their mothers' seclusion in the family farmhouse, with fathers often away working from Sunday to Friday night, often for months at a time. Jane McLeish, born three years earlier than George Cowper, mentioned that 'Mum was a very nervous person, so at shearing time when Dad was away, for months, on end, would only come home at weekends, being the eldest I had the role of being Mum's security'. She commented 'when Dad was away Mum used to sleep with the rifle, beside the bed. Absolutely petrified, she was'.[41] Alan Watson, born two years after George Cowper, and growing up on his family's farm, remarked: '[W]e only had the one car, and quite often, Mum'd be marooned here, for a few days … and so if Dad had the car, we were confined to barracks, if we wanted something, and Mum wanted something, we'd ride the bike down the town, to the shop'.[42] Rural mothers, like Margaret Cowper, could thus be isolated in distant farm houses with only their children for company.

Medical Facilities

One of the problems of rural living described by the McIntyre and Holt reports was that medical services were limited, expensive, and generally confined to larger rural towns. McIntyre and McIntyre recorded insufficient doctors and specialists. Though most towns had infant welfare centres, Holt's research suggested that farmers' wives seldom used them, and the McIntyres recorded complaints about their availability.[43] No reference is made by any witness at the inquest about Margaret and George attending an infant welfare session either in Stawell or in a local hall. The limited availability of medical practitioners in Stawell is implied by the fact that Dr Jeffree was not only Margaret Cowper's family doctor, but had attended George's birth, provided antenatal care, and was also the district medical examiner

who performed the post mortem.[44] If rural women were experiencing difficulties coping, a contributing factor was that medical and support services were in short supply and not easily accessible, particularly in families where there was only one vehicle used by the husband for work.

Infanticide

Except for a brief period during the early twentieth century, Australian attitudes to, and treatment of, women who committed infanticide have been more lenient than might be expected, even though, as Judith Allen stated in *Sex and Secrets: Crimes Involving Women Since 1880*: 'Infanticide was classified as a murder like any other and punishable by death'.[45] Allen commented that, though late nineteenth-century coroners' records show that 'many babies were dispatched at birth, few women were brought to trial'.[46] Commenting on the leniency frequently shown to obviously guilty, unmarried 'offenders' by 'judges, juries, counsel, police, journalists and others', Allen suggested that this was the result of their familiarity with the women's situations.[47] Infanticide was a drastic form of fertility control and an indicator of sheer desperation. Swain and Howe argued too that doctors, police, judges and juries sympathised with the mothers and endeavoured to lessen charges and sentences.[48] Both Allen's, and Swain and Howe's, research indicated a change in attitude in the twentieth century with infanticide gradually being seen as a result of mothers being 'mad' rather than 'bad'.[49] Allen's work demonstrated further that the incidence of mothers killing their babies decreased from the interwar years, and that those indicted were mainly married women who had killed older babies and children 'in the context of marital breakdown (due to causes such as infidelity, violence, sexual estrangement, desertion, unemployment and non-support) usually exacerbated by deep psychological depression'. Most of these women then attempted suicide: 'Such circumstances led to an understanding of infanticide as an irrational act of demented women in need of psychiatric help'.[50] However, Swain and Howe contended that, though mothers of newborns received more lenient sentences, those who killed older infants still faced charges of wilful murder.[51]

Though Allen's study of infanticide is largely based on New South Wales cases, her evidence shows parallels with the death of George Cowper. Margaret Cowper was a married woman living in a small rural community. As was the case with many of the mothers studied by Allen, Swain and Howe, her marriage had broken down; she and

her husband were separated; and she had largely lost his financial support, though she did have the support of her more affluent mother.[52] Equally evident in the newspaper reports is the community sympathy for Margaret Cowper. Headlines mention the coroner's appeal for sympathy, describe the death as tragic, and reiterate that George was killed by his mother in a nightmare. Though no psychiatric or medical evidence was called, except for that of the doctor who performed the post mortem, the coroner's acceptance that the child's death was not intentional, but occurred while Margaret Cowper was in the throes of a nightmare, reflects Allen's comment that infanticide increasingly came to be seen as an irrational act of women needing psychiatric assistance, not condemnation.

Recognition of Postnatal Depression/Psychosis

Though the coroner's report and the local papers indicated local sympathy and support for Margaret Cowper, none of the accounts considered the possibility that she might have been suffering from a form of mental illness, and that she might therefore need psychiatric help as well as community sympathy. Though most newspaper accounts mentioned Margaret Cowper's husband's lengthy absence, and the *Age* and the *Argus* mentioned the amount of money he sent, no attention was given to the effects of loneliness on her ability to deal with two children under two years of age, one of them just three weeks old. Similarly, though mention is made of the drowning of her first child, no connection is made either in the coroner's report or in the newspaper articles of possible effects on her psychological health.

Associations between childbirth and maternal mental disturbance have long been evident in western culture. In Victoria, as early as 1900, the defence in the trial of Maggie Heffernan for the murder of her newborn son mentioned 'puerperal mania', and Dr Harold Smith testified that for pregnant women: 'There is a liability to mental derangement during the whole 9 months', part of a growing recognition that mothers guilty of killing babies were generally 'mad, not bad'.[53] However, in post-war Australia, beyond the concept of 'baby blues', seen as a short-lived problem in the first few weeks after the baby's birth, there was little public acknowledgment or discussion of the problem either in women's magazines and or in medical self-help books. Even in 1965, 'a woman doctor', writing in a special supplement 'Baby Book' in the *Australian Women's Weekly*, suggested that mothers' problems were

more the result of their coming from broken homes or turning to their own mothers instead of to their husbands. The woman doctor never suggested that some new mothers might have more serious problems.[54] Moreover, in what was regarded by many women as a revolutionary medical text about women's health, *Everywoman* (published in 1971), Dr Derek Llewellyn Jones had only one paragraph on what he termed 'third day blues'.[55] Nevertheless, it is clear from historical studies such as those discussed above that there was some recognition by the courts of the more serious levels the syndrome could assume long before the phenomenon was named and before infanticide was distinguished from murder in law (1958 in Victoria).

As Keira V. Williams has commented of current understandings,

> there is a developing consensus among medical scholars that maternal infanticide is heavily correlated with postpartum mental illnesses, which are, in turn, heavily correlated with specific socioeconomic factors. Poverty, a lack of social or community support, and intimate partner violence, for example, are all linked to both postpartum depression and maternal violence, including infanticide.[56]

Margaret Cowper had some family and financial support, as well as community sympathy, after George's death, but she clearly needed more support than her mother and stepfather could provide, as she contended with having had three children in three years, the death of her first child, the lengthy absence of her husband, straitened financial circumstances, and, possibly, domestic violence, all of which may have contributed to the disturbed state of mind that we now associate with postnatal/postpartum depression. However, making a diagnosis at this distance in time is fraught with difficulties. Notably, mental health law specialist Bernadette McSherry advises caution in leaping too easily to conclusions about involuntary actions such as Margaret's. 'Automatism', she has said, 'is the term used to cover conduct which is involuntary for legal purposes and which is not caused by a disease of the mind'. Automatism includes sleepwalking. Writing in the 1990s, McSherry dismissed this as a legal defence for criminal acts, commenting more specifically that it is difficult 'to see how postpartum depression … can result in involuntary conduct'.[57]

Conclusion

While the coronial inquest records and newspaper accounts do not enable us to determine with any degree of certainty what caused Margaret Cowper to kill her infant son George, her story can give us an insight into the lives of women on farms in the post-war period and hence the mental stress to which they may have been subject arising from their financial dependence on their husbands, their emotional vulnerability when deserted, their social isolation, their lack of basic amenities such as electricity and running water, and the lack of medical and psychiatric assistance available to them.

Notes

1   Deposition of Margaret Muriel Cowper, Proceedings of inquest held on the body of George Peter Cowper at Stawell, 26 May 1950, VPRS00024/P/0000, Unit 001637, Vsc1, 1950/612, p. 1, Public Record Office Victoria (PROV).

2   The town of Deep Lead, 11 kilometres or nearly 7 miles north east of Stawell, a 10- to 15-minute drive, was developed when gold was discovered in July 1857. As the gold supply declined, some residents turned to agriculture as a source of income, particularly vegetable market gardening. Deep Lead's population has fluctuated between 250 and 300 people from the late nineteenth century to the early 21st century. See 'Deep Lead', www.victorianplaces.com.au/deep-lead, accessed 21 July 2016. The nearby borough (town) of Stawell had a population of 5,250 in December 1951, and the Stawell Shire, which includes Deep Lead, a population of 2,510. Carmel and Cliff Loats, *Deep Lead and Back*, Deep Lead, Deep Lead Progress Associations, 1993, pp. 4, 6, 41; *Victorian Year Book, 1950–51*, p. 335.

3   Deposition of Detective Bryan Rogers, Proceedings of inquest held on the body of George Peter Cowper at Stawell, 26 May 1950, VPRS00024/P/0000, Unit 001637, Vsc1, 1950/612, pp. 9–10, PROV.

4   Coroner P.R. Biggin, Proceedings of inquest held on the body of George Peter Cowper at Stawell, 26 May 1950, VPRS00024/P/0000, Unit 001637, Vsc1, 1950/612, p. 1, PROV.

5   Deposition of Muriel Sarah Ann Farrer, Proceedings of inquest held on the body of George Peter Cowper at Stawell, 26 May 1950, VPRS00024/P/0000, Unit 001637, Vsc1, 1950/612, p. 1, PROV.

6   Deposition of First Constable Victor Heather, Proceedings of inquest held on the body of Brian Cowper, 21 April 1948, VPRS24/P000/1597/443, p. 2, PROV.

7   Harold Farrer's deposition related to his identification of George's body at the Stawell Mortuary on 20 May 1950 and contained no information about Margaret's relationship with her son nor about George's death.

8   The spelling, syntax and punctuation from the depositions quoted are as recorded in the inquest record.

9   Deposition of Dr Jeffree, Proceedings of inquest held on the body of George Peter Cowper at Stawell, 26 May 1950, VPRS00024/P/0000, Unit 001637, Vsc1, 1950/612, pp. 5–6, PROV.

10 Deposition of Detective Bryan Rogers, Proceedings of inquest held on the body of George Peter Cowper at Stawell, 26 May 1950, VPRS00024/P/0000, Unit 001637, Vsc1, 1950/612, pp. 9–10, PROV.

11 Rogers, p. 11.

12 Muriel Farrer, p. 1.

13 Muriel Farrer, pp. 1–2.

14 Muriel Farrer, p. 2.

15 Muriel Farrer, p. 3.

16 Margaret Muriel Cowper, Proceedings of inquest held on the body of George Peter Cowper at Stawell, 26 May 1950, VPRS00024/P/0000, Unit 001637, Vsc1, 1950/612, p. 2, PROV.

17 *Stawell Times and Wimmera Advertiser* (*STWA*), 30 May 1950, p. 3.

18 Jeffree, p. 2; Rogers, p. 1.

19 Coronial Inquest 26 May 1950, VPRS00024/P/0000, Unit 001637, Vsc1, 1950/612, p. 1, PROV.

20 'Child's Death at Deep Lead Investigated', *STWA*, 30 May 1950, p. 3.

21 The *Age* and the *Argus* in Melbourne reported the death and the second inquest. Interstate, the *Advertiser* in Adelaide and the *Sydney Morning Herald* carried accounts of the inquest. 'Charge Follows Infant's Death', *Age*, 22 May 1950, p. 3; 'Mother Killed Baby During Dream', *Age*, 27 May 1950, p. 3; 'Murder of Baby Is Alleged', *Argus*, 22 May 1950, p. 3; 'Mother Killed Baby During Nightmare', *Argus*, 27 May 1950, p. 3; 'Killed Baby During Nightmare', *Advertiser*, 27 May 1950, p. 1; 'Two Babies Killed Accidentally', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 May 1950, p. 7.

22 'Boy's Tragic death: Mother Charged with Murder', *STWA*, 23 May 1950, p. 1; 'Child's Death at Deep Lead: Killed by Mother in Nightmare', *STWA*, 30 May 1950, pp. 1 & 3; 'Mother Charged with Son's Murder', *Horsham Times* (*HT*), 23 May 1950, p. 1; 'Appeals for Sympathy for Young Mother', *HT*, 30 May 1950, p. 3;

23 'Boy's Tragic death: Mother Charged with Murder', *STWA*, 23 May 1950, p. 1.

24 'Child's Death at Deep Lead Investigated', p. 1.

25 'Child's Death at Deep Lead Investigated', p. 1.

26 'Appeals for Sympathy for Young Mother', p. 3.

27 Estate of Graham Thorncroft, Probate Jurisdiction in the Supreme Court of Victoria, VPRS28/P3/4023, 357511, PROV.

28 According to the Reserve Bank Pre-Decimal Inflation Calculator of comparative wealth, this is equivalent to $502,155. See http://www.rba.gov.au/calculator/annualPreDecimal.html, accessed 25 January 2017.

29 A one-off, lump sum £5 maternity allowance had been introduced by the Australian government in 1912. The Commonwealth introduced child endowment in 1941. This provided a weekly payment of five shillings to a mother for each child after the first. This was extended in 1950 to provide five shillings for the first child and ten shillings for subsequent children. 'History of Pensions and Other Benefits in Australia', *Year Book Australia 1988*, at http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/94713ad445ff1425ca25682000192af2/8e72c4526a94aaedca2569de00296978!OpenDocument, accessed 1 August 2016; 'Social Security Payments for People Caring for Children, 1912–2008: A Chronology—Tables 2-4', Parliament of Australia, at http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BN/0809/childrenpartb, accessed 2 August 2016.

30 Renate Howe and Shurlee Swain, 'Saving the Child and Punishing the Mother: Single Mothers and the State 1912–1942', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 17, no. 37, 1993, p. 43.

31 Rogers, p. 10.

32 More substantial wicker and wooden bassinettes were available with shelves to put nappies etc.

33 Rogers, p. 1, (p. 9 of the inquest record); Margaret Muriel Cowper, Proceedings of Inquest held on the body of George Peter Cowper, p. 1.

34 Deposition of Margaret Muriel Cowper, Proceedings of the inquest held on the body of Brian John Cowper, 21 April 1948, VPRS24/P000/1597/443, p. 1, PROV.

35 Alan J. Holt, *Wheat Farms of Victoria: A Sociological Survey*, Melbourne, School of Agriculture, University of Melbourne, 1947; A.J. and J.J. McIntyre, *Country Towns of Victoria: A Social Survey*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press in association with Oxford University Press, 1944. Holt surveyed the entire Victorian wheat belt, including the Wimmera, of which Stawell and Deep Lead are a part. The McIntyres surveyed 180 small towns throughout Victoria.

36 Holt, pp. 119–22; McIntyre and McIntyre, pp. 112–13.

37 Several interviewees mentioned local balls in the 1960s to celebrate the electricity being turned on.

38 Holt, chapter 5, *passim*, and pp. 127–30.

39 Holt, pp. 172–3.

40 Muriel Farrer, p. 2.

41 Marilyn Bowler, Interview with Jane McLeish, 19 March 2015, pp. 1 & 13.

42 Marlyn Bowler, Interview with Alan and Terri Watson, 19 July 2015, pp. 10–11.

43 Holt, pp. 123–5; McIntyre and McIntyre, pp. 44 & 130.

44 Jeffree, p. 6.

45 Judith A. Allen, *Sex and Secrets: Crimes Involving Australian Women since 1880*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 28.

46 The prosecution's problem in the case of newborn deaths was to show that the child had been born alive and then murdered. If this could not be proven, then concealing a death brought a maximum penalty of four years imprisonment. See Allen, p. 28. A search of lists of those hanged in Victoria from 1852 to 1975 (when capital punishment was abolished) indicates that no woman was executed for the murder of a newborn child, though Emma Williams was executed in 1895 for drowning her 2-year-old son, and Martha Needle, who had murdered her three children, was executed for killing her fiancé's brother. 'Particulars of executions' (Hangman's journal for HM Gaol, Melbourne), http://media.heraldsun.com.au/multimedia/2012/05/hang/index.html#/The%20Hanging%20Book/0, accessed 1 August 2016; 'List of People Legally Executed in Australia', en.wikipedia.org.wiki/List-of-people-legally-executed-in-Australia, accessed 22 July 2016.

47 Allen, pp. 31–2. Some women were acquitted even when they had admitted their guilt.

48 Shurlee Swain with Renate Howe, *Single Mothers and their Children: Disposal, Punishment and Survival in Australia*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 95–6.

49 Swain with Howe, p. 96.

50 Allen, p. 162.

51 Swain with Howe, pp. 97–8.

52 Though the coroner's report records Margaret's mother's evidence and her stepfather's identification of George's body, no mention of the baby's father occurs in the record or any newspaper report, suggesting he did not return for the inquest into his son's death.

53 Margaret Anderson, 'Maggie Heffernan' p. 3, https://oldtreasurybuiding.org.au/maggie-heffernan, accessed 7 April 2020.

54 'Facing the Baby Blues', 'Baby Book', *Australian Women's Weekly* (*AWW*), 10 March 1965, pp. 12–13.

55 Derek Llewellyn Jones, *Everywoman*, Faber & Faber, London, 1971, p. 214.

56 Keira V. Williams, 'Feminism, Infanticide and Intersectionality in Victorian America', in Michelle Hughes Miller, Tamar Hager, and Rebecca Jaremko Bromwich (eds), *Bad Mothers: Representations, Regulation and Resistance*, Toronto, Demeter Press, 2017, pp. 256–7, https://jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1rrd9h6.20, accessed 1 December 2019.

57 Bernadette McSherry, 'The Return of the Raging Hormones Theory: Premenstrual Syndrome, Postpartum Disorders and Criminal Responsibility, *Sydney Law Review*, vol. 15, no. 292, 1993, pp. 311–12.

HISTORICAL NOTES

Letters to 'Dear Rupert', 1874–75

Annette Lewis

Abstract

This article is based on letters, extracted from Sir William Clarke's letter book, that William wrote to his brother, Joseph, and to his 9-year-old son, Rupert, as the rest of the family—the other three children from William's first marriage, his present wife Janet and their two children (one born on the trip), and Janet's sister Lily—embarked on a tour of England and Europe in 1874 and 1875. Rupert remained at home in the care of Joseph and attended Melbourne's Wesley College. These letters, written some 145 years ago, offer a rich source of historical material that sheds light on a father–son relationship and provides glimpses of the paternal expectations that gave rise to tensions between the two.

Introduction

William Clarke (1831–1897) was the son of W.J.T. Clarke (1805–1874), a wealthy pastoralist who owned large properties in the colonies of Tasmania and Victoria. In 1862, William Clarke moved from Tasmania to manage his father's extensive pastoral interests in the Ballarat, Warrnambool and Gippsland districts in Victoria. He and his wife, Mary, established their home on the Sunbury estate, part of the 137,000 acres Clarke owned in the county of Bourke. The couple had four children—Blanche, Rupert, Ethel and Ernest. In March 1871, after Mary Clarke died following an accident, Janet Snodgrass, Mary's companion and the children's governess, remained at Sunbury to care for the four children. Two years later, William and Janet were married. This marriage produced eight children—Clive, Mary, Russell, Petrea, Francis, Reginald, Vera and Ivy.

Clarke was a generous benefactor. Following his death in December 1897, the *Argus* published a lengthy review of his life, which included this statement: 'Sir William Clarke rendered Australia a great service by showing how a great fortune may be so utilised as to disarm

criticism and secure a widespread affection and a general respect'. Likewise, the *Age* noted that: 'Sir William Clarke set a good example to the wealthy members of the community that a large fortune was a trust to be administered to the general advantage'. Also, the *Australasian* declared: 'The keynote of his life was its prevailing spirit of kindness, and his great claim to remembrance might be summed up in a single line, "Write me as one who loves his fellow-men"'.[1]

Clarke's generosity was extended to many institutions and societies, including the Church of England, the Abbotsford Convent, Melbourne University, Trinity College, the Janet Clarke Hostel, the Academy of Music, the Melbourne National Museum, the defence forces, the Homoeopathic Hospital, the Women's Hospital, the Blind Asylum, St John Ambulance, various agricultural societies, the Masonic Lodge and the Indian Famine Funds. After Sir William's sudden demise in November 1897, Janet Clarke, in response to a letter of appreciation from the Trinity College Council, wrote:

> I know that you all intend it as a mark of honour and affection in which you hold the memory of my dear husband and I think that to have lived one's life with anyone so noble and unselfish and desirous of the good of others—in the widest sense is in itself the greatest privilege.[2]

This view was clearly supported by Lord Kimberley, secretary of state for the colonies 1880–1882, who wrote to Lord Normandy, the governor of Victoria, after William Clarke was awarded a baronetcy in 1882:

> He commands the respect and regard of almost everybody here and I do not believe that you ever advised the conferring an honour upon anyone, which was deserved better. He is one of the few colonists who, having great wealth, endeavour to use it for the benefit of his country, and his poorer neighbours, instead of for his own glorification and advancement.[3]

Sir William's son, Francis (Frank) Clarke, commented: 'To us his sons and daughters, he was a quiet kindly father ever seeking companionship with us and almost shy in the seeking, less perchance we might think he was thrusting himself upon us'.[4]

This view was not necessarily that of Rupert Clarke, Sir William's eldest son, as Frank later acknowledged. In 1946, Frank, Rupert's half-brother, by then a businessman in his own right and a past minister of

lands, public works and water supply as well as president of Victoria's Legislative Council, wrote in his memoir of his family:

> My father with his justness and consideration for others realised that there might be some jealousy between the two families, but over the long years this only eventuated in the case of Rupert, who, being older, did resent, and perhaps naturally, his own mother's fading memory and in consequence spent much of his time playing polo and in travel. On the occasions in my boyhood when he did return to Rupertswood, it was for a scant week and then he was obviously not happy in his surroundings.[5]

Letters from Sir William to the Young Rupert

The tension between Sir William and his oldest son, Rupert, can be traced back to Rupert's separation from the rest of the family when they journeyed overseas without him between August 1874 and December 1875, not arriving home until January 1876. An examination of the correspondence between William, his brother Joseph Clarke, and his then 9-year-old son throws some light on the origins of Rupert's jealousy towards his father's second family and his alienation from William himself. During these seventeen months, Rupert remained at home in the care of his uncle, Joseph, while his father, his new wife Janet, Rupert's two brothers and sister and his half brother Clive travelled to England and Europe. As an historian, I found in these complex letters—as well as in the periods of silence on Rupert's part—a rich source of historical material for examining this father–son relationship in the context of William's remarriage and Rupert's sense of abandonment. The resulting feelings of alienation would remain with Rupert for the rest of his life.

Rupert was six when his mother, Mary, died suddenly after she had fallen awkwardly from a coach. This fall brought on a miscarriage that resulted in her death. It is likely that Rupert was in the carriage with his mother, brother, sisters and Janet when the frightened horses bolted. This tragic event must have shocked and confused this small boy, now deprived of his mother's love and care. Eighteen months later, Janet Snodgrass, his mother's companion, became engaged to his father, and two years after his mother's death Janet and William were married. Within a year Rupert's half brother, Clive, the first of William and Janet's eight children, was born.[6]

In January 1874, a year after his marriage to Janet, William wrote to the Reverend Smith, the headmaster of Hawthorn Grammar School,

which Rupert, now nine years old, was attending, expressing satisfaction with Rupert's progress. Nevertheless, there were matters that his father required the headmaster to address. He wanted Rupert to pay more attention to 'spelling, reading, arithmetic, plain clear writing and after that Latin and music'. He understood that Rupert's French and Latin pronunciation was not as it should be but believed he needed to spend more time practising the piano, although he did admit that Rupert hated to practise and became miserable when doing so. Since William wanted Rupert to continue his studies until he was 18 or 20, he believed it was particularly important that the boy's memory be accurate: 'In place of extensive study I prefer his knowing one lesson that he can repeat without a mistake to two he would only make one mistake in'.[7]

Perhaps it was William's concern for Rupert's scholastic progress that drove his decision that Rupert should stay at home while the rest of the family travelled overseas later in the year. Rupert Clarke, being the eldest son, would one day inherit the extensive property at Sunbury where the Clarke's new mansion was to be built, and, for this reason, he was given the responsibility of christening the foundation stone of their new home and naming it Rupertswood. This event occurred in August 1874 shortly before the family departed on their tour. By this act, his father was acknowledging the leadership role his eldest son was destined to assume. In the absence of his family, Rupert was to be placed in the care of William's brother, Joseph, who would be acting as William's business manager, and Rupert would attend Wesley College with his two cousins.

William's intention was to remain in close contact with his son through the exchange of letters in the months he was overseas with his other children, Blanche, Ernest and Ethel from his first marriage and Clive and Mary, his children with Janet, Rupert's stepmother. William wrote some of his letters in pencil and at times the handwriting was unclear, so certain words and phrases must have caused difficulty for his secretary, who was required to transcribe William's personal as well as his business letters. Probably, these letters were transcribed in a more formal style, adding punctuation so that the recipient could better understand the contents.

In October 1874, William, obviously displeased at not receiving a letter from Rupert, wrote to his brother from Galle asking him to bring to the schoolmaster's attention Rupert's need to become a 'good

pensman'. He added: 'Give my love to him and tell him the pleasure a letter from him will give me'. A month later he sent Rupert a very long letter from Galle describing the social practices of the native population and adding news of Janet and his travels in Galle.

In the same month, Rupert would have received another letter from his father telling him that he was sending scarf pins to him, his Uncle Joseph, his cousins, William and Lewis, and earrings to his Aunt Caroline. He concluded his letter thus:

> I trust you will pay attention to your lessons as if you only do so you will increase the pleasure of your life. It is a great pleasure to Janet, Lily and Miss Service to be able to speak French to the waiters and I hope you will be able to speak French.

His 'affectionate father' reminded Rupert that he expected his reply to provide an update on the progress of the building of Rupertswood, including how Rupert considered it would look like when finished.

Obviously, Rupert's failure to write letters continued to upset William so, in correspondence to Joseph dated 13 December 1874, he again asked for information about Rupert's behaviour and his performance at his lessons. His next letter to his 'darling Rupert' a week later was more appeasing. Perhaps feeling somewhat guilty at not sending Rupert a Christmas present, he assured him of 'the love we all feel towards you and which I am certain you return. On Christmas morning we will all wish you a long life and health and happiness'. William also promised Rupert that he would organise guns for him and his cousins but that he must learn to use the guns properly before he ventured outside with them to ensure he did not injure himself or others. He further promised that he would have a likeness of Mary Clarke, his mother, painted on ivory for his locket.

Given that this letter would not have arrived until some time after Christmas, the emotional trauma of a Christmas spent without his mother, father, brother and sisters for this 9-year-old boy could only be imagined. Only six when his mother died suddenly, Rupert would have been hurt and puzzled by this enforced separation from his family, and the consequent resentment would affect this young boy for the rest of his life. William's love for his son and anxiety that he should be successful in his studies underpinned the content of his letter, but in reaching out to Rupert from such a distance he failed to find the appropriate words

and tone that might have ameliorated the loneliness and anxiety his son must have been experiencing. Finally, William again came back to a familiar theme in his accustomed paternalistic style:

> In reply to this letter I trust to have a full account of how you enjoyed your holiday and how you like your school. We are all looking out for letters from Australia with news of all of you and I trust to hear a good account from your Uncle Joe about you and that you are able to keep up with your cousins in your lessons.

This fatherly advice would have brought little comfort to Rupert for two reasons. Implied was the belief that Rupert's school performance was not as good as his cousins and, second, Rupert would still have been coming to terms with the news of the arrival of his new half sister, named after his mother. Janet's mother, Agnes Snodgrass, had been sent a telegram notifying her of the birth of Janet and William's first daughter, Mary, on 24 December 1874 at Naples.

Soon after came a letter in which William, probably adopting a practice that father and son had shared at home, told Rupert a joke that Jack Snodgrass, a cousin of Janet's, had related about an Englishman sailing on an Italian boat.

> In the middle of the night he fancied the ship was going sideways so he got up and went on deck and found the watch crew being asleep he at once went to the bell the hours were struck on and gave two or three very loud rings and immediately went back to his berth. The Captain and all the crew of both watches rushed upon deck and enquired what was the matter and the man that was bell ringing said he was wide awake and saw a white devil fall from the sky ring the bell and drop over the side which all believed.

In reaching out in this way it was clear that William wanted to reassure Rupert that despite the distance that separated them they could still share a good joke, as had been their custom.

In early January 1875, another letter was penned to Rupert describing visits to places of interest near Naples, including the Roman Baths and Mount Vesuvius. There was a detailed account of a climb from the Observatory on Mount Vesuvius to the top of the mountain undertaken by Blanche, Blanche's governess (Miss Service), Lily (Janet's sister), and William, where, according to William:

We took a bottle of wine to drink all your healths in Australia but the glass was broken going up but we used the shell of an egg that was cooked in the red hot lava that is on the top of the mountain and drunk it with great pleasure. And all said they never enjoyed wine so much before.

Aware that Rupert would be missing his own mother, William told him that he had sent home the likeness of his mother for his locket before explaining that Janet's little daughter was born at 20 minutes past two o'clock at night, but he had mistakenly dated the telegram the 24th instead of the 25th. He explained to Rupert that the baby had been christened Mary Janet, adding 'she is a good little thing and I am certain you will love her when you see her'. Again, however, his son was reminded how important were his lessons for his future life as 'if you are not equal to boys your own age you will be unable to hold your own with them when you are grown up'.

In his next long business letter to Joe, he asked his brother once again to review Rupert's writing and, if necessary, to contact his schoolmaster to ensure it was given special attention. Perhaps this desire for Rupert to write well sprang from the challenges William himself had experienced in attaining 'good penmanship' when he attended Mr Bonwick's school in Tasmania and later Whitchurch Grammar School in Shropshire in England. Although William had been a conscientious student who excelled at practical subjects, his handwriting was described by his grandson, Michael Clarke, as 'vile'.[8]

Over the next few weeks, William wrote three more letters to Rupert with detailed descriptions of their accommodation in Naples and Rome and their consequent activities. Whether Rupert would have assimilated the geographical and historical commentaries is open to question, but William, intent on sharing the family's travels with his son, described their adventures. For instance, in February 1875 from Rome came this letter to his 'darling Rupert':

We have visited the church of St. Peter and picture galleries also the Capitol which you will learn about when you learn Roman History. Going from our hotel you go up a hill which requires a zigzag road to make it easy for carriages to drive up and in a small garden there is a wolf "the Crest of Rome" in a cage and when you get to the top of the hill you enter the court of the building on one side of which is devoted to ancient history and the others to pictures but in one of the

passages is the Picture Gallery. There are a large number of busts in marble of illustrious Italians who have been dead for forty years and I am pleased to say that they represent better looking men and the sculptors have been more skilful than the Roman emperors and the men that carved them out of marble.

In his next letter, William returned to a familiar theme, possibly having finally received a note from Rupert. In the future, his son was asked to write longer letters with more detail about his interests and the games he was playing and with information about the progress of the house at Sunbury and the number of horses that had been been broken in on the farm. However, in a five-page business letter to Joe, William again complained that he had not received a letter from Rupert, and asked Joe to speak to him kindly about his father's disappointment.

In March, after wishing Rupert many happy returns for his birthday, William delivered another homily.

I trust that every birthday you will remember that you are approaching to the age of a man and I take note of the progress you have made last year and consider if you have mastered sufficient as the greatest pleasure of your life will be a perfect education and if you allow the time when you are young to be spent in idleness you will have a very difficult labour to make up for lost time. The great thing is to do everything well and try and remember it, at all times of your life.

He reminded Rupert that all his family would be very happy to see him as a well-educated man. In addition, he recommended becoming involved in 'manly games' like cricket, swimming and bush walking, which would prepare him for a long, healthy and pleasurable life. In his years spent at Whitchurch Grammar in England, William had played both cricket and football. His physical fitness had meant that when he returned to Victoria, where his father had given him the responsibility of managing huge properties at Dowling Forest and Wimmera in the Western District, he was able to work alongside the station workers and shepherds as well as share their primitive living conditions. He wanted Rupert to be likewise prepared for the demanding work at the properties that would one day be under his control.

In Paris in April, William could finally inform Joe that he had received a nice long letter from Rupert. Perhaps Rupert, at the prompting of his Uncle Joe and the letters from his father, had finally written a

detailed account of his daily life. In any case, in the following August, William, writing from Edinburgh, commented on Rupert's improved writing. If he continued in this way, William counselled, he would eventually be able to write 'a good hand'. He included news of Rupert's brother, who apparently became very fond of donkey riding while they were staying at Scarborough: 'One day Ernest was very much amused at the courier running after the donkey and kicking him to make him move faster'. He also described the new baby, Mary, as a very happy child who seldom cried. The picture of his mother, painted in Florence, was now finished and soon to be sent to London from whence it would be sent on to Victoria.

William informed Rupert that they would return by the mail steamship that left Brindisi on 29 November and expected to land in Melbourne on 11 January 1876. Nearly seventeen months had passed since William had seen Rupert, and he expressed his love for his son with the comment that: 'It would be a happy day when we see your dear face again'. Sadly, William did not finish on this note but suggested to Rupert that he should overcome a shortcoming in his education by learning to swim—a skill that, once mastered, would give him much pleasure for the rest of his life.

William's last—undated—letter to his oldest son, now ten years old, was about Rupert being unattached to Oxford College and the rather confusing advice he had been given concerning this position. A Mr N. Robertson had strongly advised him 'to recommend you not to do so but to wait a little longer as in life after you may not like to be asked at what college you were at and have to say that you were unattached'. At the age of ten, Rupert would not have easily understood the implications of his father's message. This information was followed by a detailed account of the horses Willliam owned, including two he had bought for £1,700 which, if fit, he hoped to race in November. His final words to Rupert came back to the subject of college education:

> The best time of a man's life is that passed in College not only the time he is there but to the rest of his days as at all parts of the world he is meeting other men who have been there before and after but believe will you as one who is deeply interested in your future happiness that making the best of opportunities and taking care of your health will add to your future happiness.

William's love for his eldest son was indisputable. In time, Rupert would be, like his father, a very rich man. As the eldest son, he would inherit great wealth and property. William had accepted that with wealth came responsibility to family and country and therefore was intent on ensuring Rupert would be educated to a standard that would permit him to manage his inheritance responsibly. Thus, while wishing to express love and affection for his son, he felt compelled to encourage him to strive and achieve. Obviously, in promising Rupert the portrait of Mary for his locket, he wanted to show his son that he understood that he was missing his mother and needed a suitable keepsake to honour her. However, William did not fully recognise that, in 1874 and 1875, Rupert, isolated as he was from his immediate family, was too young and lonely to understand and comply with his father's expectations. The Clarkes' arrival back in Melbourne on the designated day meant that Rupert was once again able to take his place in the Clarke family, but the hurt and sense of desertion he had suffered never fully dissipated.

As Rupert matured much of the advice contained in his father's letters was acted on. He became a fine horseman and an expert with guns and, as a young man, Rupert was enrolled at Magdalen College, Oxford. However, his relations with his family remained strained, and Frank Clarke's stated belief that the early death of Rupert's mother and the ensuing deep-seated resentments provide an explanation for Rupert's restless personality and his difficulty in forming close relationships is convincing.

Postscript

Rupert married Amy Cumming in 1886 and they had two daughters. After William's death in May 1897, Rupert inherited the baronet title and took on the responsibility of managing the properties he had inherited. At first, he and Amy lived at Rupertswood at Sunbury, but Rupert eventually sold this property to his stepbrother, Russell. On 31 May 1909, Amy served divorce papers on Rupert on the same day that he left for a long journey into the wilds of New Guinea. He did not defend the legal divorce proceedings that followed. His physical, geographical and intellectual skills were tested in 1914 when he returned to New Guinea to lead a challenging and dangerous expedition up the Fly River in his own yacht, *Kismet*. During this exploration, intent on finding exploitable gold, Rupert Clarke and his companions sailed 630 miles up river—20 miles further than any previous explorations undertaken.[9]

Despite his advancing age, Rupert served in World War I as a lieutenant in the British Army. In 1918, then aged 53, he married Elsie Tucker, aged twenty, and this marriage produced two sons, Rupert and Ernest, and a daughter.

Perhaps Rupert's achievements in exploration and war did finally allow him to find some sense of resolution. In her biography of the Clarke family connections, Phyllis Power, Rupert's eldest daughter from his first marriage, evokes an image of a man whose ability to sustain relationships was less damaged by his early childhood experiences than Frank Clarke's memories and the evidence presented here would argue, for Phyllis remembers her father as a generous and caring man whose sudden death in December 1926 left her 'completely stunned … He was so close to me'.[10]

Notes

1   *Argus*, 17 May 1897; *Age*, 17 May 1897; *Australasian*, 22 May 1897.

2   Undated letter from Janet Clarke addressed to 'My Lord Bishop' (probably Field Flowers Goe (1887–1901). In private hands.

3   Sir Ronald Lindsay, 'In Search of a Victorian Baronetcy', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 68, no. 1, April 1997, p. 95.

4   Francis Clarke, *The Clarke Clan in Australia*, privately published, 1946.

5   Clarke, *The Clarke Clan*.

6   Annette Lewis, 'Janet Lady Clarke (1851–1909): Leader in the Good Work', PhD thesis, Deakin University, 2010, p. 80. Clive was born 20 October 1873 and died 9 February 1894.

7   William Clarke's Letter Book. In private hands.

8   Michael Clarke, *Clarke of Rupertswood 1831–1897*, Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1995, p. 5.

9   *States Times*, 19 May 1915, p. 3; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 February 1915.

10 Phyllis Power's unpublished biography of Janet Clarke, and Phyllis Power, *From These Descended*, Kilmore, Homestead Books, 1997.

Florrie Hodges: On Being Brave

Nikki Henningham*
with Helen Morgan

Abstract

In 1926, a teenage girl from Powelltown named Florrie Hodges became a national celebrity owing to her bravery in the face of extreme bushfire danger. She was awarded a medal by the Royal Humane Society of Australasia for the selfless act of courage that saved the lives of her three younger siblings, but she suffered terrible physical and mental injuries in the process. With the help of the descendants of Florrie's extended family, who shared their memories of Florrie after the fires, this historical note reflects upon the relationship between celebrity and heroics and the inter-generational impact of untreated trauma.

John Schauble's excellent article about 'Victoria's Forgotten 1926 Bushfires' (published in this journal in December 2019) reminds us of the importance of this event in reframing the relationship between Victorians and their environment.[1] It also reminds us how quickly events can be forgotten, when bigger, seemingly more catastrophic, events happen subsequently. The 1926 fires in Gippsland have been 'jettisoned to a more distant past', barely memorialised in art, literature or history, despite killing more Victorians, proportionately, than any fires before or since except the 1939 fires. Schauble makes a strong case for the 'Great Fires of 1926' to be remembered better, as a turning point, a moment in time when Victorians reviewed their relationship to 'the bush' and reorganised their 'social and practical responses to bushfire'.[2]

As well as understanding the social and political lessons learned from them, we should remember the 1926 fires better because of their human cost. They devastated small communities in Gippsland, and the impact of that trauma is a living memory for descendants of some survivors. Through the story of Florrie Hodges, a teenager who

survived the fires and became a celebrity for her heroic actions, we can explore themes that resonate nearly 100 years later, such as the nature of celebrity, gendered narratives of heroics and the inter-generational impact of unresolved trauma. It is the last of these themes I would like to reflect upon here, with passing reference to the nature of fame and heroics.

Schauble highlights the remarkable story of Florrie Hodges, a 14-year-old girl from a mill settlement near Powelltown, whose heroic actions captured the national imagination. On Sunday 14 February 1926, she was at home with members of her family when the fire exploded about them. Instructed by her mother to take the children to safety, she walked for some miles with her three younger siblings, Rita, Vera and 17-month-old Dorothy, finally lying down on a train track and shielding them with her own body when there was nothing to do except allow the fire to burn over the top of them. They all survived, but Florrie received horrific burns to her legs and back. She was hospitalised for several months and was left disabled and disfigured.

Stories of the heroics of 'the little bush girl of Powelltown'[3] emerged quickly after the fires were put out, and Florrie Hodges became something of a celebrity. Her bravery was recognised far and wide; she was awarded a Royal Humane Society medal, and a testimonial fund launched and administered by the Timber Workers' Union raised some £1,000 to be placed in trust until she was 21, her father being very anxious about her future and the need to make sure that the funds were to be clearly available for her own use.[4] Politicians, unionists, even famous actors were keen to share the stage with Florrie at various events held in her honour during 1926. Important Labor Party figure Jean Daley spoke at an event held in May, and the actor, Louise Lovely, appeared at one in September, along with a range of other artists and the Returned Soldiers Memorial Band.[5]

If, as Schauble suggests, the 1926 fires produced little in the way of cultural product, it seems that what did emerge was focused on a 14-year-old girl. A souvenir booklet was published, 100,000 photographs distributed to schoolchildren across the nation, Queen Mary and the Duchess of York proudly received photographs of the 'Australian Heroine', a gramophone recording of Florrie telling her story was released, and Mary Grant Bruce wrote a special version of her story that was published in the *School Magazine*.[6] Florrie, through her deeds, was

variously described as 'carrying the spirit of many a pioneer mother',[7] exhibiting 'the endurance of a Spartan and the pluck and fortitude of Nurse Cavell',[8] and equalling the heroics of soldiers in both the Boer War and the Great War. 'The battlefields of South Africa, Gallipoli and Flanders', said Jean Daley at her testimonial, 'had not furnished a braver deed than the act of heroism performed by the little bush girl of Powelltown'.[9] Florrie was very proud of the various honours and accolades she received, but, when asked to speak, she used the modest hero's refrain familiar to all of us, telling people 'she thought that any Australian girl would have done what she did' (Figure 1).[10]

Figure 1: Souvenir certificate of the Disatrous Bush Fires, 14 February 1926, showing presentation by medical staff to Florrie Hodges of Powelltown for her self-sacrificing heroism (RHSV Collection: VF 033112)

The tributes were marred only by a poorly attended Sydney event, organised by the Feminist Club and the League of Child Helpers, after which Sydneysiders were scolded for rushing to greet 'every visiting celebrity' but not the girl 'descended of the race that gave the world the Anzacs', who exhibited 'the most outstanding act of heroism of the year, if not the decade'.[11] Florrie's story still resonated some years after the events. In a 1931 issue of the *Freeman's Journal*, children's submissions were published under the title 'My Favourite Heroine'. Ten-year-old

Enid Casey asked her readers, 'Do you remember the story of Florrie Hodges' and explained why she was 'her favourite Heroine'.[12] During 'fire season' in 1934, the story of 'the 'Heroine of Black Sunday' was retold in the wake of severe fires in Tasmania and the Victorian timber country.[13] From this time, there is little to be found about Florrie and the trajectory of her life after the fires. Perhaps, following the 1939 fires, all other fires paled into historical insignificance.

Perhaps there are also other reasons to explain Florrie's loss of celebrity over the years, ones that relate more directly to her own life experiences after the fires? Finding an online image of her bravery award and the purse presented to her at the testimonial in her honour created a chain of correspondence between my colleague at the Australian Women's Archives Project, Helen Morgan, and a member of Florrie's extended family, Joy Welch. Helen had been tracing stories of early twentieth-century 'girl heroes' and was immediately drawn to Florrie's tale. She found the name of the donor of the purse to Museum Victoria via their website, and this act of curation provided her with a connection to Joy.[14]

Joy offered to collect stories at a family gathering to be held in early February. Florrie passed away in 1972, but several elderly relatives who remembered her were willing to talk about what they knew and recalled. Many of them became very emotional while doing so but persevered because they wanted Florrie's story to be better known. 'They thought the importance of remembering and recognising her bravery, [talking about] what had happened to her goes quite a way to explaining her life after the event', said Joy.[15] It had not been a particularly happy one.

A nephew, Stan Gleeson, now 87, remembers Florrie well and speaks of his visits to her house in Lyonville, near Trentham. Florrie married her cousin, Bill, soon after the accident, when she was sixteen. Bill worked in the timber mill and he had suffered a couple of serious injuries, so both he and Florrie would have been in constant discomfort or pain. They lived a very simple life. Florrie was remembered as a tough, no-nonsense woman, who did not talk much. She never spoke of the fire, the attention afterwards or the impact it had on her or her body. Her preference was to seek company at the pub, which she visited regularly: an uncommon sight in those days. Most other women were at home with the children, but Florrie was often to be found at the local with her husband drinking. Given the couple's history, it seems that the

extended family looked out for them as much as possible. Everyone knew they both had alcohol issues and everyone attributed that to the trauma they had experienced.

Florrie and Bill had six children, but only four lived to adulthood, and the trauma was inter-generational. Their daughter Nancy had a number of children, who were mainly placed in care as a result of her alcohol issues. Their son Bill did not have children, but he passed away in a Salvation Army home as a chronic alcoholic. Little is known about the two youngest children, but it *is* known that all of them had been in and out of care owing to Florrie and Bill's inability to care for them. The extended family tried many times to take them all in (especially the two little ones) but the state judged their own families to be too large to permit them taking in any additional children. Some family members with whom Joy spoke still got emotional when they talked about their parents not being allowed to take care of them—they had not wanted their children to be placed in an orphanage. Joy further reported that these family members were acutely aware that, if it had not been for Florrie, their mothers would have perished in the fire and they would not be here, in 2020, telling her story.

It is important to Stan Gleeson that Florrie be remembered because the past lives on in the present. His son, a Country Fire Authority (CFA) member, rescued people in the 2009 Black Saturday fires. He suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), so this nephew's knowledge of Florrie's story helped him to understand the impact similar trauma could have on his own son. He knows how unresolved trauma can continue to play out for years to come. It has made a difference to him as the family creates a pathway to recovery for their son.

In her email, Joy Welch sadly noted that 'in saving others, Florrie lost herself', and, talking about it now, we can see the far-reaching implications for Florrie, her children and her grandchildren. Even at the time, there were commentators who recognised that risk. Dr Irene Stable, the medical officer for the Victorian Education Department, observed with some foreboding that: 'The child will bear the marks of the fire throughout her life, as an external manifestation of her suffering; nothing will ever reveal the deep scar which this terrifying event has left on her memory; nothing will erase it'. [16] It is fair to say that nothing ever did.

Recognising Florrie's story is to recognise the damage that continues to be done when past trauma is not acknowledged. Celebrating bravery as an achievement is not the end of the story; we also need to remember that for very many women and men bravery as 'achievement' has come at a significant cost. Uncovering the history and honouring the stories of brave women like Florrie helps us to reimagine what it means to be brave, and how careful we must be with our heroes.

Notes

1   John Schauble, '"Where are the others?" Victoria's Forgotten 1926 Bushfires', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 90, no. 2, December 2019, pp. 301–17.

2   Schauble, pp. 301–02.

3   'Heroine of Fires', *Brisbane Telegraph,* 26 May 1926, https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/180721688.

4   'Florrie Hodges' Testimonial Fund', *Traralgon Record*, 11 May 1926, p. 3, https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/67489537.

5   'Florrie Hodges' Testimonial Fund', p. 3; 'Miss Florrie Hodges', *Argus*, 20 September 1926, p. 21, https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/3810119.

6   Schauble, p. 310.

7   'Sydney Misses an Opportunity to Pay Tribute to a Heroine', *Sunday Times*, 28 November 1926, p. 3, http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article128123047.

8   'Florrie Hodges' Testimonial Fund', p. 3.

9   'Heroine of Fires'.

10 'Miss Florrie Hodges', p. 21.

11 'Sydney Misses an Opportunity to Pay Tribute to a Heroine', p. 3.

12 'My Favourite Heroine', *Freeman's Journal*, 26 February 1931, p. 43, https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/128786841.

13 'Bush Fire Season', *Argus,* 25 January 1934, p. 1, https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/11732842.

14 Item HT 33731, Purse—Presentation, Florence (Florrie) E. Hodges, 1926, Museum Victoria Collections, http://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/items/1973026; and Item NU 488890 Medal—Royal Humane Society, Florence (Florrie) E. Hodges, Boxed, 1926, Museum Victoria Collections, http://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/items/1973024.

15 Private correspondence between Joy Welch and Nikki Henningham, 17 February 2020.

16 'Florrie Hodges' Testimonial Fund', p. 3.

The Tele-Gastrograph

Charles Lewis

Preamble

As is my custom, I recently emailed an ex-student from Mirboo North High School. After a period as a fellow science teacher, Arthur Lucas went on to Flinders University and was eventually appointed principal, Kings College London. In his retirement, Arthur and his wife reside at coastal Paignton, Devon. Over many years, he has been researching and publishing the prolific correspondence of Ferdinand von Mueller.

My missives from the Antipodes invariably bring forth interesting and detailed responses from Arthur. In the latest he referred to an article he discovered in the National Library of Australia database, Trove, presumably because it mentions von Mueller. Titled, 'The Tele-Gastrograph', it was published in the Melbourne *Age* on Saturday 29 June 1878 (pp. 5–6). The comprehensive article reported on how a recent invention, not yet patented, was tested at five venues in Victoria. The tests were conducted with the co-operation of well-known gentlemen. Some were given special responsibilities according to their talents and interests.

Unfortunately, reading the Trove article proved difficult. An identical, clearer copy was found on the internet. It was published on 30 and 31 July 1878 by the *Taranaki Herald* in New Zealand. A transcribed copy appears below.

THE TELE-GASTROGRAPH

> There seems to be absolutely no limit to the services which man will be able to exact from electricity. And of all the uses to which it has been put we question if there is one whose practicable value will be so great to humanity as that which was brought to a successful issue last night in a series of interesting experiments before some of the leading men in our city. The credit of inventing the tele-gastrograph is solely and entirely due to a gentleman who has been for some years connected with the literary department of this paper. As letters patent have not yet been granted for the invention, we must content ourselves on the present occasion with giving a general description of this latest and most wonderful addition to the list of nineteenth century wonders,

and with giving a full report of the marvellous manner in which it performed its functions. When the subject was first breached it was treated with a sort of amused contempt. It seemed so utterly impossible that it could realise the expectations formed of it that people absolutely refused to consider it seriously; and the mere mention of the name of the tele-gastrograph was sufficient to call up a smile on the face of the unthinking. But all this is now at an end. Doubt is no longer possible. The machine has come triumphant out of a searching inquiry, and it has proved itself to be one of the most useful and valuable instruments that the ingenuity of man has yet created. It fairly promises to revolutionise the whole scheme of modern domestic economy; and while warmly congratulating the inventor on his success, we still more warmly congratulate the public, who will be the principal gainers by it.

The tele-gastrograph is a machine by which, through the aid of electric currents, the flavour of any food or liquor can be transmitted by wire to any distance, and the sensations of eating or drinking conveyed by merely placing the end of the wire between the teeth. The inventor never pretended that any actual nourishment was conveyed by this process. He merely claimed that the sensation of partaking of rich viands and costly wines could be imparted to people a hundred miles away from the operator—written on their palates, in fact; and that the number who could receive this sensation from a small quantity of food, and the length of time that it could be made to last, were practically unlimited; and after the experiments of last night all doubt as to the correctness of his calculations is at an end. The private trials of his machine on a small scale within the last few weeks satisfied all who witnessed them; but at the request of the inventor public notice was withheld till he had perfected his arrangements so as to give the world an opportunity of judging for itself.

It was arranged that at eight o'clock on the evening of 28th June, the experiments were to commence. The machine was worked at the Victoria Club, and a number of well-known gentlemen kindly gave their services to assist the operator. Messrs. Ellery and S.W. McGowan took charge of the electric battery. Mr. Butters, Mr. Sayers, the well-known professor of cookery, Mr. Hay, of the Athenaeum Club, and Mr. Phipps, of Clements' Cafe, undertook to see that the soups and food were properly cooked and were kept hot. Dr. Bleasdale and Sir Redmond Barry looked after the wines, and Judge Cope and Mr. Gatehouse after the beer and spirits; while Mr. Geo. Kirk, Mr. Reginald Bright and Captain Standish were in readiness to send a sensation of cigar smoke along the wire after the meal was disposed of. There were five points of observation fixed upon, viz.:—*The Age* office,

Government House, the Minister of Education's office at the top of Collins-street, and the post-offices in Geelong and Castlemaine. At each of these places a number of persons were assembled to watch the proceedings, and take part in them. Sir George Bowen, with Major Pitt and Captain Bull in attendance, and six other gentlemen, conducted the experiments at Government House; Mr. W.C. Smith, with Messrs. Brown and Gilchrist, watched at the Education office; Mr. Berry, Mr. Ince, the mayor of the city, and three of the principal residents were in charge at Geelong; and Professor Pearson, Mr. Reid (the chemist), Mr. Green, of the Telegraph department, and Mr. Leech (barrister-at-law), observed at Castlemaine. At the office of this paper there were, besides the staff, ten persons present by invitation, among whom we may mention Messrs. Munro, Longmore, and O'Hea, M.L.A.'s, Mr. Marcus Clarke, Mrs. Hardinge Britten, and the Dean of Melbourne. Telephonic communication was established with every station, and at a few minutes past eight o'clock every gentleman was at his post. At the urgent request of inventor all the observers had refrained from having dinner, but before operations commenced, they partook, according to direction, of brown bread and butter, with two or three glasses of cold water. Precisely at a quarter-past eight, and when it was ascertained by a preliminary trial that the wires were in working order, a bottle of the best sherry, flavored with half a wineglassful of orange bitters, was poured into the receiver of the machine, and the electro-magnetic battery was turned on by Messrs. Ellery and McGowan. This was hardly fair to the inventor. He had directed that no more should be placed in the receiver for each sensation than an ordinary diner was in the habit of consuming at a meal; but Dr. Bleasdale, unused to the control of the tele-gastrograph, considered that one wine-glassful would be quite inadequate to supply the wants of the numerous observers, and he therefore gave sixteen times more than he should have done. The evil effect of this mistake was speedily apparent. The observers at the different stations having taken the wires between their teeth, and the battery being turned full on, the alcoholic essence of the large quantity of sherry placed in the receiver was sent along the wires in full force to the five points of observation, and the thirty-six persons in gastro-graphic connection with the machine received the impression of having each consumed an entire bottle of sherry and bitters. Some of the observers stood this very well, and showed little signs of having received too heavy a sensation; but others, especially some gentlemen prominently connected with the cause of total abstinence, were very strongly affected, and in response to an urgent appeal by telephone from the editor of this paper, the battery by which the wine was

discharged was turned off. From first to last, five minutes had elapsed from the time when the sherry was put into the receiver till our message caused the supply to be discontinued. In that brief space five-sixths of the bottle was dissipated, and some of the observers were temporarily disabled from taking notes. Every sign of incipient intoxication was produced. There was the wine flush apparent on the cheek; the voice, altered of course through the necessity of holding the wire between the teeth, became thick and husky, and two gentlemen who were observing in this office looked and behaved more like persons who had dined than teetotallers usually do at that hour of the evening. Instantaneously, however, upon the current being stopped, the ill-effects ceased, and even Mr. Munro, who had been most violently affected became as sober as a judge. The pleasurable sensation of having lately partaken of wine remained, but that, and an exhilaration of spirits that lasted throughout the experiment, was the only result of Dr. Bleasdale's ill-judged zeal.

Half a dozen exceedingly fine Sydney oysters were next exposed to the action of the battery, each having squeezed upon it a few drops of lemon juice. The effect of this was very fine, and proves that the tele-gastrograph is peculiarly well qualified to transmit the flavours of the most delicate foods. Intentionally *menus* had not been forwarded to the various posts of observation, as the inventor wished to have a perfectly unbiassed [*sic*] opinion from the gentlemen who took part in the experiment. A scientific objector had endeavoured, in anticipation, to account for the sensations by declaring that they were produced by the action of the imagination. But the fallacy of the argument, on which a great deal of stress was laid, was shown through the whole course of last night's proceedings …

To this point, the text of the article transcribed here has been complete. For the sake of brevity, however, the remainder of this historical note contains excerpts only.

His Excellency sent a message himself by telephone congratulating the inventor on the marked success that had up to this time attended the experiments; and Professor Pearson and Mr. Berry simultaneously informed him from Geelong and Castlemaine, that they could almost smell the sea so fresh were the oysters. A glass of Chablis closed this part of the performance, after which there was an interval of about five minutes, that was employed by the observers in comparing notes on what they had felt.

After the meal, a further test was conducted on the food:

> It was very singular to notice the state of the food after it had been subjected to the action of the magnetic battery for the required time … in every case the food looked as tempting … as when first brought in from the kitchen; but it was found to be utterly devoid of taste, and some analytical experiments conducted on the spot by Baron Von Mueller and Messrs. C. Newbery and W. Johnson proved it to be utterly valueless for human sustenance.

The final paragraphs of the article produced pertinent comments from some of the observers.

> The full flavour of the choice cigar consumed in the receiver was enjoyed by everyone of the thirty-six observers, while there was neither expectoration, a disagreeable odor from the breath, nor ashes littering the room. As the inventor said, "You could kiss your sweetheart after smoking for half an hour and she would never know it." Some of the observers who are anti-smokers enjoyed the cigar thoroughly and felt no ill effects from it. Dr. Fulton, who was present, was anxious to try how physic could be sent along the lines, and suggested putting a blue pill and black draught into the receiver, but after communicating with all the stations it was found that no gentleman would consent to having the experiment tried on him. The warmest congratulations poured in upon the inventor at the close of the proceedings, and Sir George Bowen stated his intention of recommending him to Her Majesty for some mark of her favour. Messrs. Lyell and Munro have already commenced negotiations with him for the purchase of his patent for the Government, and it is stated that they have every prospect of bringing matters to a successful termination.

Other newspapers, beside the *Taranaki Herald*, published reports based on the *Age* article after 29 June. On 10 July the *Brisbane Courier* published a lengthy article containing extracts. The Melbourne *Evening Star* published a brief report on 29 July, whereas New Zealand's *Taranaki Herald* precisely copied the article from the *Age*, as we have seen. The *Evening Star* headed the report 'THE TELEGASTROGRAPH HOAX', noting that 'a good deal of amusement has been created in Melbourne by the publication in the "Age" of a circumstantial account of certain pretended experiments with the telegastrograph'. It went on to comment:

gravely perused by scores, and probably hundreds, of readers without a breath of suspicion as to the genuineness of and accuracy of the Munchausonian report, not even to the close proximity in which the veracious narrator placed Mrs Emma Hardinge-Britten to the Very Rev. the Dean of Melbourne, as taking part in the experiments at the "Age" office, proving too tough a morsel for digestion.

I recall browsing the bound sets of *Melbourne Punch* in the RHSV library and noting the liberties contemporary artists and journalists took with significant public figures. Many became 'figures of fun' and would no doubt have been somewhat resentful. Perhaps the custom has links with the oft-repeated sentiment that Australians demonstrate less respect for authority than citizens of other nations, though similar publications in Britain from this period exhibit the same tendency to send up prominent people.

The *Geelong Advertiser* of 2 July 1878 published an article headed, 'THE TELE-GASTROGRAPH', alluding to the article that had appeared in Saturday's *Age*, 'gravely descriptive of a wonderful invention termed "the tele-gastrograph", and which was destined to revolutionise our present social system, abolish the present costly necessities of existence, and enable all mankind to live sumptuously and obtain the maximum of sustenance for the minimum of cost'.

Colonial newspapers obviously monitored the offerings emerging from other literary departments—much like current forms of social media, though in a time scale of days not seconds. The Geelong newspaper also referred to a recently published novel titled *The Battle of Dorking*, which described the invasion of an ill-prepared England by the efficient army of emerging Prussia. The writer commented that, although the story was fictional, two forts were actually built near the London suburb of Dorking where a crucial battle took place. Such is the impact of fiction on human decision-making.

In a more recent exchange, Arthur Lucas suggested, tongue-in-cheek, that I should contact the *Age*, asking them to provide as a matter of urgent public benefit details of the invention by their staff member so that, in this time of shortages in supermarkets and restrictions on meeting, people will still be able to enjoy the sensations of fine dining and keep at the recommended social distance. As yet, I have not taken up this suggestion, but the idea has merit; in the meantime I decided, given that historical articles for the most part tend to lack humour, to

offer this piece to the *Victorian Historical Journal*. It is, however, very tempting to ask the *Age* if it has a staff member capable of designing a machine to measure the 'gullibility level' of readers. With the recent advent of a plethora of social media, scamming and 'fake news', such a device would surely be well accepted by the community at large.

Postscript

It did not take long for the *Age* article to draw attention from overseas editors. The British *Gardeners' Chronicle*, highly popular in Australia, commented in September 1878: 'In this big Gooseberry season we scarcely expect the enclosed extract to be received with anything but incredulity'.
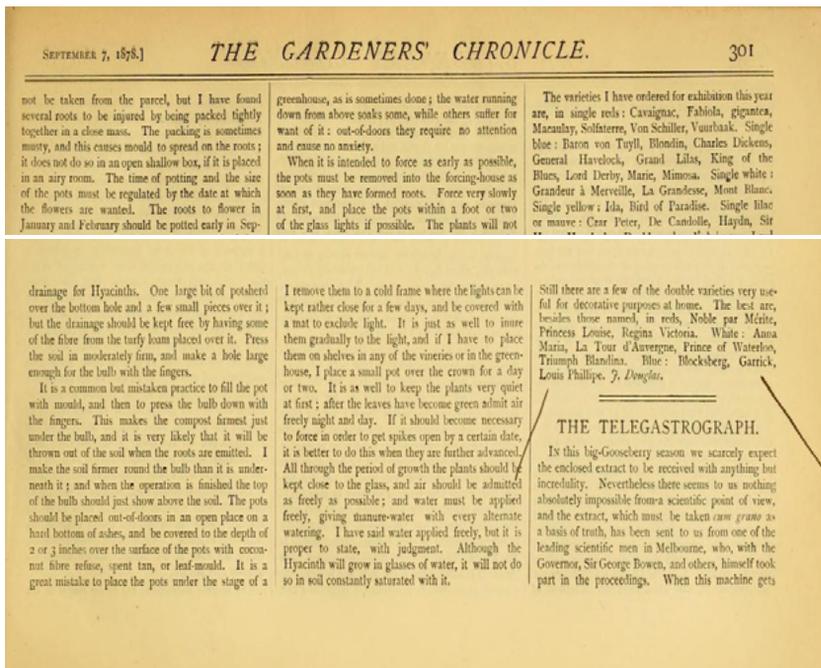
The *Pharmaceutical Journal*, the official journal of Britain's Royal Pharmaceutical Society, also picked up the story. Across the Atlantic Ocean, the *Abbeville Press & Banner*, a South Carolina paper issued on 23 October 1878, caught up with the tele-gastrograph, and, in the same month, so did a Pennsylvanian paper, the *Forest Republican*.

Back in Australia, the *Town and Country Journal* (Sydney) had a 'Question & Answer' guru. Subscriber of Cobargo asked—'can I procure a pair of telegastrographs in Sydney? If so, where, and the price. Answer: No, except in the imagination of an Australian journalist, the telegastrograph does not exist'.

Appendix I

To assist readers, I provide here a list of brief biographical notes on some of the observers of the tele-gastrograph experiments:

Emma Hardinge-Britten: Visiting English spiritualist, author, lecturer

Hussey Burgh Macartney: Dean of Melbourne

Thomas Cope: County Court judge, musician, Yorick Club

John Bleasdale: Private secretary to Catholic bishop of Melbourne, Royal Society, winemaking

James Munro: Businessman, temperance leader, politician

George Kirk: Stock and station agent, MLA

James Gatehouse: Mayor of Melbourne

Charles Pearson: MLA, journalist, headmaster of Presbyterian Ladies College

Reginald Bright: Businessman, merchant, sportsman

Marcus Clarke: Novelist, journalist, poet

Charles Standish: Army officer, chief commissioner of police, Freemason

George Bowen: Author, colonial administrator, governor of Victoria

Andrew Lyell: Businessman, MLA, conciliator

Redmond Barry: Judge, chancellor of Melbourne University, chairman of State Library Trustees

Robert Ellery: Director of Melbourne Observatory

Samuel McGowan: Superintendent of telegraphs

Appendix II

Finding Ferdinand: The Global Quest to Decipher Mueller's Mysterious Gothic Letters

It began over 30 years ago, and it was an extremely daunting task. Locate, translate, database and publish over 10,000 letters by Baron Ferdinand von Mueller, one of Australia's best-known nineteenth-century scientists.

Mueller, the first Director and Chief Executive of Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria and Founder of the National Herbarium of Victoria, was a prolific correspondent and established links with hundreds of fellow botanists and biologists across the globe. Not only were his letters botanically detailed, they were handwritten in old-style Gothic German and laden with rich descriptions of erstwhile goings-on, from masquerade balls and idle gossip to visits by foreign dignitaries. But Science Historian, Rod Home, who was Professor of History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Melbourne at the time, felt up to the mammoth task of getting them published, and he managed to inspire people from around the world to join his quest.

"I started researching and I became aware that there were three people around the world, who were also hunting out Mueller's correspondence – German-born Doris Sinkora, from Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria in Melbourne, Arthur Lucas in London, and Johannes Voigt in Stuttgart, Germany," says Rod. Recognising the potential to collaborate, Rod suggested the three join forces.

"They took that seriously, and they talked to each other (by phone and snail mail in those days) and said okay, we'll do it," he says. And thus, the monumental "Correspondence of Ferdinand von Mueller Project" began, with Rod at the helm, leading the location, translation, transcription and editing of the letters and explanatory footnotes. "I didn't know anything about botany when I started. Luckily, Arthur is very good on Botany, and Doris is a German-speaking algae specialist and the library at Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria offers a plethora of valuable information too," says Rod.

Because Mueller's letter-copy books and much of his correspondence did not survive the test of time, the team has contacted many institutions internationally seeking copies of letters and other

relevant documents pertaining to Mueller. So far over 10,000 letters have been located and included in the database.

The project has been instrumental in re-igniting interest in Mueller and his significant life's work. It has also given valuable insight into the historic development of our understanding of Australian flora and the study of the natural environment, early Australian science and exploration, and the relationship of Australian scientists to the national and international scientific communities.

The project has reached a milestone of 9000 transcribed letters, which will soon be made available to the public, and will continue for several years until all remaining correspondence is dealt with. Perhaps in another 150 years, a global team will be transcribing Rod's letters into the lingua franca of the day.

Appendix III

Professor Arthur Maurice Lucas CBE, AO, PhD, FIBiol, FACE, FKC, Principal 1993–2003. Artist June Mendoza (born 1924) (Courtesy Kings College London)

REVIEWS

Geoffrey Blainey: Writer, Historian, Controversialist
By Richard Allsop. Monash University Publishing, Melbourne 2020.
Pp. xiv + 294. $34.95, paperback.

Geoffrey Blainey has had a remarkable career, publishing at least 40 books from _The Peaks of Lyell_ to his recent memoir _Before I Forget_, in the course of which he has become a significant figure in the Australian cultural landscape. Allsop's subtitle makes it clear that this is a history of the career, not a full biography. The book does not explore Blainey's personal relationships, but it succeeds in giving us a sense of his evolving personality. And Allsop does have a chapter on Blainey's childhood, which sets the scene for the career.

The son of a Methodist minister, Blainey was born in 1930, but there was concern because the baby was at first thought to have an incurable abdominal defect. Nevertheless, a leading Melbourne paediatrician was engaged and operated with a successful outcome. This initial drama encouraged a sense of providence protecting young Geoffrey. Methodist ministers had a peripatetic existence, moving on to a new appointment every few years, a pattern of life that might have inhibited some children, but Blainey took it comfortably in his stride, always curious about his surroundings and developing a quiet self-confidence that was with him for life. His capable, knowledgeable father was important to him, while his mother, who was, he said, 'more a romantic', was a shadowy presence. But it was a happy childhood, much of it in country towns, reinforced by a sense that 'we saw ourselves as Australian and not belonging anywhere else'.

Being the son of a Methodist minister got him a scholarship to Wesley College, and the path to Melbourne University unfolded before him. He was attracted to history, and one of his subjects was Manning Clark's famous Australian course. According to Clark, Blainey was silent throughout the first term, yet submitted an essay 'that was by far the best in the class'. He was soon being noticed by both staff and fellow students. And then, audaciously, he wrote a fully researched critique of an article in _Historical Studies_ by an established historian, Professor

R.S. Parker, which argued that Federation had been driven by economic interests. The student's article was so good that the journal published it. It was this local academic controversy that marked the beginning of Blainey's career.

Unlike many other first-class-honours history students, Blainey did not make the journey to Oxford as part of the preparation for an academic career. The Mount Lyell Mining and Railway Company happened to be looking for a historian to write a history of the company and was steered to Blainey. Mt Lyell was the first Australian company to make its records available for such a project. Melbourne University and the company co-funded the first year of research, after which Blainey actually negotiated with the company to become an employee while he wrote the history. He moved to Queenstown, entering vigorously into its social life, famously playing and scoring in the Smelters B Grade Premiership football team in 1953. *The Peaks of Lyell* was a success and was taken up by Cambridge University Press and published in Britain and the United States.

At different times in his career Blainey has worked as a freelance historian or as an academic, and for some years he was a respected dean of the Faculty of Arts at his alma mater. But in either case the books kept on coming. He is a born storyteller and a dab hand at titles—*The Rush That Never Ended*, *Triumph of the Nomads* and, of course, *The Tyranny of Distance*. Some historians have taken issue with his findings but he had no trouble finding readers. Sometimes Blainey offers a new, distinctive way into a topic; the role of distance in Australian history was one such factor that provoked much discussion, as was climate and weather in the causation of Eureka. Less controversial is his concern for material culture, but he was interested in technology and things before many historians picked up on it. *Black Kettle and Full Moon: Daily Life in a Vanished Australia* was one product. He is less interested in personal motivation and relationships.

As a controversialist Blainey was at his most provocative in the 1984 immigration dispute. In what was a fairly conventional survey of Australian immigration for a Rotary conference in Warrnambool, it was only at the end that he threw in the comment that 'the pace of Asian immigration is now far ahead of public opinion, especially the public opinion in those suburbs and workplaces to which many of these Vietnamese and Kampuchean refugees will go'. On an earlier

occasion he had said there were 'very serious tensions' in some suburbs, whereas generally the integration of the Vietnamese boat people into the community had come to be regarded as a policy success story. Blainey, who was a member of the History Department at the time, claimed authority as a historian for his views. Twenty-three of his departmental colleagues responded in a public letter in which, while acknowledging his right to his opinions, they dissociated themselves from Blainey's raising of the immigration policy in racial terms. Blainey expanded on his views in *All for Australia*, while many of his academic critics responded with a collection of essays with the awkward title, *Surrender Australia? Essays in the Study and Uses of History: Geoffrey Blainey and Asian Immigration.*

It was important for Blainey that many of his Melbourne contemporaries who had been friends, including several on the left, stood by him, even if they had doubts about his position on Asian immigration. In the wake of the controversy Blainey became much more of a public figure, increasingly ready to offer his opinion on a range of issues in the popular media. He also restlessly sought wider horizons for his history, *A Short History of the World* becoming a best seller.

Richard Allsop's project appeared to begin with Blainey's blessing, but somewhere along the way that was withdrawn, for reasons that are not revealed. Yet Allsop's account is largely sympathetic to the curiosity and energy that have driven Blainey's history and is useful in giving us an intelligent survey of the length and breadth of an extraordinary career.

John Rickard

Geelong's Changing Landscape: Ecology, Development and Conservation
Edited by David S. Jones and Phillip B. Roös. CSIRO, Melbourne 2019. Pp. xix + 324. $69.99, paperback.

This collection of essays should be commended for its scope and the range of topics it encompasses. Using the natural and built landscapes of Victoria's second-largest urban centre, the papers gathered here treat of subjects that are often regarded in isolation, or as the stuff of disparate disciplines. While there is much to be gained by crossing

these disciplinary divides, there are also dangers in taking a wide-ranging view. Not many people are completely *au fait* with two or more intellectual areas, so in crossing those boundaries mistakes are sure to be made.

The seventeen substantive papers in the collection are grouped into three parts, each of which focuses on a different theme of relevance to the Geelong region. These themes are (in brief): environmental history, ecology, and humans as agents of change. There is an obvious overarching logic in such an arrangement—although there is some degree of overlap, the themes are each sufficiently discrete in subject matter. That said, it does seem a bit contrary to have the two chapters that focus specifically on vegetation in different parts: pre-European in Part 1; and vegetation changes since European arrival, in Part 2. Similarly, Chapter 10 on 'Key Ecological Principles … ' would fit better with the other ecological-themed papers in Part 2, rather than in its present position as the first paper in Part 3. Chapter 4, 'Welcome to Wada wurrung Country', is also oddly placed. Given the emphasis (particularly in the first two parts) on the long-standing Indigenous presence in the Geelong region and the management of their country by clans of the local *Wadawurrung* language group, it is surprising that the 'Welcome' was not placed as the first piece in the book. If nothing else, it would certainly have made a more fitting opening than the 'Introduction' provided by the editors.

It is not unusual in compilations such as this, which comprise pieces by a wide range of authors, to detect a discernible variation in the style and standard of writing. Although that is the case in this volume, in most chapters the writing is easily readable and sufficiently clear to convey the messages. However, it is hard to judge what place the essay by Keeney and O'Carroll occupies in this collection. No doubt there is a place in the world for the kind of philosophical and esoteric analysis provided by these authors, but it seems a bit at odds with the rest of the contents here. The central rationale of this book is to make a case for the coming together of nature, history, and design (in all of its architectural, planning and landscape forms). But Keeney and O'Carroll (Chapter 16), in focusing on the former Alcoa site on Point Henry, tell us that: 'The natural and semi-natural histories of the peninsula are irrelevant … and many are speculative and imaginary' (p. 262).

Geelong's Changing Landscape would have been greatly improved by the omission of Chapter 1, the editors' introduction. This is poorly written; many sentences are overladen with phrases and are of such length as to be almost beyond comprehension. On the first page there are a couple of factual errors and a rather basic grammatical error—the misuse of 'narration' for 'narrative'. And there are examples of non-sentences, with one or more phrases masquerading as a sentence, without a verb in sight! Further examples of errors or difficult prose include:

- In Chapter 8 the author twice quotes from J.T. Gellibrand's 1836 'Memorandum', referencing the version edited by C.E. Sayers in 1983. However, the page numbers cited correspond with the original version, published in 1898 (pp. 159 and 160);
- The *Wadawurrung* may have regularly camped *near* Reedy Lake, but I doubt that it could be true to claim that the lake 'was also a late spring village' (p. 161);
- Vague and unreferenced statements such as 'In fact the first record of the Bunyip was at Lake Modewarre' are misleading and of no particular use. The jury is still out on the question of the nature of the somewhat mythical bunyip, so its relevance to the ecology of anywhere is also questionable (p. 161);
- 'This contribution to greenhouse gas emissions is adding to scientific discourses about climate change' (p. 203).

What this book needed most before it was printed is a more rigorous editing and proofreading process than it seems to have received. This would have eliminated many of the grammatical glitches that have crept in, as well as the factual errors and a bit of duplication. Such problems are inevitable in multi-authored works such as this, but they can be edited out.

The editors rightly point out (p. 3) that there is a dearth of sources that detail collectively all of the various facets of Geelong's history and development, as well as the ecology of its regional surrounds. For all its presentation problems, this volume will go a long way towards meeting that need.

Gary Presland

Progressive New World: How Settler Colonialism and Transpacific Exchange Shaped American Reform
By Marilyn Lake. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 2019.
Pp. 307. $68.00, hardback.

On 12 June 1893, the American educator Anna Garlin Spencer addressed the International Congress of Charities, Corrections, and Philanthropy in response to a lecture on institutionalised children from the South Australian journalist Catherine Helen Spence: 'After this glowing speech we must all feel that the distance between America and Australia is as nothing, since the same heart-beat of love signals the life [of] both countries'. For decades, such effusions of fellow feeling proliferated among the white reformers who fashioned themselves as pioneers forging 'new lands, new communities, new worlds' (p. 2). Their stories lie at the heart of Marilyn Lake's impressive book, which charts the transpacific exchanges that undergirded the development of American progressivism. Progressivism, she argues, was the child of settler colonisation rather than endemic to the Atlantic world; it was an ideology shaped against perceptions of Old World feudalism and indigenous 'savagery'. Bound by the shared 'chronology of … colonialism', settler progressives forged political orders that were democratic and elitist, emancipatory and coercive, and, above all, governed by entrenched racial hierarchies (p. 2).

Progressive New World traces the story of transpacific progressivism through the extended conversations enjoyed by its luminaries. Skilfully reconstructing a series of intellectual dyads, Lake demonstrates how progressive sensibilities were shaped and policies transferred between Australasia and the United States. From the Anglo-Australian writer Charles Henry Pearson's correspondence with Harvard don Charles Eliot Norton, she unravels the 'pre-history' of progressivism, emphasising Pearson's conviction that democracy could only flourish in the white colonies, which were free from Old World reactionaries and willing to bear its costs: 'the elimination of the native' and the oppression of non-white labour (p. 22). Later, her description of Victorian lawyer H.B. Higgins' friendship with his American counterpart Felix Frankfurter reveals how Australian precedents infiltrated United States labour law. Similarly, Lake follows the chain of letters between the New Zealand secretary of labour Edward Tregear and US Labor Bureau investigator

Victor Selden Clark to show how the latter was persuaded of the merits of an antipodean-style wage-setting system following a study tour of Australasia in 1903–04.

As exposed by Tregear's bawdy asides to Clark and in Pearson's use of 'manliness' as an index of political progress—white pioneers sat above both unmanly British aristocrats and emasculated indigenous peoples—progressivism was a self-consciously masculine project. Nevertheless, as encoded in the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1902*, which enfranchised white women and disenfranchised most Indigenous people, Australian progressives redefined citizenship from a gendered to a racialised category. Thus, Lake not only scrutinises the American tours undertaken by Spence and the suffragist Vida Goldstein, but also analyses the surge in maternalist rhetoric as enfranchised women campaigned for the benefits of their hard-won citizenship. By the 1910s, Spence's ideas about the deinstitutionalisation of dependent children had found an American audience. Yet, while ensuring the securities of 'home life' for the white child was considered paramount to progressive states, indigenous children on both sides of the Pacific were simultaneously removed into white homes and institutions where, isolated from their families, they could be moulded into citizens.

Recalling her travels, Spence borrowed from Theodore Roosevelt's lexicon, hailing her hosts' kindness, without which she could not have 'lived the strenuous life to the utmost'. Such generosity did not always extend to her ideas. Spence's faith in the reformatory power of the state saw her branded a socialist by friends and enemies alike. The clash between American individualism and antipodean collectivism striates Lake's history, culminating in Higgins' abandonment of the Commonwealth Constitution on the grounds that its American-inspired states' rights provisions, devised by the Tasmanian jurist Andrew Inglis Clark, threatened the progressive aspirations that had animated Federation. By contrast, the Australian Aborigines Progressive Association (AAPA) welcomed American ideas. Yet, rather than emulating the Society of American Indians, another organisation that sought to repurpose the tools of progressivism, the AAPA turned to the Universal Negro Improvement Association, melding the politics of black transnationalism with the demand for self-determination.

Progressive New World raises the question of how important Australia was to the immense project of balancing the extremes of

America's Gilded Age. The book stems from Lake's conviction that Australian and American reformers shared common 'comforts and conceits', such that their exchanges should be considered apart from their international context (p. 2). Theodore Roosevelt, ever present in her chapters, appears smitten with antipodean thinking, but, without a full consideration of his influences, it is difficult to assess critics' accusation that his 1912 Progressive Party platform was a 'mere rehash of Australasian policy' (p. 7). Furthermore, Australasia's age of experiments attracted a broader range of observers than those surveyed in the text, while colonial 'pioneers' looked beyond America for inspiration. When Catherine Spence ran as a delegate for the 1897 Federal Convention, she proclaimed that she 'had studied three Federal Constitutions, those of the United States, Canada, and Switzerland', and consequently understood which precedents the Commonwealth should adopt. Finally, *Progressive New World* is framed as a history of exchanges between 'the United States and Australasia' (p. 20). Yet, despite the intrigue it held for American progressives, outside Tregear New Zealand is largely overlooked, an absence most apparent in Lake's writing on indigenous progressivism. Here, consideration of the Young Māori Party—whose members rose to the highest levels of government—would have enriched her comparisons with the AAPA and America's 'Red Progressives', and further complicated her analysis of indigenous peoples' negotiation of progressivism's intricate racial logics. Without doubt, however, *Progressive New World* is an important and ground-breaking work that allows us to see that the transpacific project of progressive reform was inseparable from the racialised regimes in which it was enacted.

James Keating

Mallee Country: Land, People, History
By Richard Broome, Charles Fahey, Andrea Gaynor and Katie Holmes. Monash University Publishing, Melbourne 2019. Pp. 416. $39.95, paperback.

The prologue for this sweeping and readable history of Australia's mallee country introduces the reader to these 'wondrous' ecologically rich lands of 'unique and startling landscapes'. This is where distinctive flora—including forms of mallee eucalypt—thrived in semi-arid

conditions across millennia, creating a habitat for diverse species of indigenous birds, insects and animals. Since Deep Time, these lands were sustainably managed by 2,000 generations of Aboriginal people. All this was to change rapidly with the intrusion of Europeans from the 1830s, and the environmental transformation wrought by grazing, acclimatisation and agriculture.

In focusing on the settler practices and policies that resulted in the clearance of three-quarters of these vast lands, *Mallee Country* makes an important and deeply researched contribution to environmental and social histories of people and place in Australia. It innovatively establishes the ecological and human connections between mallee areas that span the south of the continent and fall within the jurisdictions of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. In Victoria, these lands are known, with a capital letter, simply as 'the Mallee'. The adoption of this geographically expansive framework enables fresh insights and comparisons to be brought to the analysis of issues such as the various state ventures into closer settlement and farming schemes. The effective use of diaries, letters and other archival sources adds nuance to the now mythic stories of perseverance and hope that have long been associated with the struggles of farming families to 'tame' the mallee lands. Moreover, the authors have taken care to integrate the histories of Aboriginal agency and experience, both before and after colonisation, into their comprehensive narrative.

Mallee Country is divided into four chronological sections. The first opens with geological formations and, with the coming of the Anthropocene, outlines the ways that Aboriginal peoples lived in a symbiotic relationship with mallee lands defined by laws, and spiritual and cultural practices. The scarcity of water and the importance of rivers such as the Murray were essential to how Aboriginal peoples managed resources in these dry scrubland territories. European explorers, such as Charles Sturt and Edward John Eyre, were among those who 'opened' up the land for pastoral use. For the Ngargad, who occupied the South Australian mallee, colonial invasion led to extinction, probably hastened by the spread of smallpox. For all Aboriginal peoples, it meant dispossession from their ancestral lands.

Pastoralism was ultimately to fail, particularly away from the river systems—although the environmental impact of sheep, and later of rabbits, was drastic and irreversible. The book's second part examines

the period from 1880 to 1945, when grazing was replaced with the wheatfields that came to dominate mallee lands. Social and political aspirations for an Australian yeoman class led to state support for closer settlement, including farms for returned soldiers after both world wars. To undertake the clearing of the scrub and its notorious mallee roots, and the sowing and harvesting of grain, specially designed tools were invented: the mallee roller, and the stump-jump plough. Railways spread and transported the grain to markets. But farming communities were dogged by drought and dust storms, as well as plagues of mice and locusts. As case studies in both Victoria and Western Australia show, across the decades of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Aboriginal people clung to their lands with great tenacity, working in the farming economy and continuing to camp on country.

The third section of *Mallee Country* explores the boom years that followed World War II, with soaring wheat prices and increased mechanisation as tractors replaced the horse and plough. This 'golden age' for mallee farmers heralded further clearing and cropping of land in South Australia and Western Australia, driven by a faith in modern science to reshape scrubland into productive farms, and funded through private interests and government schemes. In the 1960s, this massive project of land clearance was halted by the effects of drought, and there were attempts to reverse the degradation of the environment through no-till farming and establishment of national parks to protect flora and fauna. Indeed, by 2014, between 10 and 30 per cent of land in all of Australia's mallee regions was set aside for conservation and recreation, signalling a significant shift in the use of and attitudes towards these lands.

The book's concluding section traces the actions by farmers to sustain their livelihoods in the face of environmental and climatic challenges and volatile markets. This has meant 're-inventing' the mallee, not only through the diversification of agricultural production, but in scientific work in plant genetics and breeding so as to produce heat-resistant strains of wheat. The attitudes of farmers are shifting to acknowledge the effects of climate change, while the reinvigoration of arts and culture within Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities has been notable in recent years. Despite *Mallee Country*'s documentation of the environmental damage that has occurred since European colonisation, this impressive history ends with a note of hope. Those

who live in mallee country, the authors write, are 'now demonstrating their capacity to apply their energies and initiatives to secure the future of this ancient land and the preservation of its exquisite biota' (p. 384).

Kate Darian-Smith

Solicitors and the Law Institute in Victoria, 1835–2019: Pathway to a Respected Profession
By Simon Smith. Law Institute of Victoria, Melbourne 2019. Pp. xv + 250. $85.00, hardback.

The Law Institute of Victoria was founded in 1859. Two of its founding principles were to 'suppress any illegal and dishonourable practice and promote good feeling and encourage proper conduct among members of the profession'. Within three years it faced a major crisis when the president and vice-president were both forced to resign for breaches of these principles. The president, Kenric Brodribb, was unfortunate because one of his partners had become involved in an attempt to evade the Land Acts, and Brodribb was dragged into the dispute, the rights and wrongs of which were far from clear. The case of the vice-president, Peter O'Farrell, was altogether more sensational. O'Farrell, who had a large practice among Melbourne's Catholic community, was sued for criminal libel by the chief clerk of the police force, another Catholic, Michael Hanify, following a dispute over the management of the church's funds. The jury found that O'Farrell's description of Hanify as a 'wanton and cowardly hound' justified the charge, and he was found guilty and subsequently expelled from the Law Institute. O'Farrell was the brother of Henry O'Farrell, who attempted to assassinate Prince Alfred in 1868. Following family tradition, in 1882 Peter O'Farrell shot and wounded the Catholic archbishop, James Goold, who O'Farrell claimed owed him money. This form of debt collection was not viewed favourably by the courts, and O'Farrell was jailed for two years for malicious wounding.

The law seems to attract great raconteurs and, over the 185 years since the first lawyer arrived in Victoria, there have been innumerable humorous or dramatic stories about life and the law. Simon Smith's history of *Solicitors and the Law Institute in Victoria, 1835–2019* has its fair share of them, peppered amongst the chapters of this carefully

researched and thoughtfully presented account of the development of the legal profession since the arrival in Victoria of the first lawyers from the United Kingdom in the mid-1830s.

The Law Institute has always been torn between self-interest—its role as the solicitors' trade union—and the protection of the welfare of the public—its regulatory function. Thus, the institute fought against measures that it feared would reduce solicitors' incomes, from the introduction of the Torrens system of land titles in the 1850s to the establishment of 'no fault' compensation schemes in the 1970s and 1980s. At the same time, it fought for many years to gain parliamentary recognition as the sole regulator of the profession. In recent decades, both Liberal and Labor governments have wound back the Law Institute's regulatory role, leading to the situation today where it is primarily a trade union, with ancillary functions such as continuing education. With membership now voluntary, the institute faces the challenge of catering to the vastly different requirements of the multinational law firms with hundreds of partners and tiny suburban and country firms. There are now over 20,000 solicitors in Victoria (over half of whom are women), but whether the Law Institute will continue to be their representative is far from clear.

Solicitors in financial trouble have always found it hard to resist the temptation to dip into their trust accounts. Simon Smith tells the stories of some of the more dramatic defalcations over the decades such as that of Betty Bryant in 1975, which threatened to empty the entire reserves of the Solicitors' Guarantee Fund. Understandably, but unfortunately because it is such a great story, he passes over the far larger defalcation by Max Green in 1998 because the guarantee fund escaped liability on the grounds that the losses had not occurred 'in the course of legal practice'. This story, involving murder, double-dealing, enough fictitious crash barriers to reach to the moon and back, and a money trail that was never followed to its end, remains to be fully told.

Smith reminds us of the era when solicitors were forbidden to advertise. To the Law Institute, 'the essence of a profession was the personal regard and mutual confidence existing between the professional man and his client. As such, advertising was anathema'. Consequently, the only advertising allowed was a brass plaque with the name of the firm. The size of lettering was closely monitored. Similarly, until well into the 1960s, sectarianism was rife in the legal profession.

Only Protestants need apply for positions at Blake & Riggall or Arthur Robinson & Co., while Molomby & Molomby and Rennick & Gaynor were strictly for Catholics.

Lavishly produced, with a marvellous selection of illustrations, this book is a fine history of Victoria's solicitors and the Law Institute of Victoria.

Peter Yule

Port Fairy: The Town that Kept its Character: A History of Port Fairy, 1835–2018

By Marten A. Syme. Marten A. Syme, Port Fairy 2018. Pp. viii + 295. $42.50, paperback.

In his preface Marten Syme tells us that he and his wife came to Port Fairy for the first time in 1976, and both were 'immediately impressed with the built form, the bay, the wide tree-lined streets and its particular character'. They were so impressed that they purchased a 'building of character'. This love of the town has found further expression in Marten Syme's detailed history, from the arrival of the first Europeans in 1835 through until the first two decades of this century. Marten Syme observes that his is not the first history of the town. A 'hasty' history was prepared by William Earle as early as 1896, and J.W. Powling published an 'unreferenced' history in 1980. Syme states that his aim is to correct many of the errors of Earle's history and to provide, with the benefit of later research, a different emphasis from that of Powling.

Martyn Syme has indeed provided the reader with a very detailed account of the history of Port Fairy. The main sources he has employed are the local newspapers, particularly the *Belfast Gazette* and the *Port Fairy Gazette*. The use of newspapers has been revolutionised in recent years with the availability of the National Library's Trove newspaper search engine. But Martyn Syme has not taken the easy course of relying on Trove, which has limited coverage of his local papers, and has instead undertaken the hard graft of detailed reading of the local papers in hard copy. Unlike Powling's 1980 history, Syme's account resists the temptation of looking only at the early years of settlement, and his story continues up to the very recent past. He starts with the initial conflict

between the first European settlers and the Indigenous owners of the land. Curiously he has little to say of life before European settlement. The exciting, if destructive, history of whaling is well told, and here he ventures away from newspapers and delves into the available archival sources. In the early chapters we learn of the failed business enterprises of William Rutledge and the impact of the purchase of a Special Survey by James Atkinson. Isolated from Melbourne, Port Fairy failed to grow for most of the twentieth century, and in these years its buildings and infrastructure fell into decay. As in much of rural Victoria, attempts to bring manufacturing to the town, such as a Glaxo factory, faltered, with manufacturing in a general decline in the 1980s. Port Fairy's revival came with the growth of interest in heritage—with its early history the town had (and still has) some wonderful heritage buildings—and the promotion of tourism in the past 40 years. It is now the home of a very popular annual Folk Festival, and there has been a new wave of residents who have purchased holiday homes by the sea.

The main readership of *Port Fairy* will undoubtedly be among those who already have an interest in the history of the town, but the book should also have readers among the increasing number of tourists wishing to know more about the town they are visiting. For general readers the impressive and detailed research may be overwhelming. Although written in an age when family history is very popular, *Port Fairy* makes little attempt to tell the social history of the community. The story is also very inward looking, and the town is seldom put into the context of the general history of regional towns in Victoria. But this said, Marten A. Syme has comprehensively traced the history of Port Fairy and shown how this small seaside community has survived for almost 200 years. The book also includes some excellent photographs and maps that help the reader understand why Port Fairy is a special place.

Charles Fahey

Cranlana: The First 100 Years: The House, the Garden, the People
By Michael Shmith. Hardie Grant Books, Melbourne 2019. Pp. 288. $80.00, hardback.

The presentation of *Cranlana: The First 100 Years*, the history of the Sidney Myer family home in Toorak, Melbourne, is superb. Stunning contemporary images by internationally renowned photographers Simon Griffiths and Mark Wilson interspersed with archival shots, dating from the 1930s, provide a visual treat for historians and garden lovers alike. The forward by Marigold Southey (Myer) delightfully recounts her family story and the continued generational respect and appreciation for what she terms the 'family seat and tribal centre'. She also makes the telling remark that 'this book tells the story of Sidney and Merlyn's love of their *house in a garden*'.

The author, Michael Shmith, then takes the reader on a rich visual description of the current layout of the property, emphasising that this is 'not a history of the Myer family per se' but a story that 'puts Cranlana centre stage, with family and other cast members making their various entrances and exits along the way'.

The first two chapters detail the history of Australia's Aboriginal peoples' original ownership of the region, followed by colonial settlement and expansion. In 'The Road to Cranlana 1860–1920', Shmith traces the development of Toorak as an elite Melbourne suburb, describing the 'boom' years, which saw the construction of large extravagant mansions, and then the 'bust' years when property values plummeted and much of the land was subdivided.

Sidney Myer was already a wealthy man prior to his marriage to Margery Merlyn Baillieu. They spent their courting days first in Melbourne and then in San Francisco. During the Myers' fourteen-year partnership, Cranlana was, in Shmith's words, 'transformed from its original single-story Edwardian villa into an elegant, brick rendered two storey home eminently suited to the stylish and busy lives of its owners'.

Although Cranlana was always considered a private family home, the doors were opened on occasion to raise funds for various charities. Sidney's jade and ceramic collection was considered 'one of the most important of its kind in Australia'. Shmith devotes several pages to the Cranlana collection of porcelain and jade, identifying significant pieces and recording the management and preservation of the whole collection.

The purchase of an adjacent paddock in 1932 enabled the evolution of the garden in a style that both 'resonated with the design and setting of the house and, more broadly, with the leafy and tranquil south-eastern suburb in which the Myer family resided … emblematic of the cultural aesthetic of the day'. After describing the influential architects and horticulturalists of the time, who included Bogue Luffman, author and principal of Burnley Horticultural College, and the increasingly popular garden designer Edna Walling, Shmith goes on to define the work of architect Harold Desbrowe-Annear and the various quotes he provided to the Myer family from 1928 onwards. After rejecting three rather grandiose proposals, Sidney finally engaged Desbrowe-Annear in 1932, by which time the architect 'had far more space to play with' owing to the addition of the recently purchased paddock.

Myer's compassion and generosity, together with his work to create a beautiful lasting home and garden for his family, were cut short by his sudden death in September 1934; he was just 56 years old. With the death of Sidney Myer, Shmith moves the story into another life chapter—'Merlyn's Cranlana, 1934–1944: The Pre-war and War Years'. Merlyn took over the management of both home and garden, the latter documented with various purchases of plants and seeds bought from local and overseas suppliers. To mark her late husband's memory, Merlyn commissioned a biography, a 'handsome bronze bust' and a 'memorial on the site of his grave at Box Hill Cemetery'. Shmith goes on to comment that 'peacetime for Merlyn would herald the beginning of a long and fulfilling twilight'.

After Merlyn's death in 1982, Ken Myer and his second wife Yasuko lived at Cranlana for a further nine years. After their deaths in a plane crash in 1992 the house and grounds became, as Shmith puts it, 'a different sort of place, one that honours its heritage as well as bringing in the bold and the new'.

In the final chapter Shmith details further stages of Cranlana's family and corporate history, when the Myer family had to come to terms with the problem of maintaining and utilising a home that was quite magnificent yet totally unsuitable for contemporary family living. The property, like many of its kind, has had to be put on a business footing to ensure its survival, while still embracing family connections and activities.

The story of the garden's evolution ended quite abruptly with Merlyn's rejection of a post-war garden restoration plan by renowned garden designer John Stevens. This story is taken up in a detailed and informative segment by garden manager Anne Nadenbousch. It would have been interesting to have had more detail about the family's engagement with the garden, particularly in light of Marigold Southey's remark that 'this book tells the story of Sidney and Merilyn's love of their "house in a garden"'.

The Myer family, the author Michael Shmith and the publishers Hardie Grant Books are to be congratulated on creating a beautiful historic record, not only of an individual family property but also of a significant period of Melbourne's social history.

Anne Vale

Maldon: A New History 1853–1928

By Brian Rhule. Exploring History Australia, Maryborough 2019. Pp. xvi + 382. $50.00, paperback.

This is an excellent local history of Maldon from the first major gold rush to the area in 1853–54 to the eve of the 1930s Depression. Organised broadly chronologically, but also thematically, it pays close attention to the economic, social, cultural, religious and educational dimensions of life in Maldon, and is particularly good on the medical, legal and reform presence in the town. Alert at every point to connections to the wider world, the book is also parochial in a very good way—richly knowledgeable about Maldon people, businesses, organisations and events. Frequently, of course, we hear that in Maldon things happened as they did elsewhere in the British world—Protestants were suspicious of Catholic ritual and papal authority for example, and Anglicans worried about excess enthusiasm in the Nonconformist churches (p. 165); temperance and medical and legal people in Maldon were influenced by the same currents of ideas that were influential elsewhere. But the book is, of course, most alive and fascinating when we hear the distinctive local enunciations of these broader discourses—when, for example, we meet the Maldon Ladies Benevolent Association and hear a local leader speak of its intention to 'help people who help themselves' (p. 140), or when we meet the Maldon Anti-Conscription League and see the work

of the anonymous constructors of a large 'Vote No' written in pieces of rock atop Preece's Hill in November 1917.

The inevitable Australian regional local history theme of high hopes and gradual decline is here. It is, however, useful to be reminded at several points that the road to metropolitan dominance was long—Maldon businesses were losing out to Castlemaine and Bendigo long before Melbourne became a massively dominant economic competitor. Early hopes that Maldon would become the market town centre of the region also faded slowly.

There is so much more history written about the colourful but short-lived alluvial gold rushes than about the much longer company mining era. Thus it is wonderful to have a history such as this that takes us from the 1850s and 60s alluvial era into the quartz and company mining era with such clarity and understanding. Rhule shows how the end of the alluvial rushes marked only the beginning (Chapter 3) of the 'emergence of a mining industry'. Although the preface says that the book 'mostly omits similar developments that took place elsewhere in the mining industry throughout Australia' (p. xiii), it does show us close up the effects of key technological and organisational developments in Maldon—such as tributing arrangements, chlorination and cyaniding, and mechanical drills. Taking this longer view, there is less sentimentality about the levelling moment of the alluvial rushes and a clearer sense that, longer term, the creation and maintenance of social hierarchy (including, but not limited to, class distinctions) was a major theme (p. 50) of Maldon's history. The book tells the story of the miners' unions in Maldon, crucially focusing on the struggles over health and safety conditions—in the mines but also in the town itself, threatened as it was by noxious fumes from the quartz roasting process. Rhule also delineates the theme of class harmony ('Labour and Capital United'), including the ways that both labour and employers needed and benefitted from injections of capital from Melbourne, London and beyond. The price of that outside investment included, however, the volatility that came with waves of speculation and collapse, and the fact that much of the wealth produced 'went out of Maldon, often in the form of dividends paid to shareholders' (p. 103). Rhule uses mining surveyor reports to document the waves of decline in the 1870s and growth in the 1880s and 90s. He is alert to the many attempts to proof the town's economy against mining volatility by developing other industries, such

as brewing, flour milling, tourism and bicycle manufacturing. This then is an impressively well-integrated history that moves seamlessly from economic to social and cultural matters. Rhule uses some PROV and locally held archival records, but, in the general absence of detailed mining company records, the book is in good part written from newspapers—yet another reminder of how much is hidden in plain sight in nineteenth-century Australian newspapers.

Internal differences are carefully noted—religious sectarianism, ethnicity and race, and gender roles. There is some attention given to the Chinese in Maldon. Here prejudice and exclusion are emphasised rather than (as in some recent work in Chinese–Australian history) the multiple interactions that occurred despite them. Indigenous people largely disappear after Chapter 1, as does any discussion of the moral legitimacy of occupying their land. We hear on p. 11 that the claims of the original owners 'have generally been marginalised and trivialised'. But, when John Alston Wallace, Bendigo businessman and member of the Victorian Legislative Council, spoke up in the Council against immigration restriction in December 1888, he said that while others spoke of the Chinese as foreigners 'as a matter of fact the British people were foreigners in the colonies' and 'they had Christianised the original inhabitants off the face of the earth'. Was there no one in Maldon expressing such thoughts?

This book, the product of years of careful work, is a welcome and important addition to the history of the gold districts of Victoria and will be read with enjoyment by a great many.

David Goodman

The World in One Kilometre: Greville Street, Prahran
By Judith Buckrich, Prahran Mechanics' Institute Press, Melbourne 2019. Pp. xi + 213. $50.00, paperback.

Like a lot of people who have migrated to Melbourne over the years from places where 'a' is pronounced in its long form (in my case Adelaide), learning to say 'Prahran' in the Melbourne way (that is 'Pran' not 'Praraan') was one of the earliest skills I had to master when I moved to the 'big smoke' in the mid-1980s. We new arrivals were warned by those who had come before us that mispronunciation of 'pastie' (not

'paastie'), 'plant' (not 'plaant'), as well as 'chance' and 'dance', not to mention 'Northcutt' and 'Maulvn', was guaranteed to mark us out as *arrivistes*, greenhorns unused to the ways of the big city. I found saying 'Pran' relatively easy to master, and 'Northcutt' and 'Maulvn' have since become second nature, but even now after having lived in Melbourne for more than 30 years I still betray my South Australian upbringing when describing certain foods, greenery, random possibilities and shaking a leg.

Getting to know 'Pran' was central to the inner Melbourne experience in the 1980s, largely because it was home to both Chapel and Greville streets, two of the best known and most well loved of the city's local 'high' streets, which were and are so central to its urban identity. While Chapel Street was the more famous of the two, Greville Street was the trendier and the cooler. At that time lined with vintage clothing and antique stores, 'opp' shops, new and second-hand book and record stores, as well as cafes, pubs and nightclubs, Greville Street was both a shopping destination and a place to see and be seen, especially on Saturday mornings (and, later, afternoons when shopping hours were extended in the late 1980s). That it was home to a public garden too meant that it was also a place where those of us without much money could relax and while away a few hours without feeling any great pressure to spend what little spare cash we had left over from our meagre student allowances and part-time jobs.

However, as Judith Buckrich demonstrates in this the latest in her long and distinguished line of histories of Melbourne's important inner-city commercial strips, local institutions and cultural hubs, Greville Street's story entails much more than just shopping, for nightlife and fun in the form of Leggett's ballroom was one of its long and staple features. One of the earliest streets in the municipality and suburb of Prahran, Greville Street in its various incarnations has long been an important economic, political, social and cultural zone, home to not only the local council chambers but also various engineering works, clothing and food manufacturers, retailers and political groups and social activist organisations, many of which have had impacts well beyond Prahran, and indeed Victoria. While these business and social institutions were often owned or influenced by immigrants and their descendants, whether, as the book's title suggests, the whole world is represented in this one-kilometre street is perhaps debatable, but certainly multiple

stories of pre-modern and post-modern Melbourne (and Australia) can arguably be found there. Large numbers of these stories are uncovered in this well-researched, lavishly illustrated and closely documented book.

Funded through crowd-sourcing website *Pozible* and financially and otherwise supported by the Prahran Historical and Arts Society, the Chapel Street Precinct Group and a wide range of other individuals and organisations, the book draws on a wealth of local information and informants. The resources of the excellent Prahran Mechanics' Institute Victorian History Library and the Stonnington History Centre, as well as State Library Victoria's Picture Collection, and perhaps most evocatively the Rennie Ellis Archive, are well utilised to make this a highly accessible and visually appealing book. However, perhaps as a reflection of a desire or a requirement to appease so many 'stakeholders', there is sometimes a sense that this is a 'book by committee' rather than the voice of its main author. As I read the multiple vignettes and browsed the many images and maps, I sometimes felt that in trying to do too much and in seeking to please too many masters the book lacked a clear narrative focus. A stronger authorial voice and a good edit would have been useful.

That said, as in Greville Street itself, there are so many stories and layers in this book that every reader will likely find something here to satisfy. For me it was the bringing back of memories of my early years in Melbourne, especially some long nights at the Station Hotel, which sadly like so many other inner-city pubs is no longer with us as a live music venue, having recently succumbed to the apartment developer's siren call. As has been the case for the last 180 years, Greville Street is today again undergoing a process of major change. Whether this is for the better is of course in the eye of the beholder.

Seamus O'Hanlon

The Shelf Life of Zora Cross
By Cathy Perkins. Monash University Publishing, Melbourne 2020. Pp. 285. $29.95, paperback.

Zora Cross (1890–1964), poet, novelist and journalist, was a publishing sensation during the Great War for her erotically charged book of poetry, *Songs of Love and Life*. It was reprinted three times, received rapturous

reviews and sold around 4,000 copies in Australia and more in the UK. The publisher, George Robertson of Angus & Robertson, believed Cross was Australia's greatest woman poet. Her shining star rapidly dimmed. She fell out with Robertson. By the 1930s, Cross's style of writing had gone out of favour. If she was remembered at all when she died of a heart attack in 1964, it was for her poem, 'Memory', a standard in many school poetry collections.

By the 1980s, when many Australian women writers were being rescued from obscurity through the labours of feminist scholars, Cross remained forgotten except perhaps by racegoers. When the Australian Jockey Club wanted to dedicate a race to 'an Australian poetess', the Society of Authors had offered a choice between Judith Wright, Rosemary Dobson and Cross. Wright and Dobson recommended Cross, Wright later confiding in a private letter: 'It is lucky that Zora Cross can't object and since nobody remembers the poor woman, the good name of Poetry can't be involved' (p. 87).

Cross once told her daughter April, 'History will find me' (p. 243). And so finally it has, with the publication of Cathy Perkins' meticulously researched and beautifully written biography, *The Shelf Life of Zora Cross,* ten years in the making.

Biographers writing about women too often struggle with a paucity of material and are forced to use their imagination to fill in the gaps. Fortunately for Perkins, there is a wealth of documentation when it comes to Cross. As Perkins notes, 'My challenge wasn't finding material, but doing justice to it' (p. xi). Cross published extensively under her own name and various pseudonyms from the time she was a school girl of nine in Gympie and became one of the most regular correspondents to Ethel Turner's 'Children's Corner' in the *Australian Town and Country Journal.* Perkins estimates she wrote over 30,000 words for that publication alone. This literary apprenticeship, she observes, also helped Cross develop a style that spoke directly to an audience.

As an adult, Cross wrote novels (including a racy one set in Sydney during World War II), books of poetry, and poems and journalism for an eclectic range of publications including the *Bulletin* and the *Lone Hand.* Her interviews with other women writers for the *Australian Women's Mirror* remain some of the only accounts we have of the writing practice of some of the authors. Her daughter April recalls that she wrote obsessively, often working through the night, to support the family.

But the richest literary goldmine is her vast correspondence with Robertson, Robertson's secretary Rebecca Wiley, and literary figures such as Mary Gilmore, Bertram Stevens, John Le Gay Brereton, Turner and David McKee Wright, the *Bulletin* editor who later became her partner and father of her two youngest children. In Robertson's archives in the Mitchell Library, for instance, there are 340 often lengthy letters from Cross. Two decades after Cross's death, a large number of boxes of her writing were donated to the University of Sydney. Some of her manuscripts were damaged by rain, fire and the termites that had destroyed her first house at Glenbrook in the lower Blue Mountains (where she lived from 1919), but they were still a gift to the biographer.

Rather than construct a conventional biography, Perkins has divided her book into chapters that feature the literary figures with whom Cross had important relationships. This bold ploy works. The result is a rounded biography where Cross's day-to-day life, along with her writing and literary ambitions, are writ large. Nevertheless, it remains a puzzle as to why Cross has not attracted the attention of scholars until now. Cross was the first Australian woman poet to write frankly about sex. Her love sonnets appalled Norman Lindsay, who refused to illustrate *Songs of Love and Life* because he objected to a married woman or any woman writing about sex (though he did eventually design the cover). Cross lived a liberated life for a woman of her time. In 1911, she entered into what may have been a marriage of convenience with actor Stuart Smith. She did not live with him, and four months later gave birth to a daughter who died after three hours. She and David McKee Wright, who died in 1928, did not marry. Most of the time she was her family's sole support. In her later years, her main project was a trilogy designed to honour the role of women in Roman history. It remained unfinished.

With the publication of this outstanding biography, one hopes that the appreciation of Cross and her place in the Australian literary firmament is just beginning.

Carmel Shute

Australian Lives: An Intimate History
Anisa Puri and Alistair Thomson. Monash University Publishing, Melbourne 2017. Pp. 450. $39.95, Kindle format, Amazon Australia Services Inc., ASIN B071HMQ3S7.

The e-book, *Australian Lives: An Intimate History*, co-authored by Anisa Puri and Alistair Thomson, is an integral part of the Australian Generations Oral History Project, a scholarly and cultural collaboration between historians at Monash University, the National Library of Australia and ABC Radio National. Conceived as a new kind of scholarship, which requires 'novel historical sources', the project has culminated in an innovative multi-media resource and online archive comprising 300 'intimate histories' (from a volunteer pool of 700) of so-called ordinary Australians belonging to different generations and coming from diverse backgrounds. They collectively present a canvas of the making and remaking of Australians' 'intimate' and national identities. The narrators were born between the 1920s and the 1980s, about a quarter of them beginning life overseas. The interviews averaged four hours per person, resulting in thousands of pages of transcript to be 'lightly' edited in an attempt 'to capture the nuance of the spoken word'. *Australian Lives* focuses on 50 of the 300 stories. The youngest interviewee is Gemma Nourse, born in 1989 in Darwin—'more able to maybe be agents in [one's] own life'; Kathleen Golder, born in 1920 in Cheshire, is the oldest, her early life reminiscent of McCourt's *Angela's Ashes*. I imagine that Gemma's notion of the word 'agent' was alien to Kathleen's younger world.

Advertised as 'a new type of oral history book' in Thomson's promotional video, *Australian Lives* e-book is also an aural history, which 'enables readers to be listeners … and which curates access into one of Australia's largest online oral history collections'. Oral history has been evolving since it began to challenge mainstream history and related disciplines in the seventies; with *An Intimate History*'s e-book interviews also online, the authors hope that readers will simultaneously also be listeners.

Why the subtitle *An Intimate History*? In explaining this, Puri and Thomson contrast 'Big Picture histories … that are well-chronicled and widely reported' with their focus on disinterring and recording people's own 'intimate histories [which] illuminate everyday life as it changes

across time'. They argue that oral history offers opportunities to create and preserve our own histories otherwise denied to many of us. Implicit here is a thesis about the power of oral history in its capacity to capture 'the more intimate aspects of everyday life', a validation of one's existence and a mapping of changing generational identities.

Australian Lives comprises nine story chapters in all—alternating between a person's life stages ('Childhood', 'Later Life') and significant subjects ('Faith', 'Activism'). A 'Narrator Index' assists in navigating each narrator's life stage or experience. Each chapter begins with a cogent synopsis and concludes with 'Further Listening' as well as 'Further Reading'.

In summary, *Australian Lives* enriches the idea and practice of oral history in its conception and creation of a field, 'Intimate History', and in the e-book's curatorial function befitting the pedagogical and research methods of today's students, researchers and others interested in historical enquiry. In providing a selection and arrangement of these 50 'intimate histories' and in its desire to achieve a specific effect through its presentation, *Australian Lives* is akin to an art exhibition or museum with a catalogue appended.

Chapter 8, 'Later Life', is thematically sectioned, concluding with 'Death'. We are presented with four women's feelings about this final rite of passage, ranging from matter-of-fact, to funny, to fertile fancy. Born in 1920, Kathleen Golder quips, 'they say grow old gracefully … God knows what's happening tomorrow … so I just choose [to] enjoy the necessary things to be happy. Cup of tea, whatever'. Resignation? An octogenarian, Ruth Apps says her wish is not to die in pain, 'so that I'm not thrashing around on my deathbed'. Dignity? Ginette Matalon announces her immortality: 'I'm never going to die … I'm eternal', which she reiterates into belief. Born in 1936, she says 'I'm not old', adding that she is not afraid of death 'because I know that I am never going to die'. Delusion or a droll commentary? Speech as well as context gives meaning. We need to listen to her curious words. Finally, the youngest woman's take on her earthly departure is poignant, with death's door now made scarily real after the recent death of her younger sister. Lynne's Wizard of Oz death fantasy is an uplifting curtain call in my view. '*What I feel like* [my italics]—when I was a little girl we used to go to Campsie picture theatre … Elvis Presley was out and *It Was Fun in Acapulco*'. She remembers a clock at the front near the screen, so you know when

the movies was going to end … I remember thinking, I have to get, someone has to stop the clock, I don't want this to end … That's what I feel like my life is at the moment. It's like, I'm just getting the knack of this, you know, hang on.

In all, *Australian Lives* is an invaluable if structurally taxing curatorial companion piece to the project's online archive. Not to be read quickly.

Marie Alice Clark

Notes on Contributors

Marilyn Bowler is a past editor of the *Victorian Historical Journal*. Currently, she is researching parenting in rural Victoria from the 1930s onwards.

Marie Alice Clark is a member of the RHSV Publications Committee, was editor of the *VHJ* 2011–12, and is also a committee member of the Nepean Historical Society. Currently she is curating a 'Family Backcloth', conceived as an intimate cultural history case study that plots her mother Mariah's and her father Claude's ancestral hearths, from Limerick to the Mallee and from Dover to Struggletown (yellow and black) respectively. Finally, as a theological student Marie is researching a late-medieval mystic, Walter Hilton, and our Iron Maiden, Joan of Arc.

Kate Darian-Smith, FASSA, is a cultural and social historian, who has published on rural Australia, including as co-editor of *Cultural Sustainability in Rural Communities: Re-thinking Australian Country Towns* (2017). She is currently part of the team on the ARC-funded 'Expert Nation' project, where she is researching the place of universities and professional expertise in the 1920s and 1930s, with a focus on agricultural education and life on the land. Kate is currently executive dean and pro vice-chancellor, College of Arts, Law and Education, University of Tasmania.

Jacqui Durrant is a freelance historian based in Beechworth, North East Victoria. Her main areas of interest are nineteenth-century Victorian Aboriginal history, early gold-rush history, and environmental history. She is frequently most interested in whoever and whatever has been left out of the mainstream historical discourse. Her first book, *Fire on the Plateau: A History of Fire and its Management in Stanley*, was published by the Stanley Athenaeum in 2019.

Ruby Ekkel graduated from the University of Melbourne with an honours degree in history in 2019. During her undergraduate degree she also studied history at Trinity College Dublin, where she had the opportunity to investigate Australian identity from an international perspective. Driven by her long-term interest in first-wave feminism,

she wrote her honours thesis about the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Ruby is interested in nineteenth-century Victorian history, the international women's suffrage movement, and spatial history.

Charles Fahey taught at La Trobe University from 1990 to 2018. His research interests and publications are in the fields of labour history, the history of the Victorian goldfields and the history of rural Australia. He is presently working with Mandy Jean, a heritage architect, to develop historical and architectural criteria for the protection of domestic housing built in Bendigo in the nineteenth century. He is co-author with Richard Broome, Andrea Gaynor and Katie Holmes of *Mallee Country: Land, People, History* (2019).

Rachel Goldlust recently completed her doctoral degree at La Trobe University with a thesis that traced the history of self-sufficient living and politics in Australia from the late nineteenth century. Prior to commencing her studies, Rachel worked as a town planner and alternative living and sustainability educator. Given the relevance of her thesis to the current situation with respect to economic stress, housing insecurity and unemployment, Rachel hopes to publish it in the coming year, emphasising the perennial yearning to go 'Off-Grid'.

David Goodman teaches history at the University of Melbourne. He is the author of *Gold Seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s* (1994) and 'Gold and the Public in the Nineteenth-Century Gold Rushes', in Benjamin Mountford and Stephen Tuffnell (eds), *A Global History of the Gold Rushes* (2018).

Nikki Henningham is executive officer of the Australian Women's Archives Project and co-editor of the Australian Women's Register. She is an experienced oral historian who likes giving voice to people who do not normally get asked, then amplifying these voices by publishing them online. She has undertaken many oral history projects for the National Library of Australia's Oral History and Folklore Branch and in 2005 received the National Archives of Australia's Ian Maclean Award for her work in locating records relating to the experience of migrant women in Australia

James Keating is a historian of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Australia and New Zealand. He was the 2018 David Scott Mitchell Fellow at the State Library of New South Wales, teaches history at UNSW, and serves on the *Journal of Australian Studies*' editorial committee. His research on women, feminism, and Australasian and international social reform movements has been published, among other places, in *Australian Historical Studies*, *History Compass*, and *Women's History Review*. His first book, *Distant Sisters: Australasian Women and the International Struggle for the Vote, 1880–1914*, will be published by Manchester University Press in 2021.

Annette Lewis is a retired teacher who completed an MA in history at Monash University in 1998 and a PhD at Deakin University in 2010 on the life and times of Janet Lady Clarke. She maintains her interest in the history of the Cotton and Clarke family, early pioneers in Victoria. Her previous articles published in the *Victorian Historical Journal* are 'Edward Cotton: The Uncertain Cotton Brother', 'The Life and Times of Peter Snodgrass' (Janet Clarke's father) and 'The Role of the President, Janet Clarke, in the Closure of the Melbourne Women's Hospital'.

Charles Lewis is a retired mathematics, science and physics teacher and Victorian secondary school principal. In retirement, his enduring interest in historical research saw him volunteer with the RHSV (2001–10). Charles has self-published books including *Mitre Tavern and Surrounds in Collins Street*, *Melbourne Teachers College 1940* and *The Exceptional Melbourne Cup*, which told the story of his father and other Japanese prisoners of war who conducted a Melbourne Cup in Tavoy, Burma, in November 1942, just before the Australian 'A' Force left to work on the notorious Burma Railway.

Helen Morgan is a writer, editor, archivist, historian and hands-off philatelist. She has worked on the Australian Women's Archives Project since its inception in 2000, and is co-editor of the Australian Women's Register. Her research interests include problematising sources and working with biographical, archival and bibliographical data in public domains, especially focusing on the forgotten stories of ordinary people.

Seamus O'Hanlon teaches contemporary and urban history at Monash University. His most recent book, *City Life: The New Urban Australia*, was published by New South in 2018.

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

John Rickard, FAHA, FRHSV, is emeritus professor in history at Monash University. He has written widely on Australian cultural history and biography. He was a contributor to *Surrender Australia? Essays in the Study and Uses of History: Geoffrey Blainey and Asian Immigration* (1985).

Lynette Russell AM, FASSA, FAHA, is an award-winning historian and Indigenous studies scholar. Over the past two decades she has published numerous books and essays. Her work on Aboriginal whalers resulted in the acclaimed *Roving Mariners*. All her work is interdisciplinary, blending history, archaeology and material culture studies. Her most recent book in 2019 was *The First Naturalists*, with zoologist Penny Olsen. In 2020 she is taking up an Australian Research Council Laureate Fellowship to examine Global Encounters and First Nations People: 1000 Years of Australian History.

John Schauble has degrees in history, law, politics and emergency management from the University of Melbourne and Charles Sturt University. He worked as a journalist with the *Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* for more than twenty years in Australia and Asia. He later spent over a decade as a senior public servant in Victoria, working in fire and emergency management. His family has farmed at Crooked River for over half a century.

Carmel Shute is an historian by trade, has worked as an academic at four universities and also as a union organiser at the ABC and a media officer in local government and the trade union movement. She currently runs a PR business, Shute the Messenger. She has written extensively on history, particularly the World Wars, local government, gender, politics, crime fiction, and technology. Publications include the co-edited collection, *Worth Her Salt: Women & Work in Australia* (1982) and chapters in eight other books. She helped found Sisters in Crime Australia in 1991 and she was awarded a Ned Kelly Life Time Achievement Award in 2016.

Ruurd Snoekstra has a BA Hons degree in philosophy, a Bachelor of Social Work, an MA in archaeology and a Graduate Diploma in Information Systems. Since 2009, he has been involved in annual magnetic surveys for the Mahogany Ship.

Anne Vale is a writer, garden historian, garden photographer and a public speaker. She is a past chair of the Australian Garden History Society's Victorian branch, and a retired university lecturer. She is the author of *Gardens of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria)* (2018), *Influential Australian Garden People: Their Stories* (2016) and the award-winning *Exceptional Australian Garden Makers* (2013).

Peter Yule has written widely on Australian military, economic and medical history with his books including histories of Carlton, the Collins Class submarine project, Australian National Airways and the Royal Children's Hospital, and biographies of W.L. Baillieu and Sir Ian Potter. He has recently completed a major study commissioned by the Australian War Memorial on the medical legacies of the Vietnam War and is now writing a history of the Victorian Bar.

About the Royal Historical Society of Victoria

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

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

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

The RHSV acts as the umbrella body for over 330 historical societies throughout Victoria and actively promotes their collections, details of which are accessible via the Victorian Local History Database identified on the RHSV website. The Society also sponsors the History Victoria Support Group, which runs quarterly meetings throughout the state to increase the skills and knowledge of historical societies. The RHSV has an active online presence and runs the History Victoria bookshop—online and on-site.

More information:
Royal Historical Society of Victoria
239 A'Beckett Street
Melbourne, Victoria 3000, Australia
Telephone: 03 9326 9288
www.historyvictoria.org.au
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 scholarly articles on Victorian history, or on Australian history where it illuminates Victorian history. It is published twice yearly by the Publications Committee, Royal Historical Society of Victoria.

2. The submission of original scholarly articles is invited following the journal's *Guidelines* available at http://www.historyvictoria.org.au/publications/victorian-historical-journal.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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